

Energies of the Trinity: The Energies as Tripersonal Communion in Gregory Palamas

The doctrine of the Divine Energies is significant not only as an account of how God manifests Himself to man, but also as a basis for understanding His trinitarian life.

by Thomas Hamilton

The Palamite controversy began with the Trinity.¹ According to Barlaam, the filioque was impermissible because of divine apophaticism: the human creature lacked the capacity to apprehend the divine nature. As such, the question of the Spirit's procession could not be answered even in principle. St. Gregory Palamas, while agreeing that the filioque was impermissible, rejected Barlaam's reasoning. The filioque was condemned precisely *because* God has made himself manifest and participable. In partaking of the uncreated energies, Palamas argued, the Church comes to know Father, Son, and Spirit, one God. It is because of the Church's knowledge of God that the filioque must be rejected, not because of her ignorance of God. Yet, in contemporary theology, both the critics and advocates of the essence-energies distinction have sometimes ignored or understated its trinitarian context and purpose. In a paper designed to articulate positively the purpose and content of the doctrine of the energies, for example, David Bradshaw only once alludes to its relationship to the doctrine of the Trinity.² On the other side, Catherine LaCugna's criticism of the doctrine suggests that it essentially supersedes the doctrine of the Trinity, replacing the role of the divine persons in facilitating divine-human communion.³

It is the purpose of this paper to argue that the doctrine of the energies was

understood by Palamas as essential to the theology of the Trinity in that it provided a philosophical elucidation for the concept of personal divine communion *ad intra*. I will then briefly sketch the way in which such a model provides a sound basis for understanding how God is revealed in the very same activity as one and three, thereby facilitating a model of divine-human communion that is firmly earthed in Trinitarian doctrine. Clarifying the true meaning of the distinction requires attention to its conceptual roots in the tradition of classical metaphysics. In examining Palamas' engagement with traditional Greco-Roman concepts of God, it will be seen that the special role played by the divine energies in relation to the world creates the metaphysical context wherein the Trinity becomes necessary, thus distinguishing the personal and living God of Christianity from this classical conception of those Greeks whom Palamas lambasted. This amounts to a rebuttal of Barlaam's contention that the Hellenistic philosophers possessed knowledge of God equal to or greater than the knowledge available in the life of the Church. Moreover, it will be shown that Palamas' understanding of the divine energies in relation to the Trinity plays a clarifying role in understanding the way in which the New Testament describes the church's communion with God in Trinity.

I. God as One and Many

First, I will examine Palamas' cosmological argument for the existence of God, whereby proves from the properties of the world that it exists contingently, requiring on that account the existence of one who is self-existent and infinitely actual. Because things in the world change, and because change requires a "new cause in each instance" conferring on things their new or more perfectly actualized properties, the world cannot be self-existent: it must derive its new properties from that which already possesses them. One therefore has, according to Palamas, "proof for an underived, self-existent primordial cause" (*150 Chapters* 1). The cause of all things is that which possesses the actualities through which contingent things are brought into existence. Palamas then draws the conclusion from "the nature of...contingent existence..." that, things are "continually coming to an end in part." This end for the world as a whole, he suggests, is the change of creation "into something more divine by the $\delta\upsilon\nu\acute{\alpha}\mu\epsilon\iota$ of the Spirit (*150 Chapters* 2). Later in the text, Palamas uses this word as a close equivalent to the notion of the energies. Explaining Micah's description of Christ as "going forth from ancient days", for example, he states that the goings forth are the "energies of the divinity",

as God alone “possesses pre-eternal powers and energies” (150 Chapters 71). The development of the world toward, or into, its intrinsic end occurs through the energies which are the primordial ideas (or λόγοι)⁴ giving creatures their distinct properties. As it is the λόγος of a thing which develops a creature towards its eschatological completeness, it must be fully actual in God and belong to Him independent of the world’s existence, for that which is self-existent cannot be dependent upon that which contains unrealized potential.

Palamas proceeds from his description of the eschaton, energized and deified by the power of the Spirit, to criticisms of the teachings of the “Hellenic Sages” concerning the relation of God to the world. Referring to the idea that the motion of the heavens belongs to the nature of the World Soul and produces by its motion the motion of all other spheres, Palamas asks: “If the World Soul belongs to the entire world, why does the earth not revolve too, and the water, and the air?” And if the World Soul’s functioning as such were rational, as the Hellenes supposed, “it would not move the celestial body in the same perpetual movements” because those things which are self-determining “move differently at different times” (150 Chapters 3). The activities intrinsic to creatures are diverse, and insofar as every creature owes its existence and attributes to the One who is self-existent, diverse activities must belong in some manner to that divine self-existence.

In these passages, the seed is planted from which his systematic exposition will grow. Because the world changes both in its qualities of existence and in the degree to which these qualities are realized, it cannot be self-existent and ontologically ultimate. It owes its being and character to one who is self-existent and primordial. Moreover, the World Soul of the Hellenic philosophers is insufficient to explain the diversity of movements belonging to inanimate things such as stones, metals, and other mundane objects (150 Chapters 3). By implication, the diversity of inanimate things is explained in terms of a diversity of movements belonging to that which is primordial and self-existent. That there is only *one* self-existent being but *many* forms of actuality giving the contingent world its diversity entails that the diverse acts must be ontologically rooted in an absolute unity.

II. Energies as the Ground of Ontological Diversity

This diversity of movements is found in Palamas' concept of the diversity of God's natural energies. While God has one single essence, "the rays are many, and are sent out in a manner appropriate to those participating in them..." (*Triads* 3.2.13). These rays are described as "natural symbols" which are "always coexistent with the natures of which they are symbols" (*Triads* 3.1.19). The rays are symbols in that each "becomes knowable the moment its natural symbol is known" (*Triads* 3.1.21). This idea of necessarily existent manifestations is intelligible in light of the meaning of *energeia* in Aristotelian metaphysics. *Energeia* in the sense given by Aristotle, generally refers to "actuality" in contrast to "potency."⁵ An energy in this sense, then, is that which manifests a thing as truly existing with the qualities proper to its nature, enabling it to be perceived and named as what it is. Understanding the divine energies in this sense clarifies the meaning of Palamas' well-known claim that "if the substance does not possess an energy distinct from itself, it will be completely without actual subsistence and will be only a concept in the mind" (*150 Chapters* 136). The metaphysical questions addressed in Palamas' writings on the energies concern not simply the way in which God and creation are related, but the way in which God is thought to exist at all. That God exists of Himself entails that God necessarily possesses all possible actualities, subsisting through and only through His energetic manifestations. In the distinction between essence and activity, Palamas seeks to reconcile the unity and diversity which must, as deduced from the world's properties, coexist in God. The diverse operations are rooted in one nature to which the operations belong as manifestations. Thus, the specific concerns noted by Palamas in the three opening chapters of the *150* are set forth in light of the perceived advantages of his own theological system. There must be a category that relates the one nature with its many activities. Palamas' category, I will argue below, is the consubstantial hypostases of the Trinity.

III. The Relational Character of the Divine Energies

I have suggested above that one of Palamas' principal purposes in articulating his Christian doctrine of God is to account for the contingency of the world, as is reflected both in its changing nature and its characteristic tendency towards the fulfillment of its potential on the one side or nonbeing on the other. Eric

Perl, however, while arguing for the metaphysical utility of the Palamite distinction, describes the divine activities in terms suggesting the necessity of the world, describing the processions as “differentiated according to the differences of creatures” as the energies are “God-for-us.”⁶ Perl captures the heart of the matter in describing the energies as “God-for”, but in stating that the energies are “God-for-creation”, he designates creation as a necessary emanation from God. As attractive and obvious as Perl’s deduction might seem to be at first glance, Palamas is quite explicit in rejecting any ontological necessity in creation. For example, Palamas reconciles noncomposition with the diversity of created hypostases by noting that God alone is “active only, but is not acted upon, neither coming into being or changing” (*150 Chapters* 128). These characteristics are exactly those which define the cosmos as distinct from God in Palamas’ first two chapters: the cosmos, being what it is, requires a cause which is self-existent and primordial. If the world’s existence followed simply from the energy natural to God, God and the world would be mutually constitutive, rather than the former being self-existent and the latter contingent. But such an idea is metaphysically incoherent, as it would suggest that God’s existence is constituted by a world which itself contains potentiality and thus the potential for nonbeing. Hence, God would not be, as he is in Palamas, self-existent. In defining the energies only in relation to creation, Perl collapses Palamas’ metaphysics into the very Hellenism the hesychastic doctor condemns. Perl’s account of the the energies explains how it is that the world exists with a diversity of creatures but in the process deprives it of its contingency.

Still, Perl is right to consider the energies as a fundamentally relational idea. To speak of “rays” is to speak of that by which a luminous subject is revealed to another, distinct subject. Quoting John Damascene, Palamas defines an energy as an “efficient and essential *kinesis* of nature” (*150 Chapters* 129). and that which “makes Him manifest” (*150 Chapters* 137). As Palamas repeatedly denies that an energy is accidental (*150 Chapters* 135), the very character of the Christian God is identified by His active motion⁷ and self-manifestation. The language of κίνησις and δεικτικός immediately suggests the necessity of God’s acting with respect to another subject. Indeed, δεικτικός can be used in the sense of a logical proof; a thing is manifested in its being known to a receptive subject in the particular qualities which define its character and logical relations with other things. Such an account of the energies at first seems conducive to a necessarily existent creation. This is the logic to which Bulgakov

appealed in his doctrine of creation, which followed Soloviev in identifying the world as the “self-manifestation of the Absolute.”⁸

It is in the light of this dilemma that the trinitarian structure of Palamas’ theology appears. In his *Dialogue*, Palamas responds to a query about the manner in which the divine names signify God’s nature. Palamas answers by quoting Gregory of Nyssa, who, when speaking of the person of the Spirit, states that His “divinity reveals [divine] nature.” Intriguingly, Nyssa then states that the Spirit’s divinity signifies His “power of seeing”, which, Palamas adds, “knows everything, oversees everything, and foresees everything” (*Dialogue Between an Orthodox and a Barlaamite* 17). That the energies of the Spirit are here identified with the power (δύναμις) of the Spirit is, as one might appropriately say, illuminating. Those energies which have been identified throughout Palamas’ writings as the Tabor light seen by the apostles in the face of Christ are here identified as the means by which God Himself sees.⁹ Thus, he writes that “the Fathers often call [the divine powers] ‘natural energies’” (*Triads* 3.2.6). Palamas joins the active and the receptive features of the *energeia* in the *150 Chapters*. To demonstrate that the multiplicity of operations are not severally subsistent but “manifestations and natural energies of the one Spirit,” Palamas points to the “seven eyes of the Lord” in Zechariah as well as the “seven spirits” before God’s throne in Revelation, which, in context, are seven torches of fire (*150 Chapters* 71). The latter text is quoted as part of a trinitarian benediction invoking God, Christ, and the seven spirits. The person who is seen is seen through the activity which belongs to him through his nature, that of manifesting visibly. Likewise, the person who sees is able to see because of the natural activity of sight: the respective active and receptive features of sensible energies are made for each other, existing in relation to one another. As Bradshaw says, “Alongside the capacity to move is an answering capacity in the thing acted upon to be moved.”¹⁰ This reciprocal motion between two hypostases through their energies is what is expressed in the concept of “communion.”

Thus, the manifestations of divinity which preoccupy Palamas’ theological work are simultaneously the light which is manifested by the divine persons and the illumination through which the persons are able to apprehend this light. What about the possibility of a motion of kinetic activity without a corresponding receptive capacity? Is such a thing conceivable in Palamas’ metaphysics? A comment about the activity of fire in the *Triads* suggests not.

In considering the concept of a natural symbol (a manifestation always present with the thing manifested), Palamas identifies “heat” as the natural symbol of fire, since the former is always present with the latter. Palamas says that “whenever an object capable of receiving heat presents itself” it “always uses heat as its natural symbol” (*Triads* 3.1.20). The heat always manifests and makes present the fire which it signifies, but this can only be communicated in relation to those things which have the capacity to receive the heat. Absent such a receptive object, the fire, losing the capacity to manifest itself, ceases to burn.

IV. The Trinity as the Relational Basis of the Infinite Actualization of Divine Nature

The intrinsic relationality in activities proper to the one divine nature is the metaphysical principle for Palamas’ articulation of the doctrine of the Trinity. In Aristotelian terms, first actuality refers to a thing’s fulfillment of its natural potential in the realization of the qualities proper to its essence. God, being self-existent, by definition possesses maximally all the qualities intrinsic to his nature. In having an actual quality, one has the capacity (or *second* potency) to utilize the quality in a contingent fashion, producing a *second actuality* derived from the exercise of first act.¹¹ The infinite plenitude of divine activities thereby entails an infinite plenitude of possible states of contingent being.¹² For Palamas, God’s infinite actuality occurs in His knowledge of the Son. In the Aristotelian tradition which Palamas both critiques and develops, the Unmoved Mover exists in an eternal act of self-contemplation and knowledge, setting in motion the descending chain of revolving spheres leading to our own. Palamas similarly describes the uncreated energies in terms of divine self-contemplation: one cannot conceive “of a beginning of God’s self-contemplation”, nor could there have been a moment when “God began to move towards contemplation of Himself” (*Triads* 3.2.6). Yet Palamas radically differs from common Hellenic accounts of the Prime Mover’s intellection because of his Christian understanding of the personal identity of the First Mover.

For Palamas, God is the “absolute and transcendent goodness.” As in Dionysius, “goodness” signifies all the natural processions, because ‘goodness’ is measured by a creature’s correspondence to the natural processions which are its principle of existence. It belongs to the divine nature

to be infinitely good, yet the “highest of goods” is found in being a “source of goodness” (150 Chapters 35).¹³ In order to possess the infinite goodness which belongs to the divine nature, there must be in that nature a productivity by which the goods are communicated to another subject. The motion of self-contemplation, within which the nature is wholly realized, occurs in the Father’s intellective embrace of the Son, the production – or rather begetting – of whom provides the ontological basis for God’s infinite goodness. In the psychological imagery defining *Capita* 35–38, the Father is “the supreme mind” who possesses in Himself the “supreme Word” which is “always coexistent with the mind.” It is in the Word that the Father possesses perfect knowledge of “all things that goodness is.” The Word is called the “Son” because he is “indistinguishably identical with” (ἀπαράλλακτος ὄντα τὸν αὐτὸν τῷ υἱῷ καὶ τῷ πατρὶ) the Father in substance (150 Chapters 35). He is called the Word because it is in him that the Father knows and contemplates the infinitely actual manifestations of divinity. Indeed, the Father knows His own goodnesses by contemplating the goodness of his consubstantial Word who is the “brightness of the everlasting light, the unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of his goodness” (Wisdom 7:26, KJV). The divinity is infinitely actualized in the mutually contemplative relation of *consubstantial* persons, so that each divine person is fully capable of receiving the totality of what each other person manifests energetically.¹⁴ As the Father apprehends His own qualities¹⁵ through His knowledge of the Son, the utilization of those qualities in the realization of second potentials (in creation and the economy of redemption) presupposes the motion by which the Father contemplates Himself through the Son in all that He is by nature.¹⁶

At this point, one might naturally conclude that the basic metaphysical issue has been solved. Since things are actual only in motion, and since motion only occurs in relation, God is realized as infinitely actual in the mutual contemplation of Father and Son, the Two perfectly revealing and knowing the fullness of divinity in their energetic communion. But there is still one outstanding question. As the Father apprehends his own qualities through knowledge of the Word, in whom does He apprehend the quality of communion? Father and Son are indeed consubstantial, but according to the aforementioned logic, their consubstantial communion has no proper manifestation. The Father moves in relation to the Son who moves in relation to the Father, but a revelation or actualization of their union itself is lacking. Indeed, one seems to slip into the very problem which the posited dyadic

relation of Father and Son is supposed to resolve. If Father and Son complete the intra-divine motion, then the creation is still required as the theater for the contemplation and knowledge of the mutual communion of Father and Son.

This is the conceptual space wherein Palamas sets forth his doctrine of the Spirit's procession. The Spirit, according to Palamas, is "like an ineffable love of the Begetter towards the ineffably Begotten Word himself", which the "beloved Word" immediately reciprocates "towards the Father" (*150 Chapters* 36). The Spirit, then, proceeds from the Father in order that He might be He who manifests the consubstantial communion in relation to Father and Son. In describing the importance of the Spirit, Palamas cites Solomon's description of the relationship between the Son and Father in Proverbs 8: Solomon "did not say [that they] 'rejoiced' but [that they] 'rejoiced together.'" Palamas specifically emphasizes the word "together" in order to prove the necessity of a third divine person (*150 Chapters* 36). The importance of this point can be understood in light of the principle that an energy is always directed towards another hypostasis. Because the joy is at once "pre-eternal" and "mutual"¹⁷ to Father and Son, there must be a third eternal hypostasis in relation to whom mutual joy is realized. Thus, the Spirit "is the pre-eternal joy of the Father and the Son" because He is "common to them by mutual intimacy" (*150 Chapters* 36). The Spirit is thus described as "ineffable love" because He makes manifest the divinity always and exactly as communion. The Son never moves towards the Father simply as the Son, but always in His being joined with the Spirit in co-operation and communion.

Thus, for St. Gregory Palamas, the doctrine of the divine energies attains its significance precisely in its trinitarian character. The contingency of the world demands a self-existent, infinite God in the perfectly kinetic motion by which He apprehends the infinite principles of things in His own mind, a God who knows Himself in an uninterrupted movement of self-contemplation. But the Hellenic notions of God and the cosmos were insufficient coherently to meet these criteria. Aristotle's Prime Mover set the celestial spheres in motion as it revolved upon itself in the act of self-knowledge. The cosmos is in essential relation to the Prime Mover as it revolves in descending spheres according to the revolution of the Prime Mover on himself. For Neoplatonism the hierarchy of spheres set in motion by the Prime Mover has been replaced by the hierarchy of divine processions. But for Palamas' purposes, both models suffer

similar problems. A thing is actualized in its manifestations, and these can only be actualized in relation to hypostases with the capacity to receive them. The Hellenic God, being sheer Monad, is unable to exist in infinite actuality, there being no truly consubstantial hypostases in relation to which the One can make himself entirely manifest. Palamas' argument for the existence of God, then, is developed in light of his doctrine of the essence-energies distinction, through which lens God's trihypostatic existence is seen to be necessary.

V. The Energies as a Revelation of the Trinity to Creatures

Having addressed the use of the doctrine of the energies to explain the *ad intra* life of God, my purpose in the rest of this paper is to develop that idea to shed light on a Palamite doctrine of trinitarian revelation. Since our knowledge of God is had only through the energies, one must give an account of how this energetic revelation provides an epistemological basis for the knowledge of God as One and Three. Palamas characterizes the energetic revelation of God in a trinitarian fashion by stating that "...all energies are contemplated [θεωροῦνται] in not one but three persons" (150 Chapters 137). The acquisition of θεωρία entails not a revelation of God's nature instead of His hypostases, but a revelation of God according to His trinitarian character. Indeed, Palamas' arguments concerning the necessity of the Trinity depend upon God's revelation of His nature. To know God's attributes in the manifestations of His nature is to know those attributes which imply His trinitarian life, such as love, humility, and communion. Stoyan Tanev, describing Palamas' understanding of this relationship, writes that "the specific manner...of this manifestation depends on the way the hypostasis exists." The peculiar property of each hypostasis "shape out and provide the particular mode of the manifestation of the energies."¹⁸ God's self-disclosure is *always* a trinitarian revelation because the energies are always realized enhypostatically: the actual subject of action is the hypostasis. The challenge for any theologian of the Trinity is to explain how the human person is incorporated into the life of the trihypostatic Lord without being absorbed into the essence or being identified with a particular divine person. One must know that the Spirit *does* proceed without becoming *part* of that procession.

Referring to the natural energies, Palamas in the *Dialogue* approvingly quotes Gregory of Nyssa, saying "if something is said...by the divine Scriptures, it signifies something about that which surrounds divinity" (*Dialogue Between an*

Orthodox and a Barlaamite 17). Similarly, in the *Triads*, Palamas writes that deification “can be given a name” (*Triads* 3.1.32) through those who have shared in the divine life. A thing is named according to its distinctive nature, and that nature is known only through participation in its natural activities. One uses the name “bluebird” to pick out those birds who are known to be such through a distinctive set of acts belonging only to creatures of that genus. The word originates precisely in that the energies of such creatures have been shared with human persons by means of the receptive capacity and rational faculty intrinsic to human nature. However, a difficulty arises in that unique names are ascribed to each of the three hypostases: the Logos is the only divine Person to whom the name “Son” properly belongs. If names are ascribed only through *natural* activities, how can names be properly ascribed to the *persons*? The answer is that the manifestation of the natural energy is given shape in a way proper to the peculiar hypostases. The Son is known as the Son and as God in the very same act of self-disclosure: it is a disclosure of *divine* activities in a *filial* mode.

Moreover, Palamas’ appropriation of Augustine’s imagery in *De Trinitate* is clarified in view of Palamas’ discussion of the Word and Spirit cited above. Augustine notes that the Holy Spirit appears to be signified by a name denoting what is *common* among the persons. Each hypostasis is holy, and each is spirit. Thus, Augustine (*On the Trinity* 6.7) suggests that the “Holy Spirit, whatever it is, is something common both to the Father and Son.” God is named according to His energies, and His energies are shaped out, as it were, according to the distinct modes of manifestation belonging to each person. Thus, the Spirit is designated by the name “Holy Spirit” not because of direct human apprehension of the character of His eternal procession, but because of His unique place in the structure of the Trinitarian relations. Because God exists as necessarily and not accidentally one, and because existence is actualized in relation, the Spirit’s *manifesting* the unity of divine activity is essential to that unity. Holiness is an act through which mankind is sanctified, and the Spirit is named as “Holy Spirit” because He, manifesting the common act of Father, Son, and Spirit is the agent by which that common activity is communicated to the Church. The names of the persons, then, belong to each person because of the distinctive role each plays in kinetic relation to each other. Moreover, that such a relationship can be named implies the capacity of creation to participate in that very same relation. No creature can possibly share in the generation of the Son. Yet, scripture refers to incorporation into Christ as “sonship” (Gal.

4:5).

The ontological basis for such adoption is found in the relationality of the energies. A baptized Christian is not adopted as son through sharing in the generation of the Son, but rather in being drawn, through the Spirit, into the relational place that the Son has with the Father. Articulating the Spirit's eternal relationship with the Son in energetic terms functions in the same way; the Spirit is named the "Spirit of the Son" (Gal. 4:6) in the context of the Spirit's *adoption* of the faithful into the sonship of Christ. The Spirit's eternal relationship with the Son must be a relationship that is participable if it is to do the theological work scripture requires of it. The concept of the divine energies provides a firm and precise foundation upon which the mystery of the Trinity can be related to the mystery of the Church, as the energies provide a metaphysical category for the latter's proper participation in the former. The Church exists as the body of the incarnate *Son*, and the Spirit binds the Church in unity with the Father in a manifestation of His eternally binding the Father and Son in their consubstantial communion.¹⁹ Given the integral link between the concept of activity and the notion of language (naming) described above, the ecclesiology which unfolds from the doctrine of the energies places the concept of Christ as the revelatory *Word* into sharp focus. Khaled Anatolios argues that the intelligibility of the biblical narrative demands that "Father, Son, and Spirit are mutually referring speech-acts such that...[they are] radically *conversational*."²⁰ Matthew Bates similarly emphasizes the essential role that the concept of divine conversation played in the early history of trinitarian doctrine. Bates argues that the unfolding of the doctrine of the Trinity was rooted in "prosopological exegesis", wherein conversations reported in the Old Testament are attributed to an eternal dialogue between Father and Son.²¹ Bates concludes that "from our earliest Christian sources", Jesus was understood to be divine in His identification as "the Son who converses with the person of the Father through the Spirit in a time transcending fashion."²² The context of such exegesis in early high Christology reinforces the inner logic of the Palamite distinction; that God is in conversation is intrinsic to His being God, and such character necessitates the existence of a conversation partner or partners. The incarnate Jesus Christ is disclosed as truly God in nature through these speech, or word – or indeed, Word – activities with the Father. This suggests the reason why Paul, in the context of describing divinization through the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:15, Gal. 4:6), invokes Jesus' suffering prayer life (Mk. 14:36): To be glorified is to participate

in the eternal Son's prayer to the Father.

The doctrine of the divine energies elucidated by Gregory Palamas is a thoroughly trinitarian doctrine. The uncreated energies, and their existence as both actualities and activities, explain why the divine essence which they manifest subsists in the common life of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Moreover, on this same account, the role of the energies in the internal life of God also shows the way in which God is manifest as Trinity in the economy of revelation and redemption. Thus the Palamite's profound teaching is above all a perpetual call for the Church to direct her eyes to the vision of the three-sunned light.

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Notes

1. See Meyendorff's summary of the controversy's origin in Meyendorff, John. *A Study of Gregory Palamas*. Translated by George Lawrence. 2nd ed. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimirs Seminary Press, 1974, 42-44.
2. David Bradshaw, "The Concept of the Divine Energies." *Philosophy and Theology* 18, no. 1 (2006): 93-120.
3. Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (Seoul: Christian Literature Society of Korea, 2008), 193-196.
4. To be precise, the idea that energy and that of logos are not completely synonymous. A (first) energy is an actuality, idea, or form which belongs intrinsically to God from eternity. There is an infinite plenitude of operations or qualities intrinsic to God. A logos more specifically refers to those energies which have been freely and contingently realized as principles of created natures. So while each energy has the *capacity* to be realized as a logos, the number of energies which are *actually* signified by the term "logos" is limited by the limited number of created natures.
5. David Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* (Cambridge University Press: 2004), 13ff.
6. Eric Perl, "Gregory Palamas and the Metaphysics of Creation," *Dionysius XIV* (December 1990): 119.

7. Not the motion which denotes transition from potency to act by efficient causation, but the motion described by St. Maximus in his idea of the eschatological “ever-moving rest” whereby the saints repose in the eternal repose of the Blessed Trinity.
8. Vyacheslav Lytvynenko, "Sergey Bulgakov and Georges Florovsky: The Task of Relating God and Creation," *Theological Reflections: Euro-Asian Journal of Theology*, no. 15 (2014): 225.
9. See my below discussion below of on the ontological standing of receptive capacities. To speak of the operation of sight as having in itself the power of sight means that the capacity to receive the revealed light of God is intrinsic to the capacity of each divine person to reveal that light. Thus, “in thy light shall we see light.” At the event of the Transfiguration, the Apostles behold the light of God precisely because they have been incorporated into the cloud. This idea is prominent also in later Orthodox theology and spirituality, this idea is prominent in St. Seraphim of Sarov’s conversation with Nicholas Motovilov, in “On the Acquisition of the Holy Spirit” of St. Seraphim of Sarov. in which Motovilov the latter reports that, upon his seeing the hesychastic elder radiant with divine light, St. Seraphim told him : that “you You yourself have become as bright as I am...otherwise you would not be able to see me as I am” (Nicholas Motovilov, *On the Acquisition of the Holy Spirit*).
10. Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 16.
11. Explained in more detail in Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 5-7.
12. As in the conceptual relation of *logoi* and *energeia* discussed in n.4 above.
13. This idea of the inner productivity of the divine nature in the context of Trinitarian theology reaches back to the Nicene controversy, where it was especially developed by St. Gregory of Nyssa in his critique of Eunomius. Given the multiplicity of Palamas’ references to Nyssa, the latter’s doctrine on this point should be given special attention in understanding Palamas’ intent. Michael Barnes writes concerning Nyssa that “for Gregory the transcendence of God includes the capacity to produce...God’s existence is the kind that (re)produces.” Michel Barnes, *The Power of God: Δύναμις in Gregory of Nyssa’s Trinitarian Theology*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2001.
14. Per the discussion of *Triads* 3.1.20 above, a thing’s continued reception of that which is manifested is that which permits its sustained manifestation: that the Son is a perfectly suited torch for the paternal flame, as it were, entails the perpetual burning of that flame.
15. Identical here with energies, goodnesses, *first actualities*, etc.

16. Of course, any language suggesting any temporal priority or sequence should not be taken at face value. There self-exists one God, the Father. As it is intrinsic to God to exist maximally and infinitely, the contemplation of the Son and Spirit by which such infinity coherently belongs to the Father entails the necessary and eternal coexistence of Father, Son, and Spirit.

17. Mutuality refers not simply to *both* the Son *and* the Father acting with the same operation. Instead, it refers to the fact that Father and Son are *conjoined in the very activity* through which they make themselves jointly manifest.

18. Stoyan Tanev, "Energeia vs. Sophia," *International Journal of Orthodox Theology* 2, no. 1 (2011): 20.

19. To speak of consubstantial communion is to speak of the interpenetration of consubstantial persons through their acts: it is not, in my view, precise to speak of a "communion of nature." To speak of communion is to speak of a relation among distinct subjects (through activities), so that there is not so much a communion of nature as there is an identity of nature, and a perfect communion of divine persons in virtue of that identical nature.

20. Khaled Anatolios, *The Holy Trinity in the Life of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2014), 163.

21. Bates finds the earliest examples of such a hermeneutic in the ministry of Jesus himself, pointing especially to His use of Ps. 110 in Matthew 24 and other texts. This hermeneutic is likewise reflected in Romans 15:9-11, 2 Corinthians 4:13, and Hebrews 1:5-13.

22. Matthew W. Bates, *The Birth of the Trinity: Jesus, God, and Spirit in New Testament and Early Christian Interpretations of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 204.