

## ИСТОРИЧЕСКИЕ ПАРАДИГМЫ

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### **Is Palamism a Form of Classical Theism, Theistic Personalism, Panentheism, or What? Some Conceptual Clarification for Analytic Philosophers**

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The precise understanding of “classical theism” varies somewhat within analytic philosophy of religion. Sometimes it is understood as something like a synonym for generic Christian theism (in contrast to deism or pantheism or the theisms of other world religions). Alternatively, the label is often understood by reference to a specific understanding of the doctrine of divine simplicity (namely that promulgated by such figures as Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas) and the larger conception of God which flows from it. The latter usage of the label is quite common within the recent literature, such that classical theism in this sense is viewed as competing with other prominent ways of conceptualizing Christian theism, notably panentheism, theistic personalism, and open theism. Where does the Palamite understanding of God (normative within Eastern Orthodox theology) fall within a contemporary taxonomy of Christian theisms? I seek to answer this question. By way of a literature review consulting representative contemporary sources on the various alternative theisms plus Palamism, I clarify the distinctive commitments of each position and draw out their assorted conceptual relationships and interconnections. I then go on to suggest that Palamism is uniquely well-situated to function as a bridge-builder and corrective force within the current literature, capable of dialoguing productively with the aforementioned range of Christian theisms.

**Keywords:** Eastern Orthodox, energies, essence, God, Gregory Palamas, Palamism, panentheism, theism, theistic personalism

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## (1) Introduction

The renewal of interest in the thought of St. Gregory Palamas (1296–1359) was a defining feature of the neopatristic movement central to twentieth century Eastern Orthodox theology<sup>1</sup>. Palamism today enjoys a position of growing prominence in the broader theological literature, attracting interest even from non-Orthodox scholars. It is also beginning to make some inroads within analytic philosophy of religion.

In the hopes of encouraging that last development, the goal of this paper is to clarify a core component of Palamite thought for the benefit of those analytic philosophers who may possess only a passing acquaintance with it: specifically, I wish to shed light on the issue of where Palamism's understanding of God might fall within the current mainstream taxonomies of theism.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: in the next section I briefly summarize the doctrinal distinctives of Palamism when it comes to theology proper (i.e., the doctrine of God, in contrast to soteriology or eschatology or liturgical theology etc.). I focus on its essence/energies distinction and accompanying conception of divine simplicity. I expect this will be familiar territory for many readers (especially regular readers of this journal), but for others this summary should constitute a helpful overview. Then in section three I lay out the principal types of theism enumerated within current analytic philosophy of religion, and, having done so, raise the question of where Palamite theology falls within that mainstream categorization schema. In the fourth and final section I explain why that is a difficult question to answer precisely, and why that difficulty carries an advantage for Palamism.

## (2) Palamism: A Quick Refresher

On the standard Orthodox reading of St. Gregory Palamas, his theological works largely serve to clarify and synthesize key ideas found in earlier eastern Fathers, most notably the Cappadocians, St. Dionysius the Areopagite, St. Maximus the Confessor, and St. John of Damascus. The Church has viewed him as a faithful inheritor and interpreter of that prior line of patristic thought rather than as an innovator, a stance which, while not wholly uncontested in contemporary scholarship, has received substantial support<sup>2</sup>. Of course this is not to say that Palamas' corpus is devoid of originality, but rather that his theological project involves defending and building upon a pre-existing edifice rather than constructing a new one.

And what does that edifice consist in? Leaving aside for present purposes the many doctrinal commitments Palamism shares with any Christian theological/

<sup>1</sup> For general histories of that movement see [Louth, 2015] and also Paul Ladouceur's *Modern Orthodox Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> For some defences of Palamas' fundamental continuity with those earlier Fathers, see [Bradshaw, 2004], and also his concise recent treatment of this issue in [Bradshaw, 2020; Golitzin, 2013; Russell, 2019; Tollefsen, 2008; Tollefsen, 2012].

philosophical system<sup>3</sup> simply by virtue of its being *Christian* (e.g., a commitment to Trinitarian monotheism, the reality of the human soul, the directionality of history, etc.) and focusing instead on its distinctives, perhaps its single most significant teaching concerns the real distinction between the divine essence and the divine energies.

According to Palamas there is a degree of objective (i.e., independent-of-our-conceptualizations) ontological complexity in God, over and above the complexity entailed by there being three divine Persons. The divine essence/nature/substance is objectively distinct from (i.e., not-wholly-identical-to) the divine Persons who share that essence equally, and also objectively distinct from the divine energies. The three Persons, one essence, and many uncreated eternal energies are each of them mutually distinct yet utterly inseparable. Importantly, this does not mean that Palamas denies the doctrine of divine simplicity, rightly conceived. God's *nature*, considered in and of itself, can perhaps be seen as ontologically simple (utterly transcendent and devoid of anything we could understand as conceptually distinguishable internal properties or parts), yet the overarching divine Being certainly includes more than just the divine nature. It also incorporates the three Persons and the many energies, the latter of which flow from and reflect the divine nature without being identical with it or subsumed by it.

There are at least a few distinct forms or types of divine energy:

- (1) God's eternal concepts (divine ideas) and intentions
- (2) God's actions, among them the contingent free acts of creating the universe and redeeming humanity
- (3) God's necessary attributes/characteristics/traits, such as righteousness, justice, love, omnipotence, infinity, etc.

The "at least a few" above is deliberate, since, for all we know, there could be further types of divine energy that don't fall neatly into those classes, or which cross-cut two or more of those classes (e.g., perhaps there is a divine energy that counts as both an act and an attribute)<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Whether Palamas' thought amounts to a system is a matter of disagreement, with some Orthodox theologians even objecting to the label "Palamism", alleging that it carries anachronistic or otherwise misleading connotations (e.g., that it makes his thought out to be a sort of secondhand Orthodox imitation of comprehensive *Scholastic* systems like Thomism or Scotism). However, if thinking of "system" in the broader sense in which it is commonly employed within the history of philosophy (i.e., as a coherent, internally integrated worldview encompassing core metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical propositions), it can hardly be denied that Palamas had a discernible system – one largely shared with earlier patristic thinkers, yet with its own particular emphases and insights.

<sup>4</sup> That probably sounds like a weird suggestion, but by way of an (admittedly tenuous) analogy, consider the concept of charge in contemporary physics. It too seems to involve a cross-cutting overlap of standard ontological categories, insofar as it is thought of as both an inherent trait of concrete physical particles (physicists talk about electrons *having the property* of negative charge), and also as a sort of energetic emanation from those particles (charge as identical with the electromagnetic field). Similarly, maybe some divine energies could be both inherent attributes and outward energetic emanations?

Given the apparent diversity involved here, why refer to these aspects of the divine Being by way of a single term “energy”? What is the common denominator between them that justifies the shared label? Bradshaw suggests the following answer to that question: “We can generalize upon this line of thought to understand the unity of the *energeiai* as a class. Some are contingent, some necessary; some are temporal, some eternal; some are realities or energies, others are activities, operations, or attributes. What could such a disparate group have in common? Simply that they are *acts of self-manifestation*” [Bradshaw, 2004, p. 273]. [Emphases in original] The various sorts of divine energy constitute a unified class because they are all expressions of the inner Being of God, the divine identity. They manifest God because they flow from God’s essence while yet remaining fully divine. The *eternal* energies in particular serve to manifest the divine Reality *even in the absence of a contingent temporal creation*, just as (to borrow a traditional analogy) the sun’s rays would emanate from and express the nature of the sun even if there were no earth to shine upon and affect. (I.e., this Palamite doctrine of the divine energies as eternal necessary manifestations of God’s Being does *not* entail an eternally and necessarily created cosmos.)

Because the energies flow from the divine essence, manifesting and expressing the inner Being of God, they are the media by which created entities can participate in that Being and (in the case of rational creatures like us) even attain some measure of existential encounter with that Being. Papademetriou writes: “In God’s existence a distinction is made between the essence of God, which is ‘self-existing’, absolutely inaccessible, and His energies, which are accessible to man. This is the great contribution of St. Gregory Palamas, that he taught the absolute hiddenness of God and the indwelling of His energies in the world, thus avoiding pantheism on the one hand and deism on the other, at the same time preserving God’s unity... However, Palamas was not the originator of this doctrine; it is both Biblical and Patristic” [Papademetriou, 2004, pp. 57–58]. And Florovsky puts the point like this:

These energies do not mix with created things, and are not themselves these things, but are only their basic and life-giving principles; they are the prototypes, the predeterminations, the reasons, the *logoi*, and Divine decisions respecting them, of which they are the participants and ought to be the ‘communicants’... The divine energies are that aspect of God which is turned towards creation... The notion of the Divine energy received explicit definition in the series of Synods held in the fourteenth century in Constantinople. There is a real distinction, but no separation, between the *essence* or *entity* of God and His *energies*. This distinction is manifest above all in the fact that the Entity is absolutely incommunicable and inaccessible to creatures. The creatures have access to and communicate with the Divine Energies only. But with this participation they enter into a genuine and perfect communion and union with God; they receive ‘deification’ [Florovsky, 1976, pp. 67–68].

Though the uncreated energies of God do not “mix with” creatures in the sense of rendering them essentially divine (a claim that would amount to a heretical brand of pantheism or even a retrograde polytheism), some of these energies are indeed immanent in the cosmos and in human beings, if in different ways and to differing degrees. In fact the divine energies are invoked in Palamite (and earlier patristic)

thought to fulfill a number of explanatory roles, among them the key role of sustaining created entities in existence. For instance, St. John of Damascus in his eighth century work *On the Orthodox Faith* writes of divine energy that “in it they [created things] have their existence, and to all things it communicates their being in accordance with the nature of each. It is the being of things that are, the life of the living...”<sup>5</sup>. St. John is here employing a formulation present earlier in St. Dionysius the Areopagite, who wrote that in His processions (i.e., energies) God is the being of things that are<sup>6</sup>. This idea is also found many times within the writings of St. Maximus the Confessor<sup>7</sup>. Or consider the following from Palamas himself: “God is in the all and the all is in God, the one sustaining, the other being sustained by him” [The One Hundred, 1988, p. 200]. Crucially, God’s sustenance is via creatures’ participation in His energies, not His essence, permitting again a clear sidestepping of pantheism. Elsewhere Palamas writes of the divine glory (a frequent synonym for “energy” in his works): “How, then, could one think that the glory of God is the essence of God, of that God who while remaining imparticipable, indivisible and impalpable, becomes participable by His superessential power, and communicates Himself and shines forth and becomes in contemplation ‘One Spirit’ with those who meet Him with a pure heart...” [The Triads, 1983, p. 67]. Later in the same work, drawing on a previous Father to help illustrate the essence/energy divide, Palamas writes: “The blessed Cyril, for his part, says that the divine energy and power consist in the fact that God is everywhere, and contains all, without being contained by anything. But it does not follow that the Divine *Nature* consists in the fact of being everywhere, any more than our own nature uniquely consists in being somewhere. For how could our essence consist in a fact which is in no way an essence? Essence and energy are thus not totally identical in God, even though He is entirely manifest in every energy, His essence being indivisible” [ibid., 96] [Emphasis in original translation].

<sup>5</sup> *On the Orthodox Faith*, book 1, chapter 14, quoted (in his own translation) by Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 209.

<sup>6</sup> Any number of passages from the Dionysian corpus might be noted here, but consider for instance the following, from *On the Divine Names*, chapter 5, 817D: “He is the being immanent in and underlying the things which are, however they are... So he is called ‘King of the ages,’ for in him and around him all being is and subsists” [*Pseudo-Dionysius*, 1987, p. 98]. Or consider this from *The Celestial Hierarchy*, chapter 4, 177C-D: “It is characteristic of this universal Cause, of this goodness beyond all, to summon everything to communion with him to the extent that this is possible. Hence everything in some way partakes of the providence flowing out of this transcendent Deity which is the originator of all that is. Indeed nothing could exist without some share in the being and source of everything. Even the things which have no life participate in this, for it is the transcendent Deity which is the existence of every being” [*Pseudo-Dionysius*, 1987, p. 156].

<sup>7</sup> For example: “[B]eginning from the moment when God was pleased to give substance to beings and existence to what did not exist, and, through His providence – like an intelligible sun whose power holds the universe together in stability and graciously consents to emit its rays – He deigned to vary the modes of His presence so that the good things He planted in beings might ripen to full maturity, until all the ages will have reached their appointed limit... and because He fills all things with eternal light through the inexhaustible rays of His goodness...” From [*On Difficulties...* 2014, pp. 203–205].

By way of this doctrine of the real distinction between God's essence and God's energies, Palamite theology navigates the immanence-versus-transcendence dialectic (both metaphysical and epistemological) that has so strained theological reflection across Christian traditions. God is both utterly and incomprehensibly transcendent to creation and to human knowing (in His essence), yet at the same time radically omnipresent throughout the cosmos and both knowable and participable by human persons (via His energies). Whatever one's ultimate assessment of this Palamite and patristic understanding of the divine Being, it unquestionably provides a unique perspective on (and potential resolution to) that tricky dialectic and the many seemingly interminable debates bound up with it, ranging from disagreements about special divine action to the ontological foundations of Christian mysticism to sacramental theology to the problem of divine hiddenness to the relationship between time and eternity, etc. Much work remains to be done in exploring the full implications of Palamism for these ongoing theological and philosophical debates.

Which vast implications can (mercifully!) be left aside for present purposes, since it is time to shift to our discussion of the mainstream taxonomies of theism within analytic philosophy of religion.

### **(3) Varieties of Theism in the Current Literature**

While all orthodox (with a small 'o') Christian philosophers and theologians are committed to certain shared claims about God (like the aforementioned commitment to Trinitarian monotheism), there remains considerable scope for disagreement about the more fine-grained details. This has led to the articulation of distinct and competing conceptions of theism. While the nature of these divisions is itself a matter of some contention (more on which momentarily), the following fourfold taxonomy accurately encompasses much (though not all) of the current landscape, particularly within Christian philosophy:

#### **Theism**

**Classical Theism    Theistic Personalism    Open Theism    Panentheism**

Let's briefly consider the status of each of these four sub-types, proceeding from left-to-right.

#### ***(3.1) Classical Theism***

The precise meaning of "classical theism" varies from author to author, in part on the basis of what it is being contrasted with. Sometimes "classical theism" is used as a synonym for traditional Judeo-Christian theism generally, in contrast with other theisms clearly falling outside that remit (such as pantheism or process theism or polytheism). The following passage from Parrish is representative of this common usage:

Thus, 'theism' will be considered synonymous with 'classical theism', the traditional theism of the West, and the traditional concept of God in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In these traditions God has been described as personal, omnipotent, omni-benevolent, etc. And... God has almost always been considered necessary in some sense. That is, classical theism, in the forms that most of its advocates have defended, has ascribed some form of necessity to God. There are other systems which deserve the name 'theism' because they have a personal God, but where he is not the infinite transcendent creator of classical theism. Rather he is considered finite and/or dependent upon the universe. These views include finite theism and process theology... [Parrish, 1997, pp. 3-4].

Yet within analytic philosophy of religion it is also quite common (I would say *more* common) to use "classical theism" more narrowly, not as a synonym for generic Judeo-Christian theism (as contrasted with process theism and what-not), but rather as a label designating a specifically Augustinian/Anselmian/Thomist model of the divine, with its distinctive notion of absolute divine simplicity. While of course still affirming Trinitarianism, this form of theism maintains that there is no other internal complexity within the divine Being; God has no *objectively* distinct attributes or energies. We humans legitimately make conceptual distinctions between, say, divine omnipotence and omniscience, but in fact they are not distinct in God, Who has no distinct attributes. The simple divine essence functions as a single adequate truthmaker for all true predications made about God, whether positive ('God is wise') or negative ('God is immaterial' – i.e., *not* corporeal), or analogical. So we can truly say that God is omnipotent and that God is omniscient; however, the truth of those true predications is not grounded in really distinct properties of omnipotence and omniscience, but rather in the single simple divine essence. In the course of explaining this conception of classical theism, Davies puts the point as follows: "According to the teaching that God is simple, however, attributes or properties of God are, in fact, the same as God himself. On this account, God does not, strictly speaking, have attributes or properties. He is identical with them" [Davies, 2004, p. 9]. This conception of divine simplicity is thought to entail a number of other true predications, such as God's being immutable, atemporal, and omnipresent in a wholly transcendent manner – i.e., God is omnipresent in the sense of knowing what is going on everywhere and having everything within creation under His causal control, but *not* in the sense of having some aspect of His Being literally permeate creation. (A rough analogy: on this view, God is present to creation in something like the way a security guard is "present to" a room she is monitoring on closed-circuit TV. The guard knows what's going on in the room and has the ability to intervene in what's happening if she wishes, but she is "in" the room only in those cognition & control modes.)

Since that latter sense of "classical theism" is narrower than the first, it is easy for terminological confusions to arise in the absence of explicit definitions (or agreed-upon conventions of usage in one or another area of the relevant literature). And an advocate of generic Judeo-Christian theism ("classical theism" in the first sense above) will not necessarily be an advocate of Augustinian/Anselmian/Thomist theism ("classical theism" in the second sense). Parrish, for example,

defends the former but is a staunch opponent of the latter<sup>8</sup>, and the same can be said of many Evangelical and mainline Protestant theologians and philosophers<sup>9</sup> – though certainly not all<sup>10</sup>.

### (3.2) *Theistic Personalism & Open Theism*

I will treat these two together, since, while both labels are commonly employed in the literature, the latter is best seen as a version of the former. Theistic personalism is a form of Judeo-Christian theism that explicitly rejects components of Augustinian/Anselmian/Thomist theism (“classical theism” in the second sense above), most especially its doctrine of absolute divine simplicity. Those classified as advocates of theistic personalism reject divine immutability and atemporality, while affirming some measure of objective complexity within the whole Being of God (e.g., that omnipotence and omniscience are really distinct if inseparable divine attributes). Davies sees these as the central claims of the view: “And God’s timelessness is rejected, whether explicitly or implicitly, by all theistic personalists. The same goes for the teaching that God is simple” [Davies, 2004, p. 13]. As for omnipresence, theistic personalists sometimes understand it in the wholly transcendent style advocated by Augustinian/Anselmian/Thomist theism, but sometimes in a more robust fashion (to the point where the borderlines between theistic personalism and some forms of panentheism can occasionally become blurry – more on the latter view momentarily).

“Open theism” most commonly refers to Judeo-Christian theism that has given up a commitment to divine foreknowledge. On this view, God does not literally know what is going to happen because it hasn’t happened yet. (Thus His not knowing the future isn’t a limit on His omniscience – there is nothing there to know.) The future is “open” and so is not fixed. Open theism is a principal competitor in the debates on time and eternity, and God’s relationship to both<sup>11</sup>. It is defended in part on the ground of better safeguarding libertarian free-will, both human and divine. Having rejected divine foreknowledge, open theists typically also reject (by implication) divine immutability, divine atemporality, and absolute divine simplicity. It is thus closely linked to theistic personalism.

<sup>8</sup> “The doctrine of God’s simplicity is an odd one. It maintains that God is indivisible, that he is not composed of parts, e.g., of actuality and potentiality, of essence and existence; in brief, he is one, without any internal distinctions. This is a difficult doctrine to understand for it seems to imply that all of God’s properties are really one. As an example omniscience and omnipotence would be the same thing in God’s being. Nevertheless, this doctrine has long had a place in Christian theology” [Parrish, 1997, pp. 37–38]. Later he adds: “It seems completely mysterious to me to say God’s knowing that  $2+2=4$  is the same as his ability to create wombats. These are two completely different things, one is about knowledge and the other is about power” [ibid., 74].

<sup>9</sup> See for instance the recent critique of Augustinian/Anselmian/Thomist theism in the popular textbook of [Moreland and Craig, 2017, pp. 530–532]. See also the well-known book-length critique by philosopher [Plantinga, 1980].

<sup>10</sup> Consult for example the book-length defence of Augustinian/Anselmian/Thomist theism by the Reformed theologian James Dolezal [Dolezal, 2017].

<sup>11</sup> For an accessible entry point to those debates and the role open theism plays in them, see [Beilby and Eddy (eds.), 2001].



The two are not quite equivalent, however, insofar as proponents of theistic personalism can try to leave room open for literal divine foreknowledge even while denying divine atemporality (a conceptual option for those adopting eternalist 4-dimensionalism in philosophy of time)<sup>12</sup>. So, all open theists count as theistic personalists, but not vice versa.

### (3.3) *Panentheism*

Disputes abound concerning how best to define “panentheism”, and competing conceptions of the view have proliferated within theology, philosophy of religion, religious studies, and the specialist theology & science field. There have been multiple attempts to clarify the nature of the doctrine (and how it relates to the other types of theism we’ve just canvassed) within these various bodies of literature<sup>13</sup>. For our purposes then it might help to begin with the etymology of the term, concisely laid out by Cooper: “*Panentheism* literally means ‘all-in-God-ism’. This is the Greek-English translation of the German term *Allingottlehre*, ‘the doctrine that all is in God’. It was coined by Karl Krause (1781–1832), a contemporary of Schleiermacher, Schelling, and Hegel, to distinguish his own theology from both classical theism and pantheism... In other words, God and the world are ontologically distinct and God transcends the world, but the world is in God ontologically” [Cooper, 2006, pp. 26–27]. Cooper then proceeds to outline some of the many complications that arise from that seemingly simple formulation of the view, some of which centre around the precise understanding of what is meant by the “in” when it is said that the world is “in” God.

In fact he goes on to develop a sort of taxonomy of panentheisms, whereby different versions of the view are parsed out along five interrelated lines: (1) explicit vs. implicit; (2) personal vs. nonpersonal; (3) part-whole vs. relational; (4) voluntary vs. natural; and (5) classical vs. modern. Briefly, the division in (1) simply references the distinction between thinkers who self-identify openly as panentheists versus those who are clearly committed to the view but don’t adopt the label (as seems true of a good many pre-19th century thinkers). The division in (2) points towards the split between panentheists who advocate the reality of a personal deity versus those who reject it. Division (3) draws attention to two panentheist ways of conceiving the God / cosmos relationship and so two ways of articulating the “in” – on the first, the physical universe is seen as in some way a component part or constituent element of the divine Being, while on the second one or another non-merelogical relationship is posited (with an analogy to human mind/body relations

<sup>12</sup> *Eternalism* in philosophy of time is the view that past, present, and future are all equally real. It contrasts most starkly with *presentism*, according to which only the present moment is real (since the past is no longer real and the future isn’t real yet). There are also intermediate views (e.g., *growing block theory*, according to which the past and present are real but not the future).

<sup>13</sup> Within analytic philosophy of religion see for instance [Gocke, 2013; Lataster, 2014], and [Lataster, 2015; Mullins, 2016]. Within the theology & science literature the definitional issue is nicely probed by Gregory Peterson [Peterson, 2001]; Niels Henrik Gregersen [Gregersen, 2004]. Within the theology literature see too the pessimistic assessment of the definitional debate by Roger Olson [Olson, 2013].

often invoked, such that the cosmos is viewed as something like God's body). On division (4) the cutoff is between those think that God freely created the cosmos versus those who think that the two are naturally and necessarily related (e.g., the claim that the cosmos is eternally and necessarily emanated by God). Finally, (5) relates back to our second sense of "classical theism", with classical panentheists adopting more of the Augustinian/Anselmian/Thomist picture of the divine (though of course not all of it), and modern panentheists having a view of God that is closer to theistic personalism. The question of divine immutability is an especially crucial fault line for this fifth point, with modern panentheists usually emphasizing the ways in which God is affected by His relation to the ever-changing cosmos.

With those five divisions in mind, there is plenty of room for diversity amongst theories possessed of the "panentheism" label, some of which will be compatible with traditional Judeo-Christian theism ("classical theism" in Parrish's sense) while others clearly will not be (e.g., any non-personal variety of panentheism).

With these key entries in the contemporary mainstream taxonomy of theisms having now been canvassed and clarified (at least to a degree), we can turn to the question that most interests us: what sort of theism is Palamite theism?

#### ***(4) Situating Palamism Within the Mainstream Taxonomy of Theisms***

Is Palamism committed to classical theism, theistic personalism, open theism, or panentheism? This is not an easy question to answer precisely (or simply), but let's give it a go: first, Palamism does count as a version of "classical theism" in the initial sense covered above, insofar as it is obviously a version of Judeo-Christian theism, broadly construed. To the question of whether it counts as a form of "classical theism" in the second sense (i.e., as a form of Augustinian/Anselmian/Thomist theism), the answer is no. Palamas, and the line of eastern patristic thought within which he operates, clearly has a different conception of divine simplicity, one that allows for a good deal more objective ontological complexity within the overall Being of God. The real distinction between the divine essence and the divine energies provides a key point of contrast between the two models.

Yet I think more needs to be said on that latter point; indeed, the historical importance of Palamism (and that prior patristic tradition) surely provides some grounds for resisting the common tendency to equate "classical theism" with the particular Augustinian/Anselmian/Thomist strand of philosophical theology. And it is a common tendency. I will refer again to Davies as a prominent and representative example, who writes:

Classical theism is what you can find endorsed in the writings of people like the Jewish author Moses Maimonides (1135–1204), the Islamic author Avicenna (980–1037), and the Christian author Thomas Aquinas (1224/6–1274). Classical theism is what all Jews, Christians, and Muslims believed in for many centuries (officially, at least). And numerous philosophers have taken it for granted that God is as defenders of classical theism take him to be. From the time of St. Augustine of Hippo (354–430) to that of G.W. Leibniz (1646–1716), philosophers almost always worked on the assumption that belief in God is belief in classical theism. And their understanding has been shared by many theologians. The major tenets

of classical theism are part of the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church [Davies, 2004, p. 2].

With all due respect to Davies (whose work I generally admire), this is false. He is ignoring the entire eastern patristic tradition and its very different way of thinking about God. He is also ignoring substantial portions of the Roman Catholic intellectual tradition that have departed in important ways from the Augustinian/Anselmian/Thomist perspective, yet without ever being formally condemned as heretical by the Roman Catholic magisterium. I think especially here of Scotism, whose conception of divine simplicity is closer in certain respects to that of Palamism than to Thomism<sup>14</sup>.

I should emphasize that I am not trying to single out Davies for criticism on this point – again, he is representative of many who use “classical theism” as a synonym for Augustinian/Anselmian/Thomist theism. My suggestion though is that it is entirely reasonable for scholars to push back against that terminological equation. It is overly restrictive, and in some contexts leads to clearly counter-intuitive results. (Surely it sounds odd to claim that St. Maximus the Confessor *wasn't* a classical theist.) Perhaps Palamites should seek to hijack the label, or at least defend the legitimacy of their employing it as well. (Though that does carry the risk of muddying the terminological waters even further.)

How about theistic personalism? This again is a difficult terminological point, since so many scholars simply contrast theistic personalism with classical theism, where the latter is again equated with Augustinian/Anselmian/Thomist theism. If that is how “classical theism” is being used, then it makes some sense in that context to say that Palamism is a version of theistic personalism, insofar as it remains at odds with “classical theism” thus understood (in particular with its conception of absolute divine simplicity). More substantively, there is a case to be made that some core claims standard within both theistic personalism and open theism can in principle be accommodated by Palamism. Consider for instance the key question of whether God is atemporal. A Palamite has the theological resources for a unique and nuanced answer here, insofar as she has room to develop models of the God-time relationship on which the divine essence is wholly transcendent and thus atemporal but where some of the divine energies (and thus God Himself via those energies) are very much immanent within the flow of time. Similarly nuanced treatments of divine immutability and foreknowledge may also be worth exploring (especially in light of varying metaphysical conceptions of the nature of time – e.g., is Palamism consistent with both presentism and eternalism?). I do not know what sorts of final answers should be arrived at here, but there is at least a prospect for productive dialogue between Palamism and these areas of literature within analytic philosophy of religion and philosophical theology. Hopefully more Orthodox thinkers will become engaged with these debates.

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<sup>14</sup> For a concise introduction to the Scotist perspective on this (and its deep divergence from the Augustinian/Anselmian/Thomist stance), see [Steele and Williams, 2019]. And a number of scholars have now drawn attention to some of the surprising theological convergences between Scotism and Eastern Orthodoxy, particularly on this point. See [Bradshaw, 2019; Iacovetti, 2017; Jones, 2005; Kapriev, 2018; Plested, 2019]; and [Spencer, 2017].

As to panentheism, some Orthodox theologians have already self-identified as panentheists, on the grounds that Palamism's doctrine of the divine energies permits an entirely orthodox sense to be given to the claim that the world is "in" God, namely that the entire cosmos is infused with Him via His immanent active energies. Recall again the Palamas quote cited earlier: "God is in the all and the all is in God, the one sustaining, the other being sustained by him" [The One Hundred, 1988, p. 200]. This Palamism/panentheism connection has been explicitly made by one of the world's most prominent Orthodox theologians and hierarchs, Metropolitan Kallistos Ware [Ware, 2004]. Other major Orthodox thinkers have likewise affirmed the acceptability of the "panentheist" label, properly construed along Palamite lines; these include Sergius Bulgakov<sup>15</sup>, Christopher Knight [Knight, 2007]<sup>16</sup>, and Paul Ladouceur<sup>17</sup>. This Orthodox panentheism is quite different from other versions of the view (as noted in the previous section, there is a great diversity among panentheisms), but the classification remains apt.

Restating the question that opened this concluding section of the paper: is Palamism committed to classical theism, theistic personalism, open theism, or panentheism? The answer seems to be "yes"! Strange as it may seem, there are entirely legitimate grounds for affirming at least the compatibility of Palamism with at each of these types of theism, on a properly clarified understanding of each. So while answering that question involves difficulties, and some challenges to certain understandings of the standard terminology, it does admit a resolution of sorts.

It also places Palamism in an odd and not entirely unenviable position within the context of the current philosophical/theological scene. For its unique taxonomical breadth places it in a position of being able to get a hearing at the table with everyone, so to speak – Palamite theology can be "all things to all people" in the sense that it can dialogue with the classical theists, theistic personalists, open theists, and panentheists on shared footing that each camp can appreciate. Orthodox scholars thus needn't be disingenuous when seeking to intervene productively in order to share the Church's unique insights amidst the assorted in-house debates going on within these perspectives. This places Palamism, and by extension Orthodoxy, in an advantageous and interesting position. Hopefully this advantage will be seized more often in future<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> See for instance [Bulgakov, 1917/2012].

<sup>16</sup> Note however that Knight generally prefers the term "pansacramental naturalism" to "panentheism."

<sup>17</sup> Paul Ladouceur's *Modern Orthodox Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2019), 193–229.

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