Article

God and Space

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Abstract: This paper inquires into the nature of God's relationship to space. It explores two different views, one that God transcends space or exists aspatially and the other that God exists throughout space and so is spatially extended. It seeks to adjudicate the debate between these competing perspectives by weighing the principal arguments for and against each view.

1. Introduction

Just as an eternal God can be conceived to be either temporal or atemporal, so an omnipresent God can be conceived to be either spatial or aspatial; that is to say, either God may exist in space or God may transcend space. If God transcends space, then a reductive analysis of divine omnipresence in terms of God's omnipotence and omniscience seems to be in order. If God exists in space, then His omnipresence requires that He exist, not merely somewhere but everywhere in space or omnispatially. Only in very recent years have contemporary philosophical theologians begun to address the question of the nature of divine omnipresence.[1] This paper seeks to extend that discussion.

2. Biblical Data concerning Divine Omnipresence

For thinkers in the Judeo-Christian tradition, the teaching of the Bible on the divine nature is authoritative.[2] The biblical data pertinent to divine omnipresence almost one-sidedly support God's omnispatiality. The Scriptures consistently speak of God as being in space (Ex 29.44–46; II Chron 7.1–3). Despite their often anthropomorphic descriptions, the Scriptures also firmly insist that God is not confined to any localized place but "fill[s] heaven and earth" (Jer 23.23–24; cf. Ps 139.7–10). The question remains as to the theological weight to be ascribed to these passages. Here, we do well to keep in mind Paul Helm's point respecting God's relationship to time, that the biblical writers may have lacked the reflective context for raising questions about divine temporality vs. atemporality (Helm 1988, pp. 5–11)—the same goes for God's spatiality vs. aspatiality. The purpose of the biblical passages concerning God's omnipresence is not to teach metaphysics but to assure us of God's universal sovereignty, inescapability, and accessibility. Indeed, the thrust of biblical passages about God's dwelling in heaven is to emphasize His transcendence, not His spatial location.[3] In asserting that "Even heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you" (I Kgs 8.13, 27), Solomon's prayer actually leans in the direction of God's transcending space. Biblical authors were well aware that Gen 1.1 teaches that in the beginning, the transcendent God created the heavens and the earth so that everything that exists apart from God was created by Him (Jn 1.1–3). The transcendent God is certainly active in space and knows what is going on everywhere in space, but is He literally in space Himself? As in the case of divine eternity, the biblical data are underdeterminative, putting the question into the hands of the philosophical theologian.

3. Divine Omnispatiality

3.1. Spatial Location Relations

Contemporary discussion of divine omnispatiality intersects recondite debates among metaphysicians over mereology and location relations.[4] The seminal treatment for contemporary debates over spatial location is a widely circulated but, to the best of my knowledge, yet unpublished article by Josh Parsons.[5] Inspired by David Lewis' distinguishing two ways in which an object might temporally persist, which Lewis denominated *endurance* and *perdurance*,[6] Parsons distinguished two ways in which an object might be spatially extended: *entention* and *pertention*. "Entension, then, is the spatial version of endurance, 'pertension' being analogous to 'perdurance', and 'extension', the neutral term, analogous to 'persistence'." (Parsons 2003, p. 2). As Parsons uses the term, then, "When an object is located in multiple places, whether wholly or partially, it *extends*." (Parsons 2003, p. 1). If an object is located in multiple places by virtue of having distinct parts in those places, then it *pertends*. If it is located in multiple places by being wholly located in those places, then it *entends*. Entension thus involves mereologically simple objects that are nonetheless spatially extended, that is to say, objects having no proper parts but covering or occupying extended regions of space.

Intriguingly for students of divine omnipresence, Parsons takes as his point of departure not the hypothesis that there are extended, simple objects located within a surrounding region of space, such as an electron, but the Spinozistic hypothesis that there is only one material thing that fills all of space. Such an object cannot be pertended—filling space by having proper spatial parts—because ex hypothesi there is only one object and, hence, no parts (Parsons 2003, p. 2). It must therefore be entended, wholly present at every subregion of space as well as at universal space. The hypothesis is theologically provocative, for if a material object can be wholly present at every spatial region it occupies, including all of space, then how much more might an immaterial being like God, who has no physical parts, be entended throughout all of space!

Such a hypothesis leads Parsons to draw a crucial distinction between an object's being *entirely* located at some place and its being *wholly* located at some place: an object is entirely located at some place when there is no non-overlapping region at which it is also located; by contrast, an object is wholly located at some place when all of its parts are located at that place (Parsons 2003, p. 4). Obviously, this is a technical terminological distinction, which makes no pretense of capturing ordinary language usage. In a later piece, Parsons illustrates the difference:

> When I say that I am all in the office—that I am not stepping over the threshold or sticking an arm out of the window—there are two things I might mean. One is that I am *entirely* in the office, in the sense . . . that everywhere disjoint from the office is free of me. The other thing I might mean is that I am *wholly* in the office: that none of me is missing from the office; every part of me is in the office. (Parsons 2007, p. 212)

The rub is that an extended, simple object could be, contrary to ordinary usage, wholly in a place without being entirely in that place. If it is in a place, it is wholly in that place because it has no proper parts, and so all its parts are in that place; it has no parts not in that place. But it may not be entirely in that place, for there may be regions of space disjoint from the place in question where it also is. As an extended simple object, it will be wholly present not only at every distinct subregion of a region it occupies but may also be wholly present at regions that are not subregions of that region. Assuming that I am a composite object, Parsons explains the following:

> Whole location and entire location tend to go around together. When I'm entirely in the office, I'm also wholly in the office; if I reach an arm out the window, I'm not entirely in the office, because I'm also in the street, but also, I'm not wholly in the office, because my arm isn't in the office. However, suppose the extended simple sphere were hovering over the sill of my window: it would be neither

entirely in the office (for it is also in the street) nor entirely in the street (for it is also in the office). But it would be wholly in the office (for it has no part save itself, and that part is in the office) and wholly in the street (for it has no part save itself, and that part is in the street). (Parsons 2007, p. 212)

The envisaged situation is disorienting and perhaps even metaphysically impossible, but it is conceptually possible for an object to have all its parts in a place and so be wholly there while at the same time occupying regions that do not overlap the region where it is so that the region it entirely occupies is a fusion of disjoint regions. "What is distinctive of entension", says Parsons, "is that an entended object is wholly located in places other than those at which it is entirely located—or, equivalently, that it is wholly located at more than one place." (Parsons 2003, p. 4).

3.2. Divine Ubiquitous Entension

Apart from his discussion of the Spinozistic God, Parsons makes no application of his theory of location to theism. That task was taken up by the Christian philosopher Hud Hudson a few years later. While acknowledging his debt to Parsons, Hudson restricts his spatial location relations to non-point-sized regions, whereas Parsons does not. But apart from this, there does not appear to be anything about Hudson's definitions with which Parsons would disagree. Hudson proposes that we understand divine omnipresence as God's ubiquitous entension.[7] "Once again, to entend is to be wholly and entirely located at some non-point-sized region (in the case of omnipresence, at the maximally inclusive region) and to be wholly located at each of that region's proper subregions (in the case of omnipresence, at every other region there is)." (Hudson 2009, p. 209). Hudson observes that "if there is no maximal region", that is to say, if space is so big that every region of space has proper superregions, "then omnipresence would simply amount to being wholly present at each of the infinitely many contained regions." (Hudson 2009, p. 214).

4. Historical Representatives of Omnispatiality

4.1. Pasnau's Claim

Sir Isaac Newton famously believed that God exists omnispatially, constituting and filling absolute space and time by His very existing. Newton is usually considered to be out of the mainstream of traditional Christian theology in this regard. But intellectual historian Robert Pasnau has made the startling claim that divine omnispatiality represents, in fact, the mainstream Christian position.[8] He maintains that historically Christian theologians have universally believed that God is wholly present at every place in space and therefore exists throughout space. This belief is evidently the same conviction underlying contemporary theories of divine omnispatiality. Borrowing a neologism coined by Newton's predecessor Henry More, Pasnau calls such a view holenmerism, which means literally "whole-in-partism." Something is said to exist holenmerically just in case it exists "wholly at each place where it exists... if a thing exists holenmerically then it does not have proper integral parts: the 'part' of it that exists at any sub-region would be the whole of it." (Pasnau 2011a, p. 337). Thus, in holenmerism, the "whole" denotes the occupying substance and the "part" the region of space that is occupied. Pasnau asserts, "Holenmerism is the standard view regarding immaterial entities—God, angels, and rational souls—from Plotinus, Augustine, and Anselm all the way through the scholastic era. Nearly all the leading scholastic authors embrace this position, including Bonaventure, Aquinas, Scotus, Ockham, and Buridan."[9] Unfortunately, apart from providing, without comment, a list of references,[10] Pasnau does little to support this claim for patristic and medieval thinkers. Since such theologians are traditionally thought to have conceived God to be both timeless and spaceless, Pasnau's claim, if correct, would force a radical reinterpretation of such thinkers.[11]

In interpreting the views of premodern theologians concerning divine omnipresence, we are confronted with the difficulty that their statements in this regard reflect biblical language and are frustratingly ambiguous and open to various interpretations. Consider, preeminently, the claim that God is wholly present everywhere. This claim was universally

accepted, since God, being incorporeal, is not composed of physical parts. Therefore, divine pertension throughout space was out of the question. This conclusion appears *prima facie* to provide support for divine omnispatiality, until one asks what, exactly, is meant by being "wholly present." It turns out that such an expression is ambiguous and may mean that God governs or operates at every place in space, which is consistent with divine aspatiality.

For example, in his *Divine Institutes* 7, the early fourth-century theologian Lactantius takes aim at Stoic thinkers who conceived of God as the mind of the world and the world as the body of God, in contrast to Platonists who held that the world was created by God and governed by Him. Repudiating Virgil's statement that "Mind spread through all the limbs impels the entire mass and mingles itself in the vast body", Lactantius says, "If he made the world, he existed without it. If he rules it, he does so not as mind rules the body, but as a master rules a house, a driver a chariot, that is, as not mixed up with the things they rule." Here, Lactantius explicitly rejects the soul's presence in the body as an analogy for divine omnipresence. God transcends creation and is not mingled with it, ruling it rather like the master of a house or a charioteer. He thinks that divine holenmerism would have the objectionable implication that the world is God's body. He therefore maintains that the Stoics "have not understood that the divine spirit is diffused everywhere and holds all things together, but not in such a way that the incorrupt God himself is mingled with the solid corruptible elements."

Brian Leftow has wisely advised that "Treatments of omnipresence should distinguish its *nature* (what it is to be omnipresent), *cause* (what makes God omnipresent) and *manner* (the kind of presence God has everywhere)."[12] Only by reading specific texts within the larger theological context of a theologian's thought and by reading the crucial passages carefully in their literary context rather than snatching at phrases can we hope to answer such questions. As biblical interpreters are all too aware, if an interpreter comes to a text with a particular interpretation firmly in mind, then the text can often be read in a manner consistent with that interpretation; nonetheless, such an interpretation may not be the most natural and plausible reading of the text.

4.2. Augustine's Doctrine of Divine Omnipresence

Consider, for example, Augustine, whom proponents of divine omnispatiality would claim as one of their own. Augustine's most relevant statements on divine omnipresence come in his letter to Claudius Dardanus, which Augustine later entitled "The Presence of God." Ross Inman thinks that "Perhaps the clearest statement of Augustine's positive view of divine omnipresence" is the following passage (Inman 2017, p. 185):

> On this account is He said to be everywhere, because He is absent to no part; on this account is He said to be whole, because He presents not one part of Himself to a part of things, and another part of Himself to another part of things, equal part to equal parts of things, a less to lesser parts, greater to a greater part; but He is equally present as a whole not only to the whole of the universe, but also to each part of it.[13]

Alas, however, this passage is attended by the very ambiguity of which we have just spoken. It amounts merely to a rejection of divine ubiquitous pertension in favor of God's being wholly present everywhere, but it leaves unexplained the way in which God is wholly present to every part of the universe.

4.3. Plontinus' Doctrine of Omnipresence

We can come to a clearer understanding of Augustine's doctrine by considering the wider theological context of his view of God's relationship to space and time. Augustine's doctrine of divine omnipresence is shaped by Plotinus' treatment of what he called "the presence of Being, one and the same, everywhere as a whole" [*to on hen kai tauton on hama pantaxou einai holon*].[14] Plotinus insists that the All (*to pan*) is not contained in anything but, on the contrary, contains all things. "There exist certainly both the true All and the representation of the All, the nature of this visible universe. The really existent All is in

nothing: for there is nothing before it. But that which comes after it must necessarily then exist in the All, if it is going to exist at all, being as much as possible dependent on it."[15] The priority of the All is ontological, not temporal, in that it is the source of the universe. Though the All is said to contain all things, Plotinus emphasizes that the true All (or in McKenna's translation the Authentic All) (*to alēthinon pan*) is not some sort of spatial container of the universe:

> We may be reminded that the universe cannot be contained in the Authentic as in a place, where place would mean the boundaries of some surrounding extension considered as an envelope, or some space formerly a part of the Void and still remaining unoccupied even after the emergence of the universe, that it can only support itself, as it were, upon the Authentic and rest in the embrace of its omnipresence; but this objection is merely verbal and will disappear if our meaning is grasped; we mention it for another purpose; it goes to enforce our real assertion that the Authentic All, at once primal and veritable, needs no place and is in no way contained. The All, as being an integral, cannot fall short of itself; it must ever have fulfilled its own totality, ever reached to its own equivalence; as far as the sum of entities extends, there this is; for this is the All.[16]

It is precisely the All's transcendence of space that enables it to be present to all things in space rather than to extend part by part throughout space:

> One should also not be amazed if the [true] universe [*to alēthinon pan*], while not being in place, is present to everything that is in place. The contrary would be amazing, in fact, not just amazing, but impossible, if it also had its own place and were present to something else that was in place, or was present wholly, namely, in the way we say it is present. As things are, the argument asserts that it is necessary for it, since it has occupied no place, to be wholly present to anything it is present to, and to be present to all just as it is also wholly present to each. If this is not so, part of it will be here and part elsewhere. The result is that it will be divisible and a body.[17]

The true All is not only spaceless but timeless: "It is not like a stone, some vast block lying where it lies, covering the space of its own extension, held within its own limits, having a fixed quantity of mass and of assigned stone-power. It is a First Principle, measureless, not bounded within determined size--such measurement belongs to another order – and therefore it is all-power, nowhere under limit. Being so, it is outside of Time."[18] Plotinus makes use of theological language when he says, "there is That Other whom the cities seek, and all the earth and heaven, everywhere with God and in Him, possessing through Him their Being and the Real Beings about them, down to soul and life, all bound to Him and so moving to that unity which by its very lack of extension is infinite (*eis hen apeiron ionta amegethei tō apeirō*)."[19] The idea of all things existing in God and being contained by Him especially resonated with Christian thinkers in light of the scriptural affirmation that "in him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17.28). Leftow therefore quite rightly reminds us that "The availability since Plotinus of non-spatial uses of 'in' and 'contain' cautions us in reading the apparently spatial language of later treatments of omnipresence."[20]

How, then, is the true All present to all things? Plotinus answers: by being the source of their being; things participate in the All and so have their being:

> Now if this is real being and remains the same and does not depart from itself and there is no coming-to-be about it and, as was said, it is not in place, it is necessary for it, being in this state, to be always with itself, and not to stand away from itself; one part of it cannot be here and another there, nor can anything come out of it; [for if it did] it would already be in different places, and, in general, would be in something and not on its own or unaffected; for it would be affected if it was in something else; but if it is going to be in a state of freedom from affection, it will not be in something else. If, therefore, without departing from itself or

> being divided into parts or itself undergoing any change, it is in many things
> at once, existing at the same time as one whole with itself, then, being the same
> everywhere, it will have an existence in many things: but this is being on its own
> and, again, not being on its own. It remains, then, to say that it is itself in nothing,
> but the other things participate in it, all those which are able to be present to it
> and in so far as they are able to be present to it.[21]

It would be a self-contradiction for the true Being both to exist on its own as an impassible unity and to exist in many sensible things in space; therefore, it literally exists in nothing. It is present to all things in that they participate in it as the source of their being.

4.4. Augustine's Doctrine Once More

Return now to Augustine's view of divine omnipresence. God's relationship to space is analogous to His relationship to time. Firmly committed to a tensed theory of time and the objectivity of temporal becoming,[22] Augustine could not accept that God exists wholly at every successive time, for that would make Him subject to temporal becoming, which was theologically unacceptable. Therefore, God exists timelessly. But then how can God, existing timelessly, be present to things that do not yet or no longer exist in time? He writes to Simplician,

> What then is foreknowledge, if not knowledge of the future? But what becoming
> is there in God, who transcends all time? If then God's knowledge possesses
> the things themselves, they are not for Him future but present. It follows that
> one may not in this case speak of foreknowledge, but simply knowledge. But if
> things which will exist do not yet exist for Him anymore than for creatures in the
> temporal order, but He foreknows them by His knowledge, then He apprehends
> them in two ways: on the one hand, via foreknowledge of future things and on
> the other via knowledge of present things. Therefore something temporal would
> be added to God's knowledge, which is both utterly absurd and utterly false.[23]

If temporal creatures themselves, which undergo temporal becoming, were successively present to God, then an element of temporality would be introduced into God. Given his tensed view of time, Augustine will not accept that temporal creatures are all tenselessly present to God in eternity. Therefore, he is led to deny the assumption that "God's knowledge possesses the things themselves." Rather, following Plotinus, for whom the immediate cognitive object of the *Noûs* is the realm of intelligible essences that constitute the archetypes for particulars in time and space so that the *Noûs* possesses changelessly and timelessly knowledge of all things past, present, and future,[24] Augustine declares,

> the ideas are certain original and principal forms of things, i.e., reasons, fixed
> and unchangeable, which are not themselves formed and, being thus eternal
> and existing always in the same state, are contained in the Divine Intelligence.
> And though they themselves never come into being and pass away, nevertheless,
> everything which can come into being and pass away and everything which does
> come into being and pass away is said to be formed in accord with these ideas.
>
> ... if these reasons of all things to be created or [already] created are contained
> in the Divine Mind, and if there can be in the Divine Mind nothing except
> what is eternal and unchangeable ... then not only are they ideas, but they
> are themselves true because they are eternal and because they remain ever the
> same and unchangeable. It is by participation in these that whatever is exists in
> whatever manner it does exist. [25]

According to Augustine, the divine archetypal ideas not only served as the pattern for creation but even after the creation served as the medium by which God knows His creatures.[26] Hence, it is not the creatures themselves that are timelessly present to God's knowledge but their archetypal ideas (see Zimara 1954, pp. 389, 392; cf. van Gerven 1957, p. 321).

But then if by "wholly present" to things or places in space, Augustine meant that God exists in space, divine timelessness would be immediately sacrificed. Not only would temporal creatures, rather than their ideas, then be present to God but God would be enmeshed in temporal becoming as things around Him constantly come into being and pass away. He, too, would be constantly changing, not only in His relations to things around Him but also in His knowledge of what is co-located with Him, thereby sacrificing immutability as well as timelessness. It would be uncharitable to suggest that a thinker so exercised by God's relationship to time as Augustine would have been oblivious to such an evident incoherence in his view and never thought to address it.

The only hope for Augustine of preserving divine timelessness would be maintaining divine spacelessness as well. In that case, God's being wholly present to things in space is plausibly not a relation that involves God's being in space. And in his letter to Dardanus, is this not exactly what we find? Augustine's point of departure is Dardanus' question concerning Jesus' whereabouts between his death and resurrection. Augustine's short answer is that "Christ, as God, is always everywhere."[27] Notice that just as Augustine states that God is everywhere, he also affirms that God is always everywhere, that is, everywhere at every time, even though he thinks that God exists timelessly. This fact warns us not to assume too quickly that he means that God is located in every place. Augustine previews his fuller answer when he says of Christ, "He is the power and wisdom of God, of which scripture says that it stretches from end to end mightily and arranges all things pleasingly (Wis 8:1) and reaches everywhere on account of its purity, and nothing impure is found in it (Wis 7:24–25)."[28] Here, we find an appeal to God's power and wisdom, so far-reaching in their consequences, as a basis of divine omnipresence.

Interestingly, Augustine nowhere in this letter appeals to the analogy of the soul's being wholly present in every part of the body. Nonetheless, Inman, taking his cue from Pasnau, thinks that God's entending throughout space is but one instance of a more general principle, namely, that immaterial entities, in contrast to material entities, are located in space by means of entension. Inman says,

> Augustine situates the distinct ways in which the soul and body are located in space within a more comprehensive view of the material–immaterial divide, one that is characterized at least in part by the capacity for distinct ways of being located in space. Like all material objects, the body is located at a place by being partly located at every part of that place; in the parlance of contemporary metaphysics, the body *pertends* in space. Being immaterial, the human soul is located at a place by being, "whole in the whole and whole also in any part of the body" (*On the Trinity*, 6.2.8); in contrast to material beings, the soul *entends* in space. (Inman 2017, p. 184)

Apart from the fact that Augustine does not draw this analogy in treating divine omnipresence, there are two problems with pressing the analogy to illuminate the nature of God's omnipresence. First, while Augustine affirms that God is wholly present everywhere in the universe and that the soul is wholly present throughout the body, it is not clear that God is for that reason spatially located. The point of the analogy is whole presence, not spatiality. God and the soul could be similar in being wholly present to things in space without God's being spatially located. Second, it is by no means clear that even the soul, in virtue of being wholly present throughout the body, is spatially located. In another letter Augustine says, "For [the soul] pervades the whole body which it animates, not by a local distribution of parts, but by a certain vital influence, being at the same moment present in its entirety in all parts of the body and not less in smaller parts and greater in larger parts, but here with more energy and there with less energy, it is in its entirety present in the whole body and in every part of it."[29] This appears to be an analysis of the soul's being wholly in the body not in terms of spatial extension but in terms of power and influence.

In Letter 187, Augustine concludes, "Hence God is spread out through all things", and quotes several Scriptures in support. Entension theorists delight in these sections of the letter, but in fact, all they aim to prove is the falsity of divine pertension. Tellingly,

Augustine proceeds to explicate his claim that "God is spread out through all things" by saying, "But God is spread out through all things not such that he is a quality of the world but such that he is the substance that creates the world, rules it without any toil, and contains it without any burden."[30] Here, the content of the expression "spread out" is explicated not in terms of spatial location but in terms of God's creating, ruling, and effortlessly containing all things.

What does it mean to say that God contains all things?—once more, the ambiguity! Augustine says that God is "contained in no place but whole everywhere in himself."[31] He later feels obliged to explain this odd locution "in himself", asking, "For how is he everywhere if he is in himself? He is everywhere, of course, because he is absent nowhere. But he is in himself because he is not contained by those things to which he is present, as if he could not exist without them."[32] The idea here seems to be that God considered in and of Himself exists a se and so is not dependent upon space for His existence. Take away space, and bodies could not exist; take away bodies, and their qualities could not exist; but take away space, and God would still exist. Pari passu, God can be said to contain all things in that if one were to take away God, nothing would exist! For Augustine, as for Plotinus, creatures have their being by participation in God.

Augustine goes on to deny both the temporal and spatial extension of God. A sound "is equally present to all in the place where they are", even if people's subjective perceptions are different. "How much more excellently is God, an incorporeal and immutably living nature, *who cannot be extended and divided like a sound over stretches of time* and *who does not need an airy space in which to make himself present to others* but, remaining in himself in his eternal stability, able to be present to all things in his totality and to individual things in his totality."[33] Here, Augustine draws together God's relations to both time and space. God is not temporally extended and divisible into temporal parts but, as we have seen, exists timelessly. God does not need space (much less air) in order to be present to other things in space. Since physical things could not exist without space, Augustine must mean that God need not Himself be in space in order to be present to things in space. He exists in Himself timelessly and spacelessly and is wholly present to things, as already said, by His power and wisdom.

Augustine is admittedly not as clear as we should like. Some of his statements, when taken out of context, sound like an affirmation of some sort of ubiquitous entension. But when Augustine's statements are read in their theological and literary context, then the most natural and plausible interpretation of his doctrine is that God exists timelessly and spacelessly and is wholly present to things in space by causing and knowing them.

4.5. Conclusions

Elsewhere, I have tried to show that what holds of Augustine also holds of Anselm and Aquinas as well.[34] While faithfully repeating biblical language about God's being present to all things and containing all things, all three accepted reductive accounts of divine omnipresence. Interestingly, in each case, considerations pertinent to God's relationship to time prove determinative for discerning His relationship to space: for Augustine, the impossibility of spatio-temporal things being really present to God; for Anselm, the unintelligibility of tensed times' existing all at once; and for Aquinas, the requirement of the contact principle (no action at a distance) that God be in time as well as in space. The fact that such authors freely employ biblical (and Plotinian!) expressions of divine spatiality while offering reductive accounts of divine omnipresence should alert us to the need for careful textual exegesis rather than mere proof-texting.

5. Assessment of the Debate

Given my conviction, argued elsewhere, that God is temporal (See Craig 2001; further, Craig 2021), at least since the moment of creation, the need to preserve divine timelessness, so important for the theologians I have mentioned, does not concern me. Indeed, given the

analogies between space and time, the conviction that God is temporal might dispose us to look favorably upon divine spatiality as well.

On the other hand, the doctrine of creatio ex nihilo requires that everything apart from God has come into existence at some time or other in the finite past so that God alone is eternal (Copan and Craig 2004). The fact that space is a creation of God ex nihilo at some time in the finite past—whether fundamentally as a substance in its own right, as substantivalists would have it, or derivatively with respect to objects and their relations, as relationalists would have it[35]—implies that God exists aspatially sans the universe, if not literally before it.[36] Committed by the doctrine of creation to divine aspatiality to begin with, we might be ill-disposed to surrender divine spacelessness for divine spatiality in the absence of persuasive arguments.

5.1. Arguments for Divine Spatiality

5.1.1. Biblical Accord

Perhaps the most important argument on behalf of divine spatiality is its literal accord with the biblical data on divine omnipresence, which seem to imply a God who exists throughout space. Important as this factor is, however, its force is tempered by (i) Scripture's evident anthropomorphism, (ii) the biblical writers' lack of a reflective context for considering questions about God's relationship to space, and (iii) the biblical writers' conviction that God is in heaven, which utterly transcends the world and whence He acts in the world. So, it would be tenuous, indeed, to conclude on the basis of biblical data alone that God is spatial.

Are there, then, some arguments that the philosophical theologian might offer in support of divine spatiality? In his survey of arguments on behalf of the respective positions, Hayden Stephan mentions three arguments for divine spatiality (Stephan 2022, chaps. 2–4).

5.1.2. Perfect Being Theology

First are considerations arising from perfect being theology. For example, Francis Turretin, after providing scriptural proofs of God's immensity (God's being uncircumscribed by spatial limits), argues that God is present by His essence everywhere: "If God is not immense in essence, but finite, it will favor the contradiction that the creature is greater than God. For as nothing can be added to infinity, so it is of the nature of the finite that something can always be added to it. Indeed if the essence of God is not elsewhere than in heaven, the universe will be greater than God."[37] This sort of argument is, however, directed against opponents who thought that God is "contained in heaven" as a place and so finite in His presence.[38] The argument, in effect, is that God cannot be entirely located in any place, even heaven, because being so located would be incompatible with His infinity. Obviously, defenders of divine spacelessness do not so conceive God.

It is noteworthy that even the affirmation that God is wholly and entirely located within the universe will not satisfy Turretin because God would then be merely finite. So God must somehow exist "beyond" the universe. But this "beyond" should not be taken to imply that God or space is embedded in a hyperspace:

> When God is said to be immense (as so everywhere in the world that nevertheless he is not included in the world, which is finite, but may be conceived to be also beyond the world), this ought not to be understood positively (as if certain spaces are to be conceived of beyond the world which God completely fills by his presence) but negatively (inasmuch as the universal spaces of the world do not exhaust the immensity of God so as to be contained in and circumscribed by them). He is said, therefore, to be beyond the world . . ., not as being in certain imaginary places, but in himself by the infinity of his own essence, as he was before the creation of the world in himself.[39]

We have here a strong affirmation of God's transcendence of space. He is beyond the world in the same way that He was prior to the creation of the world. But He is present by His essence throughout the world without being contained in the world.

Turretin frankly admits that he does not really understand what is meant by divine immensity, but he is sure what it excludes:

> This only is to be held as certain – that it does not consist either in the multiplication of the divine essence. . .; or in the extension and diffusion of any corporeal mass. . .; or in physical contact . . .; but in the simple and to us incomprehensible infinity of the divine essence, which is so intimately present with all things that it is both everywhere in the world and yet is not included in the world.[40]

God's being the transcendent ground of being of the world fits this bill perfectly.

The argument from perfect being theology thus tends to backfire. A God who transcends space and sustains all spatial things in being is plausibly greater than one who must Himself exist in space in order to sustain spatial things and who is in turn limited in space by its shape and size. This argument is not conclusive, however, for a transcendent God might have reason to condescend to enter into space, just as He had reason to assume a human nature for the sake of our redemption. But such a reason is as yet forthcoming.

5.1.3. The Contact Principle

Next is the argument based on the demands of the contact principle that there be no action at a distance. Pasnau distinguishes between explanatory and evidential versions of this objection (Pasnau 2011a, p. 353), but these labels are misleading. What is really at stake is two competing accounts of explanatory priority. According to one account, God's existence in space is explanatorily prior to His causing effects in space; being spatially located is a metaphysical prerequisite for causing spatial effects. According to the other account, God's causing a spatial effect is what serves to locate Him in space; God's causing some spatial effect thus explains why God is in space.

Again, this argument in either version can be given short shrift. Although there is vigorous debate among metaphysicians and philosophers of science about whether there can be action at a distance, such debates can be left aside, since even if the contact principle is true, as Aquinas saw, there just is no distance between the transcendent God and spatial creatures, so in being causally connected to them, God does not violate the "no action at a distance" principle.

Hence, the version of the objection that takes God's spatial location to be a prerequisite of His causing a spatial event fails. It is precisely because God need not be located in space in order to cause effects in space that God is able to create space and the universe in the first place. As Scotus wrote, "Before the creation of the universe, it was no more the case that God was here, where the universe now is, than it is that he is outside the imagined universe, where nothing is."[41] Yet God is able to create ex nihilo spatially extended objects and space itself.

According to the other version of the objection, while being in space is not a prerequisite for causing an effect in space, still in virtue of causing a spatial effect, God thereby locates Himself in space. But there is no good reason to think that this claim is true. Here, we find a useful analogy in the causal connection between our spacetime universe and realities beyond our spacetime manifold featured in certain contemporary cosmological models. Consider, for example, Paul Steinhardt and Neil Turok's Cyclic Ekpyrotic model of the universe, which makes use of the extra-dimensional nature of string theory to facilitate the cycling of our universe (Steinhardt and Turok 2005). String theory allows entities known as membranes or, for short, branes that represent what we would normally call our three (spatial)-dimensional universe. String theory demands six extra dimensions of space in order to be self-consistent. It is thought that these extra dimensions are (usually) tightly curled up around the three macroscopic dimensions and hence usually unobservable. The Ekpyrotic model proposes that one of these extra dimensions (the "bulk" dimension) is of macroscopic size. Within this extra dimension lie two three-dimensional branes, either of which could represent our universe. These three-dimensional branes periodically collide and recede, just as if they were connected by a spring. When they collide, the energy of the collision is transferred to the branes. This energy is then converted into the matter (and

radiation) that ultimately gravitates into galaxies. The rest of the normal Big Bang sequence follows (stars, planets, and so on). As the branes separate from each other, the branes themselves continually expand. Meanwhile, the branes cycle toward another collision, and our universe is renewed with each new cycle.

Such a model does not provide an analogy to an immaterial entity's causing effects in our universe, since the membranes are physical realities; nor is the model analogous to there being no distance between our spatial universe and some ultramundane reality, since the membranes are embedded in a hyperspace in which distance can be assigned a measure. Nevertheless, the model does illustrate the way in which an entity not located in our 3-D space can produce effects in that space. If the model is possible, it shows that the cause of something in our universe need not itself be in our universe. So, God could cause events in our universe without being located in it. The Cyclic Ekpyrotic model may not be physically possible, but it seems to be at least metaphysically possible, which is all one needs to subvert the contention that God by producing effects in space locates Himself in space.

Since both versions of the objection based on the contact principle fail, this objection does not provide a good reason for thinking God to be spatially located.

5.1.4. The Divine Causal Pairing Problem

The third argument Stephan identifies in support of divine spatiality is the divine causal pairing problem. Borrowed from the philosophy of mind, the causal pairing problem is that if we imagine there to be two immaterial souls that each performs an identical mental act at the same time, resulting in a physical change in a particular body, say, its arm's rising, there must be some relation that pairs one soul's mental act with the physical change rather than the other soul's mental act.[42] If we assume that souls are not in space, spatial relations could not explain why one soul is paired with bodily change rather than the other. Analogously, as an immaterial entity that is causally connected with everything in the universe, God must then exist at every place in the universe.

In response to the divine causal pairing argument, the theist might explain the pairing of God's mental acts with certain effects based not on spatial co-location but rather on the basis of divine intentionality: God infallibly wills that some effect occurs. "God can pick out intentional objects in a direct, unmediated, immediate, and non-causal way. . .. then the divine pairing problem facing divine causation has a solution: God willing for some event E to occur and E's actual occurrence are paired by God's picking out of E as an intentional object of his will." (Stephan 2022, prospectus). Such a perspicuous and plausible solution dissolves any alleged divine causal pairing problem.

In sum, the arguments proffered in support of divine spatiality of any sort are pretty weak arguments. Are there any better arguments in support of divine spacelessness?

5.2. Arguments for Divine Aspatiality

We can do no better than to consider Hud Hudson's objections to divine spatiality. It does not seem to be appreciated in the contemporary discussion that Hudson, while defending the conceptual possibility of divine entension, spanning, and non-maximal location, regards them all as metaphysically impossible. He advances four problems in support of the conclusion that "extended mereological simples are conceptually possible yet metaphysically impossible: the problem of spatial intrinsics, the problem of shapes, the problem of parsimony, and the problem of diachoric identity." (Hudson 2005, p. 97, Abstract; cf. pp. 106–7). So as not to end this section anticlimactically, let us consider these problems in reverse order.

5.2.1. The Problem of Diachoric Identity

Just as philosophers have wrestled with the question of identity over time (diachronic identity), so the question arises as to identity over place (diachoric identity). The challenge

in the first case is to provide necessary and sufficient conditions for something's being the same object at two different times and typically takes the following form:

> Necessarily (for any distinct times t and t^*, and for any object x that is located at t, and for any object y that is located at t^*, $x = y$ if and only if —).

Analogously, the challenge in the second case is to provide necessary and sufficient conditions for a single thing's being simultaneously located at more than one place and would presumably take the following form:

> Necessarily (for any time t, and for any distinct spatial regions r and r^*, and for any object x that at t is located at r, and for any object y that at t is located at r^*, $x = y$ if and only if —).

Hudson notes that in discussions of diachronic identity, philosophers have staked out three broad alternatives: (i) that there are criteria of diachronic identity for any object, (ii) that there are criteria of diachronic identity for kinds of object, and (iii) that diachronic identity is a criterionless, brute fact.

Hudson believes that (i) depends for its defense on the perdurantist's rejecting the above schema in favor of the controversial metaphysical claim that objects persist in time in virtue of having different temporal parts x and y at different times. Applied to diachoric identity, this alternative supports the pertension theorist's claim that x and y are not, in fact, the same object but are parts of a pertending object that has parts at r and r^*. For if x and y take the objects exactly located at r and r^* as their respective values, then the above schema must be rejected, since x and y are not identical. Obviously, a pertensionist account of diachoric identity is of no use in explaining God's ubiquitous presence, since He has no spatial parts. Nor will it be of any help to maintain that x and y are identical just in case they are constituted by the same portion of stuff, since God, as an incorporeal being, is not constituted by any sort of stuff. Hudson can think of no other way to fill in the blank so as to allow an object to exist wholly at disjoint spatial regions.

What about (ii), that there are criteria of diachronic identity for kinds of object? Hudson dismisses this alternative quickly as of no help in formulating criteria of either diachronic or diachoric identity. It is clear, he says, "that analyzing what it is to be an instance of some given kind K (or analyzing the concept of a K) will not tell us what it takes for a K to persist over time. Moreover, if 'being of a kind K' doesn't fix what it takes to persist across time, it has even less hope of determining what it takes to extend across space at a time." (Hudson 2005, p. 118). Accordingly, he finds the appeal to kind-relative criteria to be of little value in formulating an adequate criterion of diachoric identity.

So what to do? It seems that the advocates of divine spatiality should adopt (iii), that diachoric identity is just a brute fact and reject the demand for criteria. Although Hudson sees this as a disadvantage for proponents of divine ubiquity, he says nothing to defeat the persuasive case philosophers have made in defense of such an alternative for diachronic identity (Merricks 2001). Still, while it is plausible that some object may endure through time as a brute fact, it is very difficult to see why, for example, two disjoint spherical regions pervaded by matter would be one multilocated sphere rather than two distinct spheres. God's immateriality may make it easier to think that He can be wholly located at two disjoint regions even if material objects cannot. The problem of diachoric identity, as formulated in terms of the quest for criteria, is therefore not a decisive objection to divine spatiality.

5.2.2. The Problem of Parsimony

Hudson believes that among competing theories that are equal in explanatory and predictive power, we should choose the theory that is the simplest. But if there are extended simple objects, this principle threatens to lead to absurd consequences. To show why, he invites us to consider a possible world with exactly one material object that is located in more than one spatial region. This object must be either entended or multi-located in space. But why stop there? Why could it not be an extended simple in the shape of a chair or a

scattered simple in the shape of an entire dining set or even a scattered simple that looks just like the Heidelberg castle with all of its furnishings? Indeed, why could it not be a simple, point-size object multiply located in 10^{80} regions so that it looks exactly like our universe? Why multiply entities beyond necessity? Hudson says, "I suppose the following reasoning is a bit too quick", but he offers it nonetheless:

> if entending or multiply locating objects were possible, then the exotic items described above would be possible as well. But we should choose the simplest theory from among all those competitors that are equal in explanatory and predictive power, and in the present market this methodology would yield the conclusion that the world is populated by a single simple bearing an uncountable number of occupation relations to distinct regions. But since that verdict is absurd, entending and multiply located objects are not possible, after all. (Hudson 2005, p. 114)

Whether we find this consideration persuasive will depend on the relative weight we place on the value of parsimony of entities. As Hudson recognizes, it is easy to imagine rationally giving up the principle rather than the possibility of entended objects. In any case, this problem is at best an objection to entended material objects. The proponent of divine ubiquitous entension could happily reject them while maintaining that God is entended throughout space.

5.2.3. The Problem of Shapes

It is quite natural, Hudson says, to think that spatial regions have their shapes intrinsically. After all, the shape of a specified region of space does not seem dependent upon any relation to anything else. On the other hand, material objects seem to have their shapes extrinsically insofar as they inherit them from the regions they occupy. This derivative relation seems even more obvious in the case of spatially extended immaterial objects, since independent of space, they have no shape. Now advocates of entended entities take it to be possible that an entended object should simultaneously occupy regions of different shapes. But given that an object cannot have incompatible shapes at the same time, entension seems ruled out.

The entension theorist may respond that while an entending object is wholly located at multiple regions, the shape of any object is fixed by the single region at which it is entirely located. On an entension theoretical approach, God has the shape and size of the maximal spatial region at which He is entirely located.

Joseph Jedwab is unconvinced by the entension theorist's response. He asserts,

> There is nothing special in itself about the region, if any, at which a substance is entirely located. Suppose some photon is located at only two point-sized regions P and P' at once. The photon has a point-sized shape: the same in every point-sized region at which it is located. But since the photon is located at only P and P', and since P and P' are disjoint, the photon is entirely located at neither P nor P' and so the photon is *entirely* located at no region. So the photon has a shape but is *entirely* located at no region. The regions that determine shape are the regions at which a substance is located *simpliciter*. (Jedwab 2016, pp. 145–46)

Unfortunately, Jedwab's argument only shows that the multilocation theorist is in trouble, for Jedwab stipulates that the photon is located *only* at P and P'. If the photon were an entending object, located wholly at P and P' simultaneously, the entension theorist can maintain that it is entirely located at the fusion of P and P', which, paradoxically, is itself point-sized (Gilmore 2018, §6). What makes an entending object's entire location special, as we saw in the case of the homogeneous sphere hovering over the window sill of one's office, is that the object is wholly present in regions of different shapes, in this case having a spherical shape in each hemispherical region it occupies. Jedwab's commonsensical claim that "Any substance located at [some region] R has the same shape as R does. Otherwise, the substance wouldn't fit into R" (Jedwab 2016, p. 144) fails in the case of entending

objects. An extended mereological simple might not be exactly located in a subregion *r*, but it will "fit" into *r* by being wholly present there without assuming *r*'s shape. Nonetheless, Jedwab's objection is of value in that it underlines just how weird entension is.

Now Hudson thinks that God's satisfying the condition of being entirely located in the maximal spatial region is sufficient for God's being a material object. If Hudson's claim involves merely a re-definition of "material object", such that any object that occupies a spatial region is ipso facto "material", even though it is non-physical, then his claim is just a radical linguistic revision. But if he means to say that occupying space is sufficient for an object's being constituted by matter and energy and describable by the laws of physics, such as $E = mc^2$, then his conclusion is theologically repugnant. If he is correct that divine spatial ubiquity implies that God is a physical object, then we have a decisive argument against divine spatiality and in support of divine spacelessness. Fortunately for adherents of divine spatial ubiquity, there are other accounts of what it is to be a material object that are as plausible as Hudson's so that occupation accounts are not burdened by the albatross of God's being a material object.[43]

Up to this point, we have tolerated talk of an entending God's geometrical and topological properties. But surely there is something very weird, even sacrilegious, about such a notion. As classical theologians saw, it seems intolerable to think that God might be entirely located in a finite space, and one that is constantly expanding, as ours is. Are we really to think that God is constantly growing, becoming bigger and bigger, but may one day begin to shrink as space re-contracts until it finally disappears at the Big Crunch and God reverts to spacelessness? Does God actually have a shape? Is He curved or flat? Could He be, like space, torus-shaped or shaped like a cup and handle? Such suggestions seem almost crazy.

Hudson's proposed solution to the problem of containment should not satisfy Christian theists. Hudson would alleviate the problem by pointing out that God stands in His occupation relations accidentally, not essentially, since God could have refrained from creating the universe and would have existed even if there had been no regions of space at all. That is, however, scant relief. While it is doubtless true that God could have existed without space and, indeed, did so exist sans the universe, it remains the case for proponents of divine spatiality that God is now limited by space in virtue of His occupation relations. Barring some sort of hyperspace, His immensity is constricted by the spatial limits of our universe.

Divine ubiquitous entension thus merits what David Lewis called "the incredulous stare." It might be said that other widely accepted theories, such as quantum mechanics, are similarly weird. But notice a crucial difference: we have overwhelming empirical evidence that despite its weirdness, quantum theory is true (or nearly so). But we have no comparable reasons to think that divine ubiquitous entension is true. The arguments in support of it that we have surveyed are very weak, leaving us with no good reason to embrace it. Therefore, its weirdness should count against it.

5.2.4. The Problem of Spatial Intrinsics

The problem posed here for spatially extended objects is analogous to the problem of temporary intrinsics for temporally persisting objects that prompted David Lewis to articulate perdurance as a way in which objects might persist through time. The problem posed by intrinsic change for identity over time is that the Indiscernibility of Identicals requires that for any objects *x* and *y*, if *x* and *y* are in fact one and the same object, then *x* and *y* share all and only the same properties. But then how, for example, can the Lord Mayor be the same person as the schoolboy Johnny he once was, since they have different intrinsic properties? How is identity through intrinsic change possible?

Endurantists, who accept a tensed theory of time, answer that the only properties a temporal entity has are those it presently has, since neither past nor future times exist. Thus, the schoolboy Johnny now has all and only the properties of the Lord Mayor, since he no longer has the properties he (the Lord Mayor) once had. Temporal entities thus wholly exist

at each successive moment of their existence. Lewis, by contrast, a partisan of tenseless time who believed that all times, whether past, present, or future, are on an ontological par, held that things persist in time by having different temporal parts at different times. The schoolboy Johnny and the Lord Mayor are thus different temporal parts of an object that is extended throughout tenseless time. On such a view, intrinsic change never really takes place, for neither the temporal parts of a thing nor the extended thing as a whole ever changes in their properties.

The analogous problem of spatial intrinsics concerns how an object can have different properties at different places and remain self-identical.[44] There is an obvious answer for pertending objects: their spatial parts have different properties at different places. Thus, some object may be pointed at one end but blunt at the other. The problem becomes acute, however, for extended mereologically simple objects. Recall the simple, homogeneous sphere hovering over the window sill of one's office. Since it is simple, we cannot say that part of it is in the office and part of it in the street. It seems to have the incompatible properties of being wholly in the office and wholly in the street. Fans of entension will say that there is no incompatibility here: objects can be wholly located at disjoint spaces. The object wholly located in one's office also has the property of being wholly in the street.

But now suppose that some such object is not perfectly homogeneous: suppose, for example, that the simple sphere is colored in such a way that it gradually shades from red to blue. In such a case, it seems to have incompatible properties that cannot be ascribed to its different parts. Some philosophers therefore reject heterogeneous, extended simples. But other philosophers have come up with a plethora of arcane solutions to the problem: some distinguish between the object and the stuff of which it is made, holding that the stuff alone is mereologically complex; others advocate spatially indexed properties: the object has the properties of *being red-at-r* and *being blue-at-r**; others suggest an adverbial strategy: the object is *r*ly red and *r**ly blue; others suggest that properties are actually three-place relations: the object is red relative to *r* and blue relative to *r**; and others suggest that the object has a so-called distributional property describing how its colors are distributed throughout it.

Now these various solutions may strike us as desperate concoctions, about each one of which we may well be skeptical. Hudson, for his part, muses, "Perhaps, however, you find all of these suggestions unacceptable. . .. But that's a lot to hang on some perhapses", and so he moves on to the next worry. But the proponent of divine spatiality should not rush too quickly on. Is there a problem of spatial intrinsics attending ubiquitous divine spatiality that is not plausibly resolved by such proposals? It seems to me that there is.

God is supposed to be wholly present at every region of space or at least at multiple regions of space. As an omniscient being, God must know where He is. But then we run right into the problem of spatial intrinsics. For at each location at which God is wholly present, God must believe, "I am here." But since the spatial indexical term "here" refers to the location of its user, God will be in different belief states at different places in space. Thus, God at different places will have different intrinsic properties and so cannot be identical across space. Instead, we have polytheism, just as Anselm feared.

In responding to this problem, Stephan writes,

> Perhaps one can take God to exhibit qualitative variation by having different items of knowledge at different regions of space. In particular, one might think that God's knowledge of where he is varies from location to location. For instance, on Earth, God knows "I am on Earth", and on Mars, God knows "I am on Mars." The question would arise, then, whether God's having such items of knowledge entails that God exhibits qualitative variation. But it seems that it is prima facie coherent to maintain that God's knowledge that "I am at R" is had by God no matter where else he is. On Earth, God knows "I am on Mars." So God's knowledge of where he is does not seem to suggest that he is a qualitatively varying extended simple. (Stephan 2022, prospectus)

Stephan has overlooked what John Perry has called "the essential indexical." (Perry 1979). I self-locate by means of my temporal and spatial indexical beliefs. Just as I must have temporal indexical beliefs about what time it is now if I am to act in a timely fashion, so I must have spatial indexical beliefs about what is here or there if I am to act in an appropriate and effective fashion. Given His omnipresence, God certainly does have on Earth the non-indexical locative knowledge that "I am on Mars." But given that God is wholly present in every spatial region, He must have as well the beliefs, "I am here on Mars", and "I am here on Earth." Absent such indexical knowledge the God who exists wholly on Mars would not know where He is, which is an unacceptable imperfection, just as a God Who existed at all times but did not know what time it is now would suffer from unacceptable ignorance.

None of the solutions proffered for dealing with heterogeneous material simples seems plausible with respect to God's belief states. The solution differentiating between an object and the stuff of which it is made is obviously inapplicable to an immaterial entity. Spatially indexed properties will not work, for indexing the properties removes the indexicality of the belief states, and God clearly knows "I am wholly here" as well as "I am wholly-at-r." Adverbialism is implausible not only because having a property $r$ly is parasitic on the more basic having r but also because spatial locations are not plausibly ways of having something. Treating God's belief states as disguised three-place relations is implausible, for wherever He is, God surely believes "I am here" simpliciter. It is not clear what a distributional property of belief states for God wholly located at different disjoint regions would be. None of these concoctions is as plausible as thinking that in each spatial region, the divine object wholly located there has the belief state, "I am here", where "here" is an indexical term referring to different places.

The only way for proponents of divine spatiality to avoid the problem of spatial intrinsics and the attendant polytheism, it seems, would be to maintain that God's spatial indexical belief states are not intrinsic to Him. We thus recur to the bizarre externalism to which defenders of divine simplicity are forced.[45] To the contrary, no belief state is more plausibly intrinsic than the belief state, "I am here."

Taken together, these four problems should make Christian theists reluctant to adopt an interpretation of divine omnipresence in terms of God's occupying space.

6. Concluding Remarks

We have seen no good reason to embrace a construal of God's omnipresence as divine spatiality but some reason to accept instead divine aspatiality. The latter view commends itself very naturally in light of the doctrine of creatio ex nihilo. For we know, in virtue of the doctrine of creation, that God existing alone without creation is spaceless. For on a relational view of space, space does not exist in the utter absence of any physical reality, and on a substantival view of space, space is a thing or substance and therefore must have been created by God. In either case, then, God brings space into being at the moment of His creation of the universe. Contrary to Newton, space is not a necessary, concomitant effect of God but a contingent, freely willed effect. Sans the universe, therefore, God exists spacelessly.[46] But the creation of space would do nothing to "spatialize" God, that is to say, to draw Him into space. The creating of space is not itself a spatial act (as is, say, bumping something). Hence, there is no reason to think that divine spacelessness is surrendered in the act of creation. If not, then God's omnipresence should be understood in terms of God's being immediately cognizant of and causally active at every place in space. He knows what is happening at every spatial location in the universe and He is causally operative at every such place, even if nothing more is going on there than quantum fluctuations in the vacuum of "empty" space.

In conclusion, it seems best to say that God literally exists spacelessly but is present at every place in space in the sense that He is cognizant of and causally active at every place in space.

Notes

1. As recently as 2006 Robert Oakes could observe that divine omnipresence, despite its "absolutely integral" status for classical theism, has received "perplexingly scant analytic attention from latter-day philosophical theists." (Oakes 2006, p. 171). Oakes' own discussion has now been largely overtaken.

2. For that reason I exclude from consideration here views of God and space, like those of Henry More and the Cambridge Platonists, that would divinize space by regarding space as God or an aspect of God, thus implying an unbiblical pantheism or panentheism.

3. See (Traub and von Rad 1979); see esp. "D. New Testament 2: God in Heaven," pp. 520–21.

4. For a helpful survey, see (Gilmore 2018).

5. (Parsons 2003); Parsons' untimely death occurred in 2017.

6. Lewis wrote, "Let us say that something *persists*, iff, somehow or other, it exists at various times; this is the neutral word. Something *perdures* iff it persists by having different temporal parts, or stages, at different times, though no one part of it is wholly present at more than one time; whereas it *endures* iff it persists by being wholly present at more than one time." (Lewis 1986, p. 202).

7. (Hudson 2009, p. 209). Hudson also conceives of two additional ways, not allowed by Parsons, for objects to be spatially extended: what he calls spanning and multiple locating. These other location relations can, like entension, be employed to provide alternative accounts of divine spatiality. Given the ongoing discussion of location relations, it would be premature to close the door on the conceptual possibility of multilocation and spanning and, hence, of accounts of divine spatiality in terms of either multilocation or spanning.

8. (Pasnau 2011a). Pasnau is followed in this claim by Inman (2017).

9. (Pasnau 2011a, p. 337). "Medieval Christian authors, despite being generally misread on this point, are in complete agreement that God is literally present, spatially, throughout the universe… the universally accepted view was that God exists holenmerically throughout space, wholly existing at each place in the universe." (Pasnau 2011b, p. 19).

10. These references are a very mixed bag, some of them having to do, not with God's existence, but with the way in which the soul exists in the body. Plotinus' One, for example, which is beyond being, cannot possibly exist spatially. Similarly, the references to Augustine and Bonaventure have to do primarily with the soul, not with God. St. John Damascene speaks of God's being wholly present everywhere in terms of God's universal operation at every place.

11. Pasnau does not shy from indicting fellow scholars for their failure to understand medieval thinkers: "Modern theologians have spectacularly misunderstood medieval views in this domain. The mainstream of medieval Christian thought does not remove God from space and time, but rather invokes holochronic and holenmeric existence so that a simple, immutable being can nevertheless exist in all places and all times." (Pasnau 2011b, p. 21). He might as well have included the wide majority of medievalists, philosophers, and intellectual historians in his indictment.

12. *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (1998), *s.v.* "Omnipresence," by Brian Leftow (my emphasis).

13. Augustine *Letters* 187. 17. I cite Inman's translation to convey the clarity he perceives.

14. Plotinus *Enneads* VI. 4-5. Unless otherwise noted, translation is from Armstrong's edition. Lloyd Gerson takes what Plotinus calls the true All to be "the intelligible world (i.e., Being) which is cognitively identical with Intellect" or *Noûs* (Lloyd Gerson to William Lane Craig, Sept. 20, 2021). For Plotinus, Gerson explains, "everything is 'in' the One in the sense that everything depends on it. What Plotinus is denying in VI 4, 2, is that Intellect-Being is 'in' anything in the sense of a container that would limit its ambit or 'reach'. Intellect-Being reaches all the way 'down' to matter. The One alone reaches matter since everything that has being in any way depends ultimately on the One."

15. Plotinus *Enneads* VI.4.2.

16. Plotinus *Enneads* VI.4.2. McKenna's translation.

17. Plotinus *Enneads* VI.4.3. Gerson's translation.

18. Plotinus *Enneads* VI.5.11. McKenna's translation.

19. Plotinus *Enneads* VI.5.12. McKenna's translation.

20. *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, s.v.* "Omnipresence." Leftow notes that "Augustine brought Plotinus' views into Christian thought, taking over Plotinus' general account of omnipresence, his argument about the soul's presence in the body, and his analogies of light and sound."

21. Plotinus *Enneads* VI.5.3.

22. See Augustine *Confessions* 11.14-19. See discussion in my *The Problem of Divine Foreknowledge and Future Contingents from Aristotle to Suarez* (Craig 1988, pp. 73–78).

23. Augustine *On Diverse Questions to Simplician* 2.2.2. 27–36.

24　　Plotinus *Enneads* V.1.4.

25　　Augustine *On 83 Diverse Questions* 46.2.21–32, 53–64.

26　　Augustine *Literal Commentary on Genesis* 5.14–19.

27　　Augustine *Letter* 187.7.

28　　Augustine *Letter* 187.7.

29　　Augustine *Letters* 166.2.4.

30　　Augustine *Letters* 187.14.

31　　Augustine *Letters* 187.14.

32　　Augustine *Letters* 187.18.

33　　Augustine *Letters* 187.19.

34　　See my forthcoming *Systematic Philosophical Theology* (Craig forthcoming), vol. IIa: *De Deo*, Pt. I: *Attributa Dei* 7: Omnipresence.

35　　For further discussion of the role played by substantivalism and relationalism respectively in debates over divine omnipresence, see my *Systematic Philosophical Theology*, vol. IIa: *De Deo*, Pt. I: *Attributa Dei* 7: Omnipresence.

36　　Oakes (2006, pp. 175–76), advocates the view that space is not a creation of God but an essential aspect of God, existing even in possible worlds in which no cosmos exists. In contrast to Newton's view, according to which space is an emanative effect of God and so distinct from God, Oakes in effect divinizes space, which is panentheistic. Similarly, J. D. Lyonhart, *Space God* (Lyonhart 2023), endorses a More-inspired view, "not that God fills space, rather, that God *is* space. God is not the biggest entity *within* space...but instead his immensity *constitutes* space" (p. 190). Such a view is pantheistic, explanatorily vicious (since nothing constitutes itself), and self-contradictory (since the constitution relation is not identity).

37　　Francis Turretin *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* III. 9.12.

38　　Turretin *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* III. 9.7.

39　　Turretin *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* III. 9.18.

40　　Turretin *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* III. 9.8.

41　　Scotus *Reportatio* I, d. 37, qq. 1–2, n. 20. I am indebted to Hayden Stephan for this reference.

42　　(Kim 2005, pp. 79–80). For an application to divine omnipresence, see (Buckareff 2016).

43　　(Inman 2017, pp. 25–31). Jedwab accepts Hudson's principle that any substance that has a shape is material and infers that since regions of space themselves have shapes, therefore regions of (empty) space are material objects (Jedwab 2016, p. 144)! This implication is to my mind the *reductio ad absurdum* of the principle.

44　　It is thus also known as the problem of qualitative variation and is closely connected with the problem of multilocation. See (Gilmore 2018, §§5.5; 6).

45　　E.g., (Grant 2012). For discussion see my *Systematic Philosophical Theology* (Craig forthcoming), vol. IIa: *De Deo*, Pt. I: *Attributa Dei* 4: Simplicity.

46　　God's spacelessness would be the functional equivalent of an embedding hyper-dimension of space. Just as a three-dimensional being could act in the two-dimensional plane in ways that would appear mysterious to the inhabitants of Flatland, so the transcendent God can act immediately at any point in our three-dimensional world. Charmed by this image, a few thinkers have even thought to construe God as literally a hyper-dimensional being existing in an embedding space-time. But this metaphysical extravagance actually gives up what has been achieved by our construing divine omnipresence in terms of spacelessness without accruing any new advantage. Talk of embedding hyper-space inhabited by God should be taken as an illustrative device without ontological significance.

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