

Constantinos Athanasopoulos and Christoph Schneider (eds.), *Divine Essence and Divine Energies. Ecumenical Reflections on the Presence of God in Eastern Orthodoxy*, James Clarke & Co, Cambridge, 2013, 298 p.

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This volume is based on a colloquium organized by the Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies, University of Cambridge, on 5 December 2008. Taking as its starting point the familiar work of David Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* (Cambridge, 2004)¹, the authors discuss the distinction (not separation) between the divine essence and energy, which is a teaching specific to Orthodoxy.

The first study emphasizes two issues: on the one hand, this teaching is at the very core of the Orthodox tradition, on the other hand, it has no direct equivalent in the West. The remainder of the volume details and deepens these two issues, resulting in a genuine ecumenical debate about this (still) controversial doctrine. All authors, be they Orthodox, Anglican, Calvinist, or Catholic, discuss the essence–energy distinction from a historical, theological, and philosophical perspective. The result is a heterogeneous collection of views which, in our opinion, has as a converging point the search for an answer to the question: to what extent is the topic relevant to the Christian East and West?

In the opinion of David Bradshaw, Constantinos Athanasopoulos, and Loudovikos Nikolaos, the essence–energy distinction is a key doctrine of Orthodoxy and reflects its superiority over Western theology, which draws heavily on Aristotelian notions. The main sources of the Orthodox tradition are St Paul, the Apostolic Fathers, the Cappadocian Fathers, Dionysius the Areopagite, John of Damascus, Maximus the Confessor, and Gregory Palamas. The authors maintain that this hermeneutical line is opposed to that of Augustine (Athanasopoulos even believes that the Eastern reception and interpretation of Aristotle is more accurate than the Western one). Roy Clouser, a proponent of the Neo-Calvinist tradition, sees commonalities between the Orthodox vision and a certain theology of a Western type; he thus distinguishes between Cappadocian and Reformational theology on the one hand and the

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¹ This book was translated into Romanian with a different title: David Bradshaw, *Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom*, translated by Dragoș Dâscă and Vasile Bârzu, Ecclesiastes, Sibiu, 2010. See my review published in *Theological Review* 21 (2011), no. 1, p. 191–192.