

- **The Essence-Energies Distinction in the Theology of Dumitru Stăniloae**
- *La distinction entre l'essence et les énergies dans la théologie de Dumitru Stăniloae*
- *Die Unterscheidung zwischen Wesen und Energien in der Theologie Dumitru Stăniloae*
- **Emil Bartos**

RÉSUMÉ

La théologie de Stăniloae peut-être considérée à la fois comme apophatique et personaliste. La révélation que Dieu donne de lui-même dans ses actes et ses paroles permet de parler de lui à la fois comme connaissable et inconnaissable dans le cadre d'une synthèse apophatique et cataphatique. Une telle synthèse permet d'entamer et de poursuivre un dialogue entre Dieu et l'homme, entre l'homme et son prochain, entre l'homme et la nature.

La possibilité de la connaissance de Dieu se fonde sur la distinction ontologique entre son essence et ses activités. C'est là le point de départ et le présupposé de l'apophatisme. La doctrine centrale développée par Stăniloae concernant les énergies créées implique une expérience de participation à la divinité, et ce, bien que la nature divine

soit en principe incommunicable. La divinité devient accessible à la participation et est communicable selon le mode d'existence. Des êtres humains peuvent exister dans le mode de Dieu, le mode de l'intégration réciproque, en tant que personnes animées d'un amour mutuel (theosis). Par contre, pour ce qui concerne l'identité d'essence, la divinité demeure incommunicable, l'homme ne peut y avoir part. Ceci ressemble à une contradiction intellectuelle (la participation à ce à quoi on ne peut participer), mais c'est là une voie réelle et unique de la connaissance de Dieu. Cependant, cet accent sur la communion d'énergie entre l'homme et Dieu prêter le flanc à la critique pour l'ambiguïté et l'instabilité de son langage, qui suggère un Dieu incomplètement révélé et une économie divine jouant un rôle très dilué.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Stăniloae's Theologie läßt sich als zugleich apophatisch und personalistisch charakterisieren. Gottes Selbstmitteilung durch Taten und Worte eröffnet die Möglichkeit, in einer apophatisch-kataphatischen Synthese über die Erfahrbarkeit und Nichterfahrbarkeit Gottes zu sprechen. Diese Synthese ermöglicht und sichert den Dialog zwischen Gott und Mensch, Mensch und Mensch und Mensch und Natur.

Die Fähigkeit, Gott erfahren zu können, basiert auf der ontologischen

Unterscheidung zwischen seinem Wesen und seinen Taten, die den Ausgangspunkt und die Voraussetzung des Apophatismus darstellt. Stăniloae's zentrale Lehre von den ungeschaffenen Energien impliziert die Erfahrung der Teilnahme, des Teilhabens am Göttlichen, obwohl man am Göttlichen im Prinzip nicht teilhaben kann. Das Göttliche wird jedoch der Teilnahme zugänglich und steht somit hinsichtlich der Existenzform der Teilhabe offen. Menschliche Wesen können nämlich in der göttlichen Existenzform, d.h. in Form einer wechselseitigen Integration,

existieren, und zwar als Personen, die von gegenseitiger Liebe bestimmt sind. Was jedoch die Wesensidentität anbelangt, so bleiben sowohl eine Teilhabe als auch eine Teilnahme am Göttlichen unmöglich. Dies klingt nach einem verstandesmäßigen Widerspruch (an etwas teilzuhaben, an dem man nicht teilhaben kann), aber wir haben es hier nicht nur mit einer echten, sondern sogar mit der einzigen Möglichkeit der

Erfahrbarkeit Gottes zu tun.

Diese Betonung der energetischen Gemeinschaft von Mensch und Gott ist jedoch angreifbar aufgrund der Mehrdeutigkeit und Ungenauigkeit der palamitischen Sprache, die an einen nur unvollständig geoffenbarten Gott und eine göttliche Ordnung denken lässt, der lediglich eine abgeschwächte Rolle zukommt.

1. Introduction

The apophatic theology of the Romanian Orthodox theologian Dumitru Stăniloae (1903–1993), inherited especially from the writings of Dionysius, Maximus and Palamas, is deeply imbued with the sense of the divine transcendence and the immanence of God in His creation, whether spiritual or corporeal, sustaining a real as opposed to a metaphorical deification. To explain this contrast, between the transcendence and the immanence of God, Stăniloae thoroughly accepts the division between *theologia* and *oikonomia*, and also makes appeal to a mysterious distinction in the very nature of God. Like the Cappadocian theologians, Stăniloae applies *theologia* strictly to the statements about the Triune God, and *oikonomia* to the central fact of divine economy, that is the incarnation. At the same time, in order to make a clear distinction between knowledge of God's being and knowledge of His acts in creation, Stăniloae adopts from the Greek Fathers the key categories of *ousia*, *hypostasis*, and *energeiai* as essential to the whole Orthodox theological system.¹ By employing the essence-energies distinction, Stăniloae is considered one of the modern Orthodox theologians who represent the school of Neopalamism in this century, together with Vladimir Lossky, John Meyendorff, Panayiotis Nellas, Christos Yannaras or Kallistos Ware. But how relevant is this approach in explaining the basic Christian doctrine of deification?

The apophatic-cataphatic method applied by Stăniloae in understanding

the entire process of salvation (often described by him as deification or *theosis*) uses as a basic ingredient the distinction between God's being and His acts. This means that knowledge of God is not theoretical but a real participation in His uncreated energies. Treatment of the epistemological basis of deification in Stăniloae comes, not surprisingly, in the shape of apophatic theology. He is a mystical theologian following a relative approach and a synthesised method in understanding apophaticism. For Stăniloae, apophaticism is that total attitude of reserve, contemplative wonder, controlling his whole theological enterprise. The mystical theology employed by Stăniloae is the theology of direct experience of God that cannot be totally exhibited in positive terms. Although Stăniloae accepts both the apophatic way of knowledge and the cataphatic one, the first is superior because it goes beyond rational knowledge in experiencing the presence of God as person in a more pressing way and in grasping His infinite richness. In this sense, apophatic knowledge is not irrational but supra-rational.² In a practical way, it involves three levels: (1) apophaticism of negative and positive knowledge, (2) apophaticism at the end of pure prayer, and (3) apophaticism of the vision of divine light. In this context, Stăniloae speaks about the revealed knowledge of divine energies, not as the result of intellectual powers, which in fact had to stop their activity, but as the work of grace in the vision of divine light.

The main purpose of this study is to explain the essence-energies distinction

in God as a starting point in Stăniloae's understanding of deification, and then to engage a critical evaluation of his view. For that, we will look at three central ideas, the trinitarian basis of the uncreated energies, their dynamic personalism and antinomic character, followed by the main charges coming from the non-orthodox camp, that of innovation, impersonalism and confusion concerning the role of the divine revelation in the whole process of deification.

2. The Divine Uncreated Energies

Stăniloae employs the distinction between the being and the operations of God as the starting point in his epistemology, an approach that is 'a new and significant development, so far as works of modern Orthodox dogmatic theology are concerned' and 'Fr. Dumitru's is thus the first dogmatics in which the distinction is seen as fundamental to the Orthodox understanding of God'.³ Against the Greek concept that God is an eternal static and incommunicable substance, and against the recent Western idea of a God wholly involved in 'becoming', Stăniloae decided to build up his systematic thinking firmly established in the patristic view of a living, eternal and personal God, 'the living God of the Scriptures, of prayer and of liturgy'.⁴ Stăniloae's concern, however, is how to give an accurate interpretation of the relationship between the divine stability and mobility. Western theology, suggests Stăniloae, could not provide another alternative in reconciling God's immutability with His 'becoming' or 'historicity' except by ratifying the Palamite distinction between God's immutable being and His inexhaustibly diverse uncreated energies.⁵ Stăniloae mentions as an example the Catholic theologian Hans Küng who came closer to the Eastern alternative when he accepted the 'possibility' of God in His eternal freedom to manifest Himself in various ways. However, even in the case of Küng it is hard to avoid the oversimplification of God's mystery.⁶ Stăniloae himself speaks about the

'possibilities' of God's being to be manifested in various ways as the evidence of His freedom. Nonetheless, these possibilities should not be understood as merely potencies looking for their fulfilment, but the confirmation of an abounding existence that can produce other existences. The mystery of God remains unchangeable, but God manifests Himself 'in unending and eternal varying acts of love',⁷ the indirect reference here being to the uncreated energies. Thus, concludes Stăniloae, at least to the extent that it concerns the energy of creating, the Palamite distinction does allow for potentiality, for God can add to His creation whenever He wishes.

Several central propositions affirmed by Stăniloae are pertinent to this understanding of the role of the uncreated energies in deification.

2.1 *The Trinitarian Basis of the Uncreated Energies*

First, Stăniloae expands the Palamite distinction by trying to localise the existence of the energies in the trinitarian life.⁸ God's knowledge regarding Himself is not separate from His knowledge regarding creatures. God is the same in the mystery of His being and in His historical manifestations. God's coming into the world is through His energies, which are 'neither the essence of God nor the persons in whom His being subsists integrally, but they are "around God's being"'.⁹ Although the divine essence is simple, inaccessible and ineffable, the energies are various and the 'means' of His self-disclosure.

To articulate his monotheism, Stăniloae makes it clear that we cannot speak of three activities or three separate effects of God's activity, and this clarification is done in a pneumatological perspective. Stăniloae exploits the type of trinitarian language so familiar and quintessential to him, so often re-encountered in his writings. Starting with the realm of *theologia*, Stăniloae writes that, due to His proper status in the Trinity, as the One who proceeds from the Father and shines forth from the Son, the Holy

Spirit introduces the divine energies into creation and makes them intimate and proper to the creatures. Stăniloae clarifies this by stating that only in this trinitarian framework can we grasp the meaning of the uncreated energies: these energies originate from the Father, are received by the Son in His proper way and by the Spirit in His proper way together with the Son. As the Spirit's radiation from the Son holds also the radiance of the Son, in His coming to us, the radiance of the Spirit is creating our radiance as sons of the Father and is strengthening in us the 'perceptive sensitivity of God' as our 'filial sensitivity'. This actually reflects that true and unique trinitarian sensitivity as a unique energy, while the persons remain distinct. The Spirit shines forth a real light, a divine energy that becomes in our souls a power of knowledge and love for God. In spite of the danger of confusing the levels of *ousia* and *hypostasis*, Stăniloae continues by explaining that, as the Spirit proceeds from the Father, the energy proceeds from the essence of the source which is the Father. God comes out from His essence through love in the Holy Spirit. Although the Spirit receives the energy in His proper way, the Spirit's being and energy are not distinct from those of the Son or the Father. The distinction exists only when we take into account the modality in which the persons of the Trinity '(possess) the being and "activate" the common energy'. Each operation or energy is accomplished together and with common joy by all three of the trinitarian persons, but by each of them from their personal status.¹⁰

When Stăniloae moves to the realm of the *oikonomia*, he comes back to the idea that the Holy Spirit brings the divine energy into the intimacy of human consciousness and produces a sensitivity for God. This sensitivity, as the result of the uncreated energies that deify man, is defined by Stăniloae in its threefold relationship: (1) in relationship with God, a special capacity of the soul to perceive God as distinct from the world; (2) in relationship with the person himself, an accentuation of the human

consciousness; and (3) in relationship with other human beings, an intensive humanisation. Stăniloae explains that this sensitivity is first of all an exceptional capacity of the human soul to perceive God as distinct from the world. But this sensitivity is at the same time an 'emphasis put upon human consciousness itself and upon the believer's proper place as a human being in existence'.¹¹ On the practical level, the Holy Spirit is working within the believer different steps of sensitivity: the first is faith, being followed by a sense of responsibility towards God, and finally the sanctifying work of the Spirit in man as part of the spiritual growth process.

2.2 The Dynamic Personalism of the Uncreated Energies

The second main characteristic of the distinction between essence and energies in Stăniloae's view is the dynamic personalism of the uncreated energies. Stăniloae expands in a creative way the Palamite distinction by locating the whole issue of the knowledge of God through the uncreated energies into a personalistic framework. At the basis of the energies, writes Stăniloae, 'is the personally subsistent essence'. Moreover, the direct knowledge of God can reach 'only as far as the existence-giving, sustaining, and fulfilling operations of the superexistent personal reality and as far as participation in the attributes manifested within those operations'.¹² Stăniloae understands these operations or energies as relations within the divine being, relations that are above the relation itself and above all that God is not. However, God enfolds them and they are manifestations of His being: some energies are held as relations with the eternal ideas of the world, and some as being virtually involved in relation with the ideas of the world—those energies that are possibilities of being activated at the world's creation. Yet, they are not the sphere of ideas in the world, but it would be more precise to say that the world of ideas in its entirety is contained in the divine energy. The energy, therefore, is the passing of

these ideas from power to action; they are the attributes of God known by the creature. Consequently the energies are not abstract concepts applicable to the divine essence, but living, personal forces, manifestations of a personal God. They extend into the world and are, in opposition to essence, sharable, indivisibly divisible, and capable up to a certain point of being thought and named.

What Stăniloae suggests, then, is that some of the operations do not come forth from the divine being in their active form eternally and independent of the will, but it is important to make a distinction in them between potency and act. As potency they exist along with the divine being in virtue of its existence. As acts or operations, however, they become potencies only by God's will. Even before creation, God might activate some of them as His relations with the ideas of things. And because God can think everything from eternity, we may say that there are countless relationships within Him from eternity. On the one hand, the divine energies are the possibilities within God's being of manifesting Himself in various ways, and, on the other hand, they are the acts in which these possibilities may be manifested. Divine being has by nature infinite possibilities of manifestation, because God is a free being. God also has eternal relation 'with all that is not in His immediate vicinity', a manifestation of His being as an 'eternal irradiation of it'.¹³ God is surrounded eternally by what is around Him—by His glory or by the unapproachable light—as a manifestation of what He is in His intimate being. It is in this light that we may progressively ascend to know God, for He 'makes His energies actual in a gradual fashion'. Moreover, 'God Himself experiences together with us the expectant waiting (and hence time) on the plane of His energies and of His relations with us'.¹⁴

Stăniloae's eagerness to explain the distinction between essence and energies often leads him to make appeal to the analogical experience encountered in interpersonal relationships on the human level. This experience involves various

possibilities to 'conform' ourselves even at the time of our participation into other persons but, due to our limitations, still remaining 'with' our being and 'beyond' any other relationship or becoming. For Stăniloae, in fact, the existent distinction between essence and energies explains the mystery of the person. Basically, personhood is constituted in relationship. Like all human beings, God can fully live as person in Himself and in relationship with His creatures by participation and conformation without ceasing to remain in Himself 'beyond' them. However, God's being is not defined by the relationships with created human beings. The kind of relationship He has outside Himself is determined by the inner relationship that characterises the trinitarian life. On their side, human persons possess that capacity to participate in a real relationship with the eternal God and to become 'radiating agencies of eternity'. Moreover, taking Christ's theandricity as model, Stăniloae affirms that, in human beings, our human energies 'are called to create room for the divine energies and *vice-versa*, in order to become together theandric energies of the believer and of God'.¹⁵ Rooted in these two data, that is the distinction between essence and energies and the ontological relationship man-God, Stăniloae is able to sustain both the paradox of God's immutability in His being and His mutability in relation with His creatures. An extensive analysis of Stăniloae's doctrine of God shows that other basic attributes of God—His absoluteness, eternity, omnipresence, omnipotency—are heavily influenced by the above understanding.

2.3 The Antinomic Character of the Uncreated Energies

Stăniloae is aware of and accepts the paradox involved in this specific distinction. Generally, the appeal to antinomy is characteristic of his theology. This antinomic attitude, met as well in the trinitarian mystery, is repeated when he stipulates that 'although God effects something on each occasion through a particular operation, yet He is wholly

within each operation'. This means that through each operation God produces or sustains a certain aspect of reality. Indeed, 'God Himself is in each of these operations or energies, simultaneously, whole, active, and beyond operation or movement'.¹⁶ The operations are nothing other than the attributes of God in motion. When Stăniloae explains the personal relationship between God and human being, the paradox becomes obvious:

By establishing the relationship with man, God enters into this relationship, on the one hand, with all that is particular to Himself and, on the other hand, He enters only with some of His energies; on the one hand, He becomes accessible in His whole particularity and, on the other hand, remains inaccessible in His being; on the one hand, He is 'modeling' for men, enters into a becoming or historicity by participating in their becoming and historicity and, on the other hand, He apprehends this becoming or historicity only at the level of His energies or operations, not at the level of His being.¹⁷

This does not imply, of course, a Neoplatonic emanation of the divine being in its operations, but a communication of the divine being with the creatures in accordance with their capacity of receptiveness. This is why Stăniloae is careful to separate the acts by which God has created and is now sustaining in existence all things, and the acts by which He enters in direct communication with the creature. This makes it possible to speak of man's deification by God's 'penetration' into the consciousness of human beings through other human creatures, and/or by God's 'transparency' through His operations. This intimacy of 'touch' between God and human beings, alongside the dynamic idea of 'energetical communion', emphasises in fact Stăniloae's departure from the Cappadocians' more restrained application of the notion of divine energies. However, says Stăniloae, 'it remains a mystery in what way the creating act of God, as uncreated act, has a created effect. This mystery has to be experienced, not only thought'.¹⁸

Not surprisingly, the main objection to this view is that, by admitting a distinction between the divine inapprehensible being and the uncreated yet accessible energies, it will result in a composite God. However, Stăniloae strongly believes in the doctrine of simplicity and non-composition in God. His response to all criticism is that the act does not make the being a composite reality, but is 'a necessary manifestation of it'.¹⁹ Specifically, the concept of being in itself implies a source for its acts. We can conceive neither nature without power and operation, nor power or operation without being. And because the status of the being does not introduce composition within the being, similarly, the movement does not make the being a composition. The operation is the manifestation of the intrinsic power, the movement of the ontic power, as for instance is the movement of mind. A being without energy is an inert being, in the same manner as an energy without being lacks consistency.²⁰ Accordingly, 'the unity of God is antinomic for our understanding', because it [our understanding] seeks to reduce everything to an exclusive category. God's unity, however, is various in its aspects, operations, powers, or manifestations. This is why the unrestrained possibilities and manifestations of God are unitary, in conformity with His being. At the same time, this antinomy is rooted in the trinitarian mystery itself. As the relationship between operations is antinomic, so is the relationship between the being and the operations. Finally, Stăniloae asserts his ignorance regarding the inner relation between essence and energies:

We experience nothing from God, in content, other than His varied operations that have to do with the world, which is to say, in relation with us. Beyond this we know that at their basis is the personally subsistent essence, but how it is, we do not know, for it is an essence beyond essences.²¹

2.4 Summary

The explanation given by Stăniloae to what he sees as the unavoidable

distinction between essence and energies in understanding *theosis* is exceptionally relevant. He advances a more dynamic personalist meaning and value to the whole discussion about the trinitarian basis of the distinction essence-energies, in comparison with Palamas' more technical approach. According to Stăniloae's concept of deification-as-participation, the above observation is true especially when this point is applied to the particular term 'participation'. If by participation we accept solely its technical connotation, that of 'possessing a part', then the whole matter of deification becomes very confused and indistinct. On the other hand, it can be argued that, by employing a more personalistic language, Stăniloae succeeded in removing several important suspicions that could be imputed against the whole idea of participation in God. Although he uses the notion of participation, Stăniloae prefers to speak about 'sharing' in God's energies in the sense of reciprocal personal giving. In this instance there exists a related rational distinction such as the one applied, for instance, to the idea of *en-hypostasia*. If for some people participation means just symbolic, nominal sharing, in Stăniloae's mind participation means real sharing. That is, sharing in God's energies means that kind of participation that can only be manifested by a person. In common with Palamas, Stăniloae believes that in the process of deification we become in a certain sense 'uncreated' by our sharing into the divine uncreated energy; although not natural, there is surely a personal possession.

Therefore, Stăniloae affirms certain basic characteristics as regards the divine energies. First, the uncreated energies are divine personal operations. They are not automatic forces manifested sequentially according to a preestablished eternal order. In that case God would not be a free God but one ensnared into an unwilling becoming. The energies presuppose the person, and are the voluntary manifestations of God's benevolence. A free person, in Stăniloae's view, is someone who remains the same in his being and

yet is capable of diversity in his acts. Accordingly, the divine operations do not arise from any necessity for the divine being to be completed, and definitely they are not new forms of God's future becoming. Second, the personal uncreated energies are voluntary irradiations. It is wrong to conceive of God's operations as empty and totally separated from His being. The personal God manifests 'something' from His being in His operations. Having their base in God's being, the divine operations are not separated in their dynamism from the content of divine being. Third, the operations are not one with or identical to the divine being. Precisely, they do not carry in themselves the whole divine being. However, in limited proportions, the divine operations carry on themselves the 'particular' of the whole divine being. Finally, in the act of their manifestation, the divine operations are somehow 'modelled' according to the measure and the status of the divine being.²²

Stăniloae affirms that, in failing to understand 'the mystery of person that cannot dissolve itself', Western theology sees deification as a created state.²³ The result is that in this theology, because there is not a real, unmediated contact realised between God and us, everything we receive from God is created. In this way, we are closed within the limits of the created, creaturehood works like a wall between God and us, and some of the concepts used by the Fathers, like deification, receive an improper meaning. To avoid such a grave misunderstanding, Stăniloae makes a parallel between the subjective essence and the objective essence. He assumes that, in the process of their operations, it would be impossible for the human persons as subjective essences to be dissolved as the objective essences would be. The obvious deduction is then applied to the person of God who, insists Stăniloae, cannot extend Himself as being, not simply because He is uncreated, but because He is a person. However, God as a personal being can extend Himself through His operations. Our mistake, says Stăniloae, is when we

try to close up God in Himself because He is uncreated. Such an approach, however, will make it impossible for us to meet Him and to take possession of something from Him.

The way of reconciliation between the Eastern and the Western positions is found by Stăniloae, on the one hand, in the mutual agreement that, in the unity of God's being, we may discern 'possibilities' to produce different created things (as has been seen earlier in both Stăniloae and Küng). Through created things, continues Stăniloae, we are in touch with the special uncreated operations and with the whole integrity of God. Moreover, having a conscious spiritual 'sensitivity', a human person can 'feel' God building up in his being a unique and different status. On the other hand, by asserting that the divine operations are not dissociated from God's being, Stăniloae wants to say not only that in each operation God is wholly active, but also that God's whole being is variously present. This is because in every act of a person the whole person is variously present, without ever being exhausted in that act. This, considers Stăniloae, is another possible ground for harmonising the Eastern and Western theologies. On the Catholic side, the need is to accept that, when it is manifested in relation with other finite things, divine being is truly manifested in a way that does not exclude other modes of manifestation. On the Eastern side, in order to maintain an authentic Palamite position, it would be enough to affirm that in each operation, and in a different mode, the whole divine being is truly manifested.

3. Critical Evaluation

3.1 *The Charge of Innovation*

The question about Palamism, in general, involves the problem whether it is a genuine development of Cappadocian thought or a new 'innovation' added to the Early Christian tradition.²⁴ On their side, Orthodox theologians refer to the 'Palamite synthesis', which means a fuller presentation of Orthodoxy in its mystical aspect, with much emphasis on

the apophatic character, on the divine light, and on the concept of deification; a presentation, however, with firm roots in the past. Krivocheine writes that in Palamas' thought 'the traditional asceticomystical teaching of the Orthodox East not only finds in his work its final and systematic expression, but also its theological and philosophical expression'. Mantzarides sees Palamas' innovation as justified, being authentic and traditional, while Florovsky calls it 'a creative extension of ancient tradition'.²⁵ Stăniloae himself, although heavily influenced by Palamas' synthesis, rejects the notion of 'creative theology' in favour of 'expressive theology'. The concept of 'creativity' must be preserved for God who alone is the Creator.²⁶ Contrary to the charge of innovation often made against Palamas by Western theologians, the Orthodox use different arguments to defend him. One of these is the question if it would have been possible for Palamas to innovate in such a traditionalist theological milieu as Byzantium. However, the Orthodox agree in finding something new in Palamas as compared with his predecessors.

Although the distinction between essence and energies in particular is certainly present in the Cappadocian thought, of great importance is the question whether, in their thought, the divine *ousia* is ontologically distinct from the divine *energeiai*. We know that the Cappadocian advance in trinitarianism has given their negative theology much more impact than we find in their precursors. By insisting upon the consubstantiality of Father and Son, and Holy Spirit and substituting an 'essential' Trinity, differentiated by 'modes of being' rather than spheres of operation, the Cappadocians make it clear that the Son and Holy Spirit share equally with the Father the ineffability of the divine nature. For the Cappadocians the energies are common to all three persons, and are God in His manward dispensation. The persons in God are distinguished only by their mutual relationships. However, the Cappadocians leave largely unclarified the relation of the divine

energies to the revelation of the incarnation, and to the sanctifying work of the Spirit; and also the relation between the energies and divine grace.

When we pass to Maximus, it seems that he does suggest at times that the *logoi* are energies, but he still has the Cappadocian rather than the Palamite notion of energy.²⁷ It is at this point that the charge of inconsistency in Orthodox theology comes into focus. In his comments, for instance, Rowan Williams claims that Maximus' understanding of energy does not imply an ontological distinction from the essence, but merely an epistemological one. Furthermore, in Palamas' case, Williams suspects two parallel modes of divine experience:

Faced with the Dionysian model of the 'super-substantial substance' participated in its *proodoi*, and apparently unable to revise the notion of participation so as satisfactorily to exclude the idea that creatures 'possess' *ousia* (that is, *theia ousia*) as the persons of the Trinity do, Palamas is compelled to postulate *ousia* and *energeia* as parallel modes of divine experience . . . This, I believe, is the movement of thought which produces the incoherences of Palamism.

Williams holds that Palamas had not the philosophy of his theology, so 'the needs of controversy drove him [Palamas] to adopt a metaphysical theory fraught with obscurities and contradictions'.²⁸ What in fact seems to be happening is that Palamas takes the Cappadocian view of the energies and presses it further than its original meaning and significance. Consequently, on the philosophical level, Palamism is accused of philosophical incoherence, due to its logical contradictions. The Orthodox replies that this is merely a typical theological antinomy. Although there are contrary truths on the rational level, 'a reconciliation is possible on the higher level of contemplative experience'.²⁹

The antinomical character of the distinction between essence and energies is emphasised by Stăniloae in direct connection with the Christian doctrine of God.

For Stăniloae, the knowledge of God does not have a theoretical or metaphorical character but it is vitalised by the axial concern for deification. God is both incommunicable and communicable, invisible and visible, inaccessible and accessible. Without this divine communicability, union with God, man's participation in Him by grace, and finally man's deification, would all be impossible. It becomes clear that for Stăniloae, in line with Maximus and Palamas, God is sharing Himself, not according to His being nor according to the Trinity's hypostases, but according to the uncreated energies shining forth from divine being. At the same time, they hold to the possibility of man's transmutation into and participation in the divine nature. Thus the antinomy becomes the rule of right devotion.³⁰

It can be seen from all of this that the difference between Eastern and Western theology results from a different understanding of participation. Western scepticism in this matter cannot see how one can escape a metaphysical composition in God. Declining to consider the antinomical method, Western theology disagrees with the real distinction between essence and hypostasis and admits a distinction only between the hypostases as they are related one to another. Thus to preserve the simplicity of God, the West makes use of the idea of simple substance, while the East works with the idea of superessential essence. In addition, holding that the simplicity of God is something that transcends our categories, Eastern apophaticism is placing divine simplicity at a level beyond even essence.³¹ Consequently, both Stăniloae and Palamas do not hesitate to affirm that deification is 'real', meaning by that an ontological union between human being and God. On their side, the Western theologians are accustomed to speak of a 'distinction of reason', deliberately avoiding the acknowledgement of a 'real distinction'. This is why a conceivable solution to draw East and West closer in this matter becomes difficult due to two different approaches. However,

the danger comes from both sides: the epistemological approach could sacrifice the possibility of a real deification, while an ontological approach could create problems in understanding God's simplicity and, consequently, promote an exaggerated mysticism in which 'only those beings close to the upper sphere of the divine can feel God's presence'.³²

3.2 *The Charge of Impersonalism*

As distinguished from the hypostases, it is said that the uncreated energies are experienced as personal, because they are God's personal words (*logoi*) for created things.³³ However, the next objection to the essence-energies distinction would be that the personalness of our relationship with God is compromised by affirming that God communicates Himself to us through non-hypostatic beings such as uncreated energies. Even an Orthodox theologian as Timiadis suggests that "it might be better to use more intimate and personal expressions, such as 'communion with the Holy Spirit' ".³⁴

The charge that the energies are impersonal is strongly rejected by Orthodox theologians. Yannaras maintains that 'the acceptance of the distinction between essence and energies means an understanding of truth as personal relationship', and thus 'God is known only as a personal revelation (and not as an idea of "active" essence), only as a triune communion of person, as an ecstatic self-offering of loving goodness'.³⁵ In fact, Palamas himself introduced the concept of *enhypostasia* regarding the energies, saying that they are enhypostasized, that is given a personal nature by being used by persons. It should be remembered that in Byzantine theology God is fully present in His uncreated energies towards us, and not divided or portioned out. Moreover, *ousia* is understood as what God is *in se* and *hypostasis* as what He is *ad alios*.

However, this argument does not hold, because even if hypostasized, the energies would still 'dilute' and make redundant the trinitarian persons themselves by taking their functions. In the trinitarian theology of the Cappadocians the three

hypostases 'do not have a common *ousia*; they are the divine *ousia*'.³⁶ If this is true and it is then applied to the Palamite distinction, the result is that the divine persons belong to the level of the imparticipable and inaccessible essence that is beyond the sphere of man's contact with the deifying energies. Therefore we cannot have a direct communion with the divine hypostases, but only with the divine persons as expressed through the divine energies. Thus, in the process of deification, the energies seem to function as intermediary between the divine persons and humans. The lack of direct communion between the divine hypostases and human being makes one wonder whether in the Palamite doctrine of deification the trinitarian persons have any soteriological functions at all.³⁷

This observation leads to the assumption that the Palamite distinction may jeopardise the whole idea of *missio Dei*. The nature of the Trinity is not static, unrelated to humankind, but is dynamic, inviting us to participate in the communion of divine life. It is recognized that this dynamic and communitary understanding of the Trinity that characterises the Eastern Orthodox Church might provide the Western Church with the true language pattern of dialogue. Indeed, this participation has its foundation and intensity in the Father's initiative, in the sending of the Son and the Holy Spirit into the world. At the same time, the one undivided God is present in His mission in all three persons. The participatory aspect of mission based on the joy of knowing God's love and on the victory of Christ on the cross over the opposing forces, is definitely one of the main peculiarities emphasised by Orthodox theology. However, in the context of *missio Dei*, it is hard to reconcile, on the one hand, the Orthodox understanding of the centrality of divine energies as 'means' of God's revelation and, on the other hand, the centrality of God's revelation in Jesus Christ. Again, Timiadis himself indicates that the distinction might contradict 'the very sense of Christ's incarnation'.³⁸ In biblical perspective the mission of the

incarnate Son as our reconciliation and the objective reality of revelation, adopting a Barthian phraseology, is the heart of the mission of God in human history, while the mission of the Spirit as the subjective reality of revelation is to unite us with the Son. Therefore, we ask how the Orthodox apply the dynamic and biblical idea of the proclamation of the Gospel to the nations, keeping in mind that divine energies are called effective 'means' of God's revelation, and human persons are invited in God's mission as participatory 'means' as well? Since we are called to participate in God's mission and in His self-revelation, it seems that the Palamite distinction identifies too closely the energies' role with the mission of the Son, of the Holy Spirit, and of Christians.³⁹

There is a certain ambivalence in the use of the term 'energy' as referring to the idea of God manifesting Himself wholly to us and the possibility of producing an 'uncreated' person. Stăniloae's affirmation is clear that God reveals Himself wholly in His energies. If one means by this that God reveals His attributes, this is clearly correct. However, on the surface, Stăniloae seems inconsistent when at once he defines the divine energies as God's attributes in motion and at other times as God Himself in motion; at one point the energies are the Holy Spirit's manifestations and at other times they are the Holy Spirit Himself. The ambiguity and instability in language may point to the fact that in His energies God becomes Himself.⁴⁰ The energies therefore become constitutive of God, and the immanent and economic are one. This is scarcely Stăniloae's intention, but it is the logic of his position. There is thus a weakness here which fails to speak of the simplicity of God.

3.3 *Revelation and Deification (theosis)*

In this context, it becomes clear that the whole issue of deification is closely related to the subject of revelation. No doubt, Stăniloae's theology is centred on revelation with its emphasis on freedom and uniqueness, ascribing to it a unique epistemic status, and resulting in the

autonomy and distinctiveness of theological knowledge over all other forms of knowledge. The general view is that revelation is that act of divine self-communication in which the triune God reveals Himself through the medium of created reality as the foundation and the author of creation, reconciliation, and salvation of created beings. In addition to this view, for Stăniloae, revelation takes a relational pattern in which the medium of revelation is an uncreated reality, represented by the uncreated energies.

As we have seen, the real problem with Stăniloae's position is directly related to the Palamite distinction between essence and energies. To stress that once again, we will follow the logical order of what revelation discloses in the Christian rationalisation. It is important to start with the biblical principle that the disclosure event is understood as the result of the intentional action of God who expresses His will, freedom, and being in this event. Since there are no external limitations imposed on God, there is in Him no conflict between being and will, so that all of God's actions are, as expressions of His will, also expressions of His being. At the same time, according to the doctrine of the Trinity, God's action is not uniform, but always unitary, and in this way expresses the unity of intention and act, will and being in God.

Moreover, what Stăniloae rightly maintains is that God does not reveal only propositions about God; God reveals Himself. However, this presupposes some restrictions of human discourse about God. Although God's revelation in *oikonomia* is understood as self-revelation, that does not mean of course that God's self, as it is present to God Himself, becomes now accessible to His creatures. Self-disclosure means that God discloses who He is and what He is. The biblical central truth of the incarnation, which Stăniloae strongly maintains, is the notion of divine self-giving or the event of self-identification in which Christ identifies Himself with created reality by communicating Himself as person in action. The formal structure of God's self-identification as Father, Son

and Spirit is closely connected to the content of God's action by which God shows Himself to be the creator, reconciler and saviour of the world. God's revelation has no other content than His action in creation, reconciliation and salvation, and this unity of the content and the mode of the actualisation of God's action is expressed in the trinitarian self-identification of God—Father, Son and Spirit.

Accordingly, Christian revelation maintains that there must be the act of reception of God's self-communication from the recipient of revelation. The self-disclosure of God has a particular author and content, so its direction or address is also to particular persons. The universal content of divine self-revelation and the universal truth claim of the Gospel of Christ, in which this content is expressed, does not contradict this particularity. This content becomes effective only in such a way that its universal claim is vindicated for particular people as the truth about the personal reality of their lives and about the reality of creation as a whole. The mode of the actualisation of the universal truth of God's revelation is its personal particularisation in the activity of the Holy Spirit.

It is at this stage in the discussion that presence of the mysterious uncreated energies becomes difficult to justify. First, although it is promising to find in Stăniloae the interrelationship of creation and redemption, we ask ourselves how it could be that this idea correlated with the Palamite view sustains a wholly free manifestation of God in His energies. It is this ambiguity that forces von Balthasar, for example, to criticise Palamism as a theology that presents God incompletely revealed and relatively free. It seems that in Palamism, insists von Balthasar, the essence of God withdraws into an unknowability, 'while His knowability becomes diffuse, and the revelation which He intended is thereby destroyed'. Thus the question is whether Palamas ever maintained that God 'holds something back' in His essence or if He covers it by His energies.⁴¹

Moreover, in Stăniloae's theology the

Christ event is seen as the paradigmatic disclosure, God disclosing Himself in created reality. For Stăniloae, Christ represents the supreme stage and the consummation of supernatural revelation. 'Christian revelation', writes Stăniloae, 'is given in a Person'.⁴² On the other hand, the Christ event implies not only the *bruta facta* of the historical events, but also His self-interpretation and the interpretation of His followers under the action of the Spirit. The overwhelming presence of the uncreated energies, unconvincingly defined as personal, in divine revelation and especially in relation with human persons, obscures the particularity of revelation, the efficaciousness of the activity of the Holy Spirit, and the uniqueness of the person and work of the Son. There is a continuous lack of clarity, an ambiguity that is at best obscuring and at worst misleading. Of great concern is the need to eliminate any intermediary that could, in any sense, claim some control over the uniqueness of God's revelation in Christ, and implicitly over the soteriological role of Christ. The object of revelation and the agent of revelation is Christ by the Holy Spirit.

4. Assessment

In conclusion, the transformatory character of mystical theology, mirrored in Stăniloae's original apophatic-cataphatic synthesis, is completed by the dynamism of the divine uncreated energies. As means of God's self-disclosure and reflecting trinitarian life, the uncreated energies become, by creation, intimate to humans and authenticates their 'filial sensitivity'. Although characterised by a dynamic personalism—as manifestations of a free, personal, and yet inapprehensible God, and as means of human ascent with the possibility to participate in God's being—the uncreated energies divulge their antinomic status. Deification-as-participation presupposes, then, the experience of the personal and voluntary irradiations of God's operations and 'something' from His being. However, it was shown that Stăniloae's concept of

deification, with its stress on the energetic communion between man and God (even though, to some extent, it resists the charge of impersonalism and unnecessary innovation) is open to the accusation of ambiguity and instability in his Palamite language, which suggests a God incompletely revealed and a divine economy with a diluted role.

Notes

- 1 Clear developments of Stăniloae's thought as regards this theme are found in the following of his works: *Viața și Învățătura Sfântului Grigorie Palama* (Sibiu 1938; 2 edition, București: Scripta, 1993), *Teologia Dogmatică și Simbolică*, vol. I (București, 1958), *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. I (București: EIBMBOR, 1978), *Theology and the Church*, tr. by R. Barringer (Crestwood, N.Y.: Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980), *Spiritualitatea Ortodoxă* (București, 1981, 2 edition 1992), and *Studii de Teologie Dogmatică Ortodoxă* (București, 1991).
- 2 D. Stăniloae, *The Experience of God*, tr. and ed. by I Ionita and R. Barringer (Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1994), pp. 98–100.
- 3 A very significant observation made by Kallistos Ware in the preface of the English translation of the first volume of Stăniloae's dogmatic theology, *The Experience of God*, p. XXI.
- 4 D. Stăniloae, 'Dumnezeu este Iubire', *Ortodoxia* 3 (1971), p. 366. Stăniloae sees in the works of Hans Küng, Paul Tillich and 'The Death of God' theology some representatives of an overstated ontology regarding the doctrine of God.
- 5 Stăniloae's earliest published book on Palamas, *Viața și Învățătura Sfântului Grigorie Palama* (1938), including a detailed presentation of the debate on the distinction between essence and energies, was to set the tone for a very large part of his subsequent work and thought. Few scholars of this century have provided so devoted a study of the historical and theological expressions of the Palamism. Stăniloae also translated parts from Palamas' works in *Filocalia* 7 (București, 1977) with a short but relevant introduction. Stăniloae even made the proposal, in 1972, for a future general synod of the Eastern Orthodox Church, that the theme of the divine energies should become central for the discussions, being also central in understanding the unity of the Church for man's salvation. Cf. D. Stăniloae, 'Opinii în Legătură cu Viitorul Sfânt și Mare Sinod Ortodox', *Ortodoxia* 3 (1973), pp. 425–440.
- 6 Cf. H. Küng, *The Incarnation of God. An Introduction to Hegel's Theological Thought as Prolegomena to a Future Christology*, tr. by J.R. Stephenson (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1987), pp. 530–538.
- 7 D. Stăniloae, 'Dumnezeu este Iubire', p. 369.
- 8 For the idea of energies in Gregory Palamas, see J. Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas* (London: Leighton Buzzard, 1964), pp. 204–206. Cf. Gregory Palamas, see PG 150, 928–933AD, 936AD, 940C–944B. The works of Gregory Palamas translated into English are: *The Defence of the Holy Hesychasts*, also known as the *Triads*—selections found in Gregory Palamas, *The Triads*, tr. by N. Gendle and ed. by J. Meyendorff, in 'The Classics of Western Spirituality' (New York: Paulist Press, 1983); *The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, also known as *Capita CL Physica, Theologica, Moralia et Practica (Capita)*, tr. by R. E. Sinkewicz (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1988); and *Contra Akindynum*, tr. by L. C. Contos, in *The Concept of Theosis in Saint Gregory Palamas with Critical Text of the 'Contra Akindynum'*, 2 vols., Doctoral dissertation (Los Angeles, 1963). Parts from *Triads* were translated by Stăniloae as 'Două Tratatate ale Sf. Grigorie Palama' (Triada I,2,3), in *Anuarul Academiei Teologice Andreiane* 9 (1932–1933), pp. 5–70, reprinted in *Viața și Învățătura Sfântului Grigorie Palama*, including 'Apologia mai extinsă', pp. LIX–XCI, și 'Antericul V Contra lui Achindin', pp. XCII–CLX.
- 9 D. Stăniloae, *The Experience of God*, p. 102.
- 10 D. Stăniloae, 'Sfântul Duh în Revelație și în Biserică', *Ortodoxia* 2 (1974), pp. 223–225.
- 11 D. Stăniloae, 'Sfântul Duh în Revelație și Biserică', p. 229.
- 12 D. Stăniloae, *The Experience of God*, pp. 126, 136.
- 13 D. Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică și Simbolică*, vol. I (București, 1958), pp. 327–328.
- 14 D. Stăniloae, *The Experience of God*, p. 159. Cf. Gregory of Nazianzus, *In Theophaniam*, Oratio 38.7 (PG 36, 317B). See

- also V. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, N.Y.: Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976), pp. 73f.
- 15 D. Stăniloae, 'Dumnezeu este Iubire', p. 389.
 - 16 D. Stăniloae, *The Experience of God*, p. 125. Similarly, K. Ware holds that God's energies are God Himself in relation with the world, 'God with us' in K. Ware, 'God Hidden and Revealed: The Apophatic Way and the Essence-Energies Distinction', *Eastern Churches Review* 7 (1975), p. 129. See also Dionysius, *On the Divine Names* 9.9 (PG 3, 916C). Stăniloae maintains the supremacy of divine operations in comparison with divine attributes, saying that we only know the attributes of God in their dynamism, that is, through His operations.
 - 17 D. Stăniloae, 'Dumnezeu este Iubire', p. 370.
 - 18 D. Stăniloae, *Filocalia* VII, p. 221. Ware specifies that we need to make a difference between the uncreated *energeia* and the *energima* as the result of the *energeia* and part of the created order. 'It is possible that earlier Greek Fathers, in certain passages where they speak about God's energies, mean simply the created effects of the divine activity; but in later Patristic theology a clear distinction is drawn between the created effect and the uncreated *energeia* that causes it and maintains it in being'. Cf. K. Ware, 'God Hidden and Revealed: The Apophatic Way and the Essence-Energies Distinction', pp. 131–132.
 - 19 D. Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică și Simbolică*, vol. I, p. 330.
 - 20 D. Stăniloae, *Viața și Învățătura Sfântului Grigorie Palama*, p. 133.
 - 21 D. Stăniloae, *The Experience of God*, p. 126.
 - 22 D. Stăniloae, 'Dumnezeu este Iubire', pp. 369–370.
 - 23 D. Stăniloae, *Filocalia* VII, p. 219. The Catholic Garrigues, referring to Maximus' position, asserts that 'energy is the act of divine essence of which causality creates the deification of men'. J. M. Garrigues, 'L'Energie Divine et la Grâce chez Maxime le Confesseur', *Istina* 3 (1974), p. 285.
 - 24 Among Catholics who accuse Palamas of innovation is M. Jugie, 'Palamas Grégoire' and 'Palamite (Controverse)', in *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* XI/2: 1735–1776, XI/2: 1777–1818; and J.-P. Houdret, 'Palamas et les Cappadociens', *Istina* 3 (1974), pp. 260–271; among Anglicans is R. D. Williams, *The Theology of Vladimir Nikolaievich Lossky. An Exposition and Critique*, Doctorate dissertation (Oxford, 1975), especially chapter VI, pp. 157–190. For an Orthodox response, see G. Barrois, 'Palamism Revisited', *Saint Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 19 (1975), pp. 211–231.
 - 25 B. Krivocheine, 'The Ascetic and Theological Teaching of St. Gregory Palamas', *Eastern Churches Quarterly* 3 (1938), p. 207; G. Mantzarides, 'Tradition and Renewal in the Theology of Saint Gregory of Palamas', *Eastern Churches Review* 9 (1977), p. 1; G. Florovsky, 'St. Gregory Palamas and the Tradition of the Fathers', in *Collected Works*, vol. I, *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View* (Belmont, Mass.: Nordland, 1974), p. 114.
 - 26 S. Dumitrescu, *7 Diminești cu Părintele Stăniloae* (București: Anastasia, 1992), p. 187.
 - 27 Stăniloae interprets Maximus in Palamite and not in Thomistic terms. As regards with the relation between *logoi* and *energeiai*, see Joost van Rossum, 'The *logoi* of Creation and the Divine "Energies" in Maximus the Confessor and Gregory Palamas', *Studia Patristica* 26 (1993), pp. 213–217. Van Rossum argues that, by comparison, there is a difference in emphasis and context between Maximus' *logoi* and Palamas' *energeiai*. Maximus' teaching on the *logoi* as the divine 'ideas' or 'intentions' of creation is in the context of the doctrine of creation, or in a cosmological context, while Palamas' teaching on the *logoi* and *energeiai* is in the context of the doctrine of God. See in parallel Maximus, *Ambigua* 7 (PG 91, 1080A, 1081A), and Gregory Palamas, *Triads* 2.3, 16. For further study of the 'logos mysticism' and the doctrine of the 'logopoiesis' of creation in Maximus, see G. Maloney, *The Breath of the Mystic* (Denville, N.J.: Dimension Books, 1974), pp. 141–160.
 - 28 R. D. Williams, *The Theology of Vladimir Nikolaievich Lossky*, pp. 177–180.
 - 29 K. Ware, 'The Debate About Palamism', *Eastern Churches Review* 9 (1977), p. 46.
 - 30 Maximus, *Ambigua* (PG 91, 1308B). Gregory Palamas comments that biblical texts, like 2 Peter 1:4, have an antinomic character as elsewhere the doctrine of Trinity, and their antinomy must be maintained as a criterion of reverence. Cf. Gregory Palamas, *Apology* (PG 150, 932D). 'The Divine substance is incommunicable and yet is, in a certain sense, communicated; we

partake of the Divine essence and yet at the same time we do not partake of it at all. And so we must maintain both (affirmations) and lay them down as the standard of piety'. Cf. Krivosheine, p. 145; see also *Theophanes* (PG 150, 932D).

- 31 Mascall has suggested a parallel between the essence-energies distinction in Palamism and the essence-existence distinction in Thomas Aquinas, 'even if they expounded it in terms of divergent metaphysical systems' and 'even if we cannot simply equate existence with energy'. E. L. Mascall, *The Openness of Being. Natural Theology Today* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1971), p. 222.
- 32 E. Timiadis, 'God's Immutability and Communicability', in T. F. Torrance (ed.), *Theological Dialogue between Orthodox and Reformed Churches*, vol. I (Edinburgh and London: Scottish Academic Press, 1985), pp. 45–47. Two observations here: (1) Timiadis' view (along with Trembelas) could be challenged by other Orthodox theologians. Palamas, it is claimed, is not an elitist but merely accepts the possibility of knowledge of God in this life. (2) Criticism of hesychasm and its focus on the vision of the light of Tabor claims that this was but one episode in the life of Jesus, an episode moreover that points forward to the Passion of Christ. But, if that is indeed so, we ask, how is it possible to suggest a developed doctrine of the 'spiritual senses' and the transfiguration of bodily vision in the vision of God?
- 33 For Palamas' doctrine of *logoi* as God's uncreated energies, particular wills and purposes as in Maximus, see *Capita* 24, 81, 87–88, 90. For Maximus, see *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* (PG 90, 296AB); *Mystagogia* 5. (PG 91, 682B, 692CD, 696A); *Ambigua* (PG 91, 1080AD, 1085AC, 1329CD, 1345BC). A summary of Maximus' doctrine in this respect is to be found in L. Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator. The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor* (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1965), pp. 79–99.
- 34 But having in mind what Timiadis believes about Patristic method, hermeneutics, and language, his view on the Palamite distinction sounds like a typical Orthodox interpretation. 'The present-day reader will be disappointed if he looks for clear-cut statements and neatly measured definitions. This is not the method of Patristics... For them, terminology is not an absolute, an end in itself... We risk betraying the real thought and intention of the Fathers if, with our contemporary pre-conceived views, after fifteen centuries, we try to give our own interpretation of some of their linguistic expressions and conceptions'. Timiadis explains: 'These energies are not something that exists apart from God, not a gift which God confers upon man: they are God himself in his action and revelation to the world; God remains complete in each of his divine energies. The world is charged with the grandeur of God; all creation is a gigantic Burning Bush, permeated but not consumed by the ineffable and wondrous fire of God's energies'. Cf. E. Timiadis, 'God's Immutability and Communicability', pp. 23–24, 42.
- 35 C. Yannaras, 'The Distinction between Essence and Energy and Its Importance for Theology', *Saint Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 19 (1975), p. 241.
- 36 C. M. LaCugna, *God for Us. The Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: Harper-Collins, 1991), p. 192. The same interpretation is found in R. Williams, 'The Philosophical Structures of Palamism', *Eastern Churches Review* 9.1–2 (1977), p. 33. See also I. Trethowan, 'Irrationality in Theology and the Palamite Distinction' *Eastern Churches Review* 9 (1977), pp. 19–26.
- 37 For similar conclusions see P. Negrut, *The Development of the Concept of Authority within the Romanian Orthodox Church during the Twentieth Century*, Doctoral dissertation (London: Brunell University, 1994), p. 36.
- 38 E. Timiadis, 'God's Immutability and Communicability', p. 46.
- 39 In a private discussion on this subject, Bishop Kallistos Ware has insisted that, to avoid impersonalism, we must always think in triadic terms. The danger lies in the language of distinction which could be interpreted as impersonal. If, for example, we speak only in terms of essence-energies we would end in impersonalism, while if we speak in terms of essence-hypostases-energies the energies would be understood in more personal terms.
- 40 Ware affirms that 'the term deity (*theotis*) may be applied not only to the essence of God but to the energies'. K. Ware, 'God Hidden and Revealed', p. 130. Mantzarides says that 'the man who partakes of this deifying gift even to a small degree is united through it to God in His entirety'. G. I.

Mantzarides, *The Deification of Man. St. Gregory Palamas and the Orthodox Tradition* (Crestwood, N.Y.: Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), p. 109.

- 41 This is von Balthasar's view, as presented by R. Gawronski, in *Word and Silence. Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Spiritual Encounter between East and West* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), pp. 56–60. For Balthasar 'the God of love is apophatic not in a "withdrawal" to a hidden essence as Palamas intends; rather, the God of love is apophatic in that He "brings the one filled by Him to adoring silence". The moment of the apophatic is not behind the appear-

ance of God, but in it . . . Thus, both 'with and against Gregory Palamas: God's essence does not cover itself with His "energies", although it really becomes known in them'.

- 42 Cf. D. Stăniloae, *Theology and the Church*, p. 124. 'The line of supernatural acts and the line of spirituality do not meet in Christ at the highest level, however, as if they constituted two parallel peaks. It is precisely the supreme spirituality of Christ which contains within itself the power to overcome the automatism of nature'. D. Stăniloae, *The Experience of God*, p. 25.

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