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## On the Way to a Secularized Theology: Why Today's Disapproval of an Atemporal God Is Gaining Momentum?

*Vladimir K. Shokhin*

Institute for Philosophy, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia

### ABSTRACT

The ongoing secularization of religion, which is associated with the development of a “post-secular society,” also manifests itself in a major controversy in analytic theology, which not so long ago remained a stronghold of religious traditionalism. The belief in the inseparability of essential atemporality of the Divine from creationism, which lies at the core of Christianity and other monotheistic religions, is in the process of being revised by a growing majority of Christian theologians. The conception of a timeless God that is currently under attack by temporalist theologians is criticized as an outdated commitment on the part of traditional theology to the Neoplatonic doctrine of a “static” Absolute. However, the desire for a “static” Absolute is not limited to Greek thought but has intercultural foundations, and in reality, no contradiction between Divine activity and atemporality can be derived from the Greek, Arabic, and Indian texts dealing with it. The increasing popularity of theological temporalism is explained in terms of a scientific attachment to evolutionism and associated urge to “democratize” a transcendent God. Some parallels from Continental “post-secular” theology, including the anthropocentric turn that replaces a theocentric vision of the world with a humanistic orientation, are also discussed.

### KEYWORDS

analytic theology, timelessness, changelessness, temporalism, creationism, Christianity, Neoplatonism, Islam, Hinduism, post-secular society

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[vladshokhin@yandex.ru](mailto:vladshokhin@yandex.ru)

## Introduction

It was not until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century with the provocative challenge from Charles Hartshorne (1948, 1984) who insisted on “Divine relativity”<sup>1</sup> that the timelessness of God became a general topic of discussion in Western theology. St. Augustine had insisted that time was created with the world<sup>2</sup> and therefore cannot not be an attribute of the Creator. Due to its perfect fit with the Christian worldview, this view was endorsed by the authorities of Boethius, Anselm, Thomas Aquinas, and Francisco Suarez such as to permit only a very narrow space in Christian theology for the expression of alternative views<sup>3</sup>. It is true that there have been attempts to question the meaning of the terms Augustine used in his definition. For example, John Locke (1825) took eternity to be nothing more than an infinity of temporal duration (p. 120). Thomas Hobbes, Isaac Newton, Samuel Clarke, and some other eighteenth century writers questioned the intelligibility of the Boethian formula of Divine simultaneity with all times (i.e., living in “eternal now”). Nevertheless, there continued to be strong defenders of Divine eternity as atemporality, e.g., Benedict Spinoza, Gottfried Leibnitz, Ann Convey, and others. Moreover, until recently, these disparities did not lead to any major challenges within traditional theism<sup>4</sup>. What has now become a hot issue in analytical metaphysics apparently started with the controversial paper by Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (1981), in which Boethius’ classical thesis that “Divine eternity is the perfect possession of the whole fullness of unending life” and is therefore timeless (Boethius, 524/2008, V.6.9–11) was backed by contemporary physics through the theory of special relativity. While their appeal to science did not prove altogether successful<sup>5</sup>, it spurred on the “temporalists” to produce new arguments, which in turn led to new counter-arguments from the traditionalists<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Hartshorne regarded God only as the head of the society of all realities consisting of experiences which do not exist outside them. Thus, while God constitutes the privileged part of them, he, on the other hand, represents its inclusive “whole,” able to access all other experiences—in short, as “supreme yet indebted to all” (Hartshorne, 1948, pp. 25–59, esp. 47). What developed from these seeds was endorsed in his popular later work wherein he collected “all cardinal mistakes” of traditional theism, i.e., the ideas of God as absolutely perfect and therefore unchangeable being, omnipotent, omniscient and unlimited good along with the ideas of the personal immortality of human beings and transcendent Revelation. See Hartshorne (1984).

<sup>2</sup> While the first mainstream theologian to have mentioned this was Philo of Alexandria in *De Opificio Mundi* (Philo, ca. 30–40/1981, VII.26), it was not as influential as Augustine’s doctrine.

<sup>3</sup> While Katherine Rogers in her masterpiece *Perfect Being Theology* mentions that Aquinas’ opponents (almost in every respect) Duns Scotus and William Ockham questioned this view, which however continued to be absolutely predominant, she does not provide evidence for this claim (Rogers, 2000, p. 54).

<sup>4</sup> A good panorama of views on the subject in early Modernity is presented in Melamed (2016, pp. 129–167).

<sup>5</sup> The main criticisms of Stump and Kretzmann consisted in demonstrating that their views contradicted the theory of general relativity, which assumed the idea of absolute time, and the authors revised their former view ten years later in Stump & Kretzmann (1991).

<sup>6</sup> One of the leading temporalists William Hasker responded to them in his well-known book which could be regarded the manifesto of open theism (Hasker, 1989, pp. 162–170).

## Two “Big Camps”

The controversy has already generated numerous publications<sup>7</sup>. The main arguments of both “camps,” which are by now well-known, can be summarised in the most general terms as follows.

The champions of the traditional (i.e., Augustinian/Boethian) teaching, wherein God is regarded not as everlasting but timeless, generally refer to: (a) the Anselmian conception of God as the Most Perfect Being (*quo melius nihil cogitari potest*) (Anselm, ca. 1077/1979, *Proslogium*, 9, 1, 108; 11–13; 14, 1, 111; 18, 1, 114, *Cur Deus Homo*, I, 13, II.71,15) whose perfectness cannot be regarded as “perfect” if we acknowledge in him any degree of temporality which is changeability; (b) a normal understanding of Divine foreknowledge; (c) similarities between Divine atemporality and aspatiality emphasized by Katherine Rogers (2000) in the sense that if the latter is indubitable the same should be true also with the former; (d) the doctrine of the Trinity wherein distinctions between “former” and “later” are not applicable to Divine nature, as stressed by Paul Helm (2010, Ch. 15) because the Father cannot be older than the Son who is coeternal with him. There is also an additional argument accepted partially even by the opponents of temporalism, i.e., (e) Brian Leftow’s idea that the coherence of the concept of temporality as such (not only the temporality of God but also of contingent things) can in the final analysis be challenged (Leftow, 1991, pp. 217–245).

In contrast, those who insist that God is eternal in the sense of temporally everlasting appeal to arguments from: (a) the incompatibility between Divine timelessness and His knowledge of temporal facts; (b) the incompatibility between God’s atemporality and His interactions with temporal beings, including answering some of their prayers; (c) the idea of Divine personality (in the sense that any person has to have a biography and therefore a temporality). Sometimes the view is additionally expressed that (d) an impersonal and atemporal God cannot provide human beings with a genuinely free will. Simultaneously and by the same thinkers, e.g., William Hasker (1989), it is asserted that (e) an atemporal God cannot provide Providence. Relatively early in the controversy, it was even asserted by John Lucas that (f) the doctrine of timeless eternity has a more practical application inasmuch as “only if God is distanced from the world of space and time can He be acquitted of responsibility for the terrible things that happen within it,” thus resolving issues concerning “an unfair theodicy” (Lucas, 1989, pp. 209–210). Both parties are, nevertheless, unanimous in the opinion that no evidence for the very nature of Divine eternity is available directly from the Bible (in spite of numerous statements therein that God has neither beginning nor end).

There are also some analytic philosophers who, in an attempt to wear two hats simultaneously, suggest a compromise solution. While Alan Padgett (1992) assumes that God is subject to change and is therefore also temporal, this does not mean that His timelessness should be totally abandoned but can be redefined to mean that God is relatively timeless, in the sense that He is not measured by time, nor affected by

<sup>7</sup> Natalja Deng who dealt with this issue in her fundamental contribution to The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy managed to discover three levels of both positions, that is strong, weak, and moderate (Deng, 2018).

the negative aspects of temporal passage. Divine time is ontological time, not our measured time in seconds, days, centuries, etc. (Padgett, 1992, pp. 19, 122, 130–131, 146). According to William Lane Craig’s view, God is timeless when He has not created the world, and temporal when He has created it (Craig, 2009). While endorsing Padgett’s distinction between “measured time,” or our time, and “ontological time,” or God’s time, Craig (2009) identifies the latter with Newton’s absolute time. He also introduces “cosmic time,” i.e., a third kind of time. Nevertheless, this apparent solution encounters a justified objection as to what these “new times” properly refer to.

### Shift of Balance

On the whole, voices opposing Divine timelessness are becoming louder than those that support the traditional view. Ryan Mullins, one of the most active participants in this polemic, in his book simply entitled *The End of Timeless God* (2016) expresses many of the typical temporalist arguments listed above but also sharpening some of them, e.g., insisting on the impossibility for an atemporal God to have a presentistic awareness of the flow of time, be free to create the world, become incarnate or allow finite beings to have free will. Based on this, he concludes

that the Christian God cannot be timeless. I also argue and conclude that there is no such thing as a third way between temporality and atemporality. My argument leaves us with the conclusion that God is temporal. My suggestion is that theologians and philosophers should abandon the timeless research program because it is unworkable and devastating to Christian theology. Instead, they should devote their attention to developing models of divine temporality and the implications it has for the rest of Christian theology. (Mullins, 2016, pp. 208–209)

Such a theological claim could not have been advanced even thirty years ago, not to mention in earlier times<sup>8</sup>.

We can happily agree with Mullins’ conclusion that there is no such thing as a third way between temporality and atemporality (if taken in the absolute sense). And he is still more justified in arguing that implications of Divine temporalism should be decisive also “for the rest of Christian theology.” Indeed, the achievement of his desire could have put an end to almost two millennia of Christian theism founded on creationism—and, correspondingly, the acknowledgement of the profound ontological distance between the everchanging world and its unchangeable Author.

While it is also true that not all temporalists are panentheists of Hartshorne’s type (see above), all panentheists are certainly temporalists. So, the radical “ontological temporalists” inviting us to embrace an evolving God, even if they like to refer to their views in terms of theism, invite us in reality to adopt some other religious world outlook. In this way, Peter Forrest, a philosophical heir of Hartshorne and the author of *God*

<sup>8</sup> One can only mention that forty years ago Nicolas Wolterstorff wrote, “Only a small minority have contended that God is everlasting, existing within time. In what follows I shall take up the cudgels for that minority” (Wolterstorff, 1982, p. 181).

*Without the Supernatural* (1996)<sup>9</sup> and *Developmental Theism* (2007) firmly holds that God is transforming himself from being a pure, unbound and totally homogenous Will into the Trinitarian God able to respond with love to human love<sup>10</sup>, so that “a change in which [new] universes are still possible implies a change in the divine character” (Forrest, 2007, p. 112). It is not surprising in this regard that he offered the outright conception of the universe as God’s body and called it “anthropomorphic theism.” Close to him is John Bishop, also a spiritual heir to Hartshorne, whose “humble god” is not the Creator, but only an interpreter of the world (he calls it “an adequate alternative” to traditional theism), “not by standing outside the Universe as its efficient cause, but by being its teleological culmination within it” (Bishop, 2009, p. 429).

Therefore, today’s controversy on the topic seems to be one of the most important among all others as dealing with the core of Christian religious belief. Such relevance is also connected with the willingness of both parties to “go out to fight” (and fight vigorously) not from some neutral philosophical point of departure, but for a better interpretation of Christian theism.

### Imaginary Argument From the Neoplatonic “Stasis”

While pondering on why still many atemporalist theists wish for their God to be immutable (and in this way rightly acknowledge that to be in time and in change is essentially the same thing), Richard Swinburne (1993) is sure that this came from Neoplatonic influence on Christian theology, for “things which change are inferior to things which do not change” (p. 222) for a Platonist. This view is mistaken for “the perfection of a perfect being might consist not in his being in a certain static condition, but in his being in a certain process of change. Only Neoplatonic dogma would lead us to suppose otherwise” (Schärftl et al., 2016, p. 222). And this Neoplatonic intervention (quite strange to the primordial Christianity) took place not earlier than in the 3<sup>rd</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> centuries.

While the contraposition of “Athens” to “Jerusalem” was formulated no later than by Tertullian (ca. 155–220), what is of importance now is its modern relevance within the controversy under discussion. William Hasker (2009), the acknowledged leader of so-called open theism, goes still further, referring to Parmenides’ insistence that true reality should be immutable, and his successor, Plato, from whom Augustine borrowed his doctrine of Divine atemporality, which was alien to the original Christian conception (Hasker, 2009, pp. 82–83). Garrett J. DeWeese, a temporalist of Padgett’s and Craig’s “breed,” who devotes two chapters of his book *God and the Nature of Time* to argue that God exists in time but not in our physical time, and that the whole tradition of atemporalism from Augustine to Aquinas begins with Neoplatonism (DeWeese, 2004, Ch. 5–6). Thus, it would be scarcely an exaggeration to claim that consistent opponents of atemporalism refer to the neo-Platonic origin of this doctrine, which is specific to the

<sup>9</sup> One cannot keep oneself here from parallels with the famous deistic opus *Christianity Not Mysterious* (1696) by John Toland.

<sup>10</sup> See also Schärftl et al. (2016, p. 22).

Hellenic metaphysical mind and essentially incompatible with the Christian God as portrayed in the Bible.

However, is it true that Neoplatonic metaphysics is so static—or, in other words, so simple-minded—as the temporalists make it out to be? It would seem that this verdict is a product of an evident misunderstanding. While for Plotinus (ca. 270/1988), movement cannot be ascribed to the One, as is also true of thinking and even the good (VI.9.9.6, cf. IX.6.9.6), this is not because the nature of the One is limited by lacking these qualities, but because it “precedes” them, being their transcendent source. It may be fairly wondered how a “static state” can be ascribed to such a super-essence which overwhelms itself and outpours beyond itself in the worlds proceeding from its first emanations<sup>11</sup>. However, it is not only Plotinus, but also the author of such indisputable authority for both Eastern and Western Christianity as Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, whose works assert that “the Sovereign God,” “the Ancient of days” is such a Being that “is anterior to Days and anterior to Eternity and Time.” And the titles “Time,” “Day,” “Season,” and “Eternity” must be equally applied to Him in a Divine sense, to mean One who is utterly incapable of all change and movement and, in His eternal motion, remains at rest” (Dionysius the Areopagite, 1920, p. 170). That means that Divine dynamics is static and statics is dynamic and both of them are present and transcended in God who exists beyond time and change.

In addition, it is incorrect to assert that the doctrine of the essential changelessness of the Divine entered Christianity only with Neoplatonism. For example, Theophilus of Antioch (who died between 183 and 185) states that it is one of God’s attributes (ca. 180–185/1970, I.4). Tertullian who died in 220 long before Plotinus (who died in 270) began to utter his sayings, also asserted that God is unchangeable, being eternal (ca. 213/1948, XXVII), and none of them scrutinised Aristotelean metaphysics where immutability is ascribed to the highest level of being while mutability to lower strata (Aristotle, 350 B. C. E./1966, VI.I., 1026a, 22–23).

It is not only Christian theologians who regarded a changeless God as timeless. To give only a few examples, Abu al-Mu’in al-Nasafi (1046–1115), one of the most authoritative theologians in the Maturidi school of Sunni Islam, indicated in *Bahr al-Kalam fi ‘Ilm al-Tawhid* [Ocean of Discussions on the Science of Monotheism] that God’s attributes being perfect and blameless include omnipotence and omniscience and his existence before space and time (Ch. 1–2). Still more expressive on this topic was Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn al-Ṭayyib al-Bāqillānī (950–1013), the author of *Al-Insaf fima Yajib l’ṭiqaduh walā Yajūz al-Jahl bih* [Equity in What Must Be Believed In, and May Not Be Ignorant About] who defended and strengthened the Ash’ari school in Sunni Islam; using almost the same words as Augustine, he stressed that the question as to “when God had been” (before creation) is irrelevant inasmuch as He “preceded” time itself and created space and time while existing “before them” (Al-Bāqillānī, 1957, The Introduction, Section 22, Ch. 8). However, there is no information that these Islamic philosophers were great connoisseurs of Plotinus or Proclus. It is true that

<sup>11</sup> Cf. “and its nature is of such a kind that it is the source of the best and the power which generates the real beings, abiding in itself and not being diminished and not being one of the things which it brought into being” (6.9.5). This translation by A.H. Armstrong is referred to in Plotinus (ca. 270/1988, p. 321).

scholars discuss the extent of the influence of Neoplatonic emanationism on some Islamic Aristotelians (Al-Farabi and Ibn Sīnā) and the controversy about the correlation between universal and individual soul<sup>12</sup>, but Divine immutability and timelessness were already in the Kalamīc doctrines professed later even by avowed opponents of the Islamic heirs of Antique philosophy. Al-Ghazālī, the best known among them, opposed Ibn Sīnā's very reasonable idea that an atemporal God should not have knowledge of all events taking place in the temporal world of everlasting vicissitudes but could be selective in the choice of objects of His knowledge, but his atemporality has not been disputed as an axiom. Neither did Ibn-Rushd in his famous *The Incoherence of the Incoherence* [Tahāfut al-Tahāfut] representing a direct response to al-Ghazālī's criticism of Ibn Sīnā, in which the conception of Divine perfect knowledge was discussed, in any way question God's atemporality<sup>13</sup>. Now, not only Neoplatonic but also Aristotelean and still more Sufi mystical layers are being uncovered in the writings of Ibn-Rushd's junior contemporary Muhyī al-Dīn ibn al-'Arabī (1165–1240) who, on the basis of mystical visions, distinguished between divine Names as they are manifested in the world, being temporary, and the same Names in themselves referring to a Divine essence that is atemporal. It would hard to find even a hint of "stasis" in such a worldview<sup>14</sup>.

Still more distant from Neoplatonism is classical Indian philosophy, where, while there is no full-scale theism, we may find numerous approaches to it<sup>15</sup>. And here we also meet many-sided features of atemporal conceptions of God in different versions of *īśvaravāda* ("the teaching of God" or "the doctrine that God exists"), and direct correlations between Divine omniscience and timelessness were pointed regularly. In the *Yoga Sūtras* and all commentaries thereon (from that of Vyāsa, i.e., 5<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> centuries, up to that of Vijñānabhikṣu, which dates from 16<sup>th</sup> century), *īśvara* is characterised as the omniscient being and the teacher of even all preceding teachers, since he is not limited by divisions of time; the inapplicability of these divisions is directly identified here as being perfected (*siddha*)<sup>16</sup> (I.26). In *The Cluster of Flowers of the Nyāya Tree (Nyāyamañjarī)* by Jayanta Bhaṭṭa (9<sup>th</sup> century),

<sup>12</sup> See, e.g., a relatively contemporary collection of papers (Morewedge, 1992).

<sup>13</sup> See, among latest contributions, Taniş (2021).

<sup>14</sup> Particular attention is paid to this difference, in the context of the Western apologists' criticism of temporalism, especially those who insist on incompatibility between Divine atemporality and omniscience including the presentist knowledge (in the sense that God can know not only that an event takes place on, e.g., 9<sup>th</sup> July, 2024, and cannot know that it takes place "today" or "now" inasmuch as involvement in time is needful for such a knowledge but can have also these knowledges) through ibn al-'Arabī's theology in a detailed investigation (Lala, 2024). One cannot avoid an impression that in such a case an obvious similarity between the approach under discussion and Orthodox difference between Divine essence and energies mediating God's interrelations with the created world is on hand. This difference was promulgated already by Basil the Great (330–379) and worked out by St. Gregory Palamas (1296–1359).

<sup>15</sup> The main reason for this verdict is that Divinity (*īśvara*) with Indian philosophical theists is bereft of omnipotence inasmuch as it cannot do anything (the creation of the world included) which could infringe on the law of karma and samsara acting as beginningless and endless by its own mechanism (it can only slightly correct the latter's work), which explains why creationism is not invoked here. This division of Indian philosophical theism into strong, medial, and weak versions along with ranging Indian attempts to offer models of theodicy was presented in the work of Shokhin (2010).

<sup>16</sup> See, e.g., Patañjali (1963, p. 29).

wherein the strong version of Indian philosophical theism was developed, God's knowledge is characterised in its most creative form (almost as with Boethius) as comprehending all things (past, future, subtle, and concealed) in an "undivided" fashion as beyond the very opposition of what can be progressive and simultaneous (and these two options exhaust temporality)<sup>17</sup>. Śāṅkara (7<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> centuries), the founder of Advaita-Vedanta and the author of the *Thousand Instructions on the Truth (Upadeśhāsāhasrī)*, avowed that the Absolute (*īśvara* being its epithet) should be regarded as having nothing material, impure, and changeable (*vikāra*) and the witness of all intellects in the world (II.7.3). It is not by chance that this characteristic of *īśvara* as being different from an individual self (*jīva*) and identified as the eternal seer is accompanied in his texts by the attribute *kūṭastha* (literally, "one staying on the top of a mountain"<sup>18</sup>). Here we have an exact parity not only with Boethius' idea but also his idiom<sup>19</sup>, i.e., the expression of the attribute of a being not subject to any change, and this unchangeableness was regarded as perfectness. Contrary to Nicolas Wolterstorff, one of the most authoritative temporalists, Indian theists did not detect even the least difficulty in reconciling timelessness and omniscience<sup>20</sup>. However, Indian thought also provides a very impressive argument by contradiction. It was the ancient antitheist school of the Sāṅkhya philosophy, whose active primordial matter called Prakṛti just considered as everlasting changeable, was regarded as the full-scale alternative to God as the cause of the world.

All the aforesaid shows quite distinctly that by no means only Neoplatonic but also intercultural religious metaphysics (in some cases involving coincidences even with the idiom of the pillar stones of Christian theology) thinkers were sure that God as *id quo nihil majus cogitari nequit* (and from this Anselmian definition no religious mind can dissent) should be conceived as atemporal without being "static."

<sup>17</sup> The whole section on *īśvaravāda* in Jayanta's great compendium of the Nyāya philosophy is available in a very good although old edition: Bhaṭṭa (1895, pp. 190–204).

<sup>18</sup> In Pāli Buddhist texts the term under discussion is *kūṭaṭṭho*; it refers to a designation of Ātman and the world by those "eternalists" who were criticised by the Buddha in the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. E. and therefore existed and taught in this age. For main contexts in the Pali texts see Rhys Davids & Stede (1993, p. 225).

<sup>19</sup> Boethius (524/2008). Katherine Rogers very aptly refers to Aquinas' analogy of a road on which those who travel can see only what is near them, while someone looking down from the height can see all of them at once (ST I, q.14, a.13) without mentioning that it was borrowed from Boethius (Rogers, 2000, p. 57).

<sup>20</sup> Here I mean in the first place his reasonings in "God is Everlasting" where he constructs such a syllogism as (a) none can know about some temporal event *e* that it is occurring except when it is occurring; (b) given that *P*'s knowing about *e* that it is occurring cannot occur until *e* begins, and since it has an ending, then *P*'s knowing about *e* that it is occurring cannot itself occur beyond *e*'s cessation; (c) hence the act of knowing about *e* that it is occurring is infected by the temporality of *e*; (d) therefore, every *P* (and God is not an exclusion to the rule) as knowing any *e* has to be infected by temporality. So, we have to choose between two great attributes of the traditional God (knowledge and atemporality) and the philosopher summons to sacrifice one of them resolutely to another. See Wolterstorff (2000, p. 499). The paper had aroused a controversy, but Wolterstorff was sure he had succeeded in overcoming his opponents in the atemporalist camp. It seems, however, that the main problem with Wolterstorff's inference lies in the clarification "and God is not an exclusion to the rule", which falls under the traditional error known as *petitio principii* (if we recollect India again it is *sādhya*sama of the Nyāya system, an invalid argument where a thing which needs to be proved is itself cited as a proof). Instead of proving that the constitution of God's means of knowledge is the same as ours, the philosopher states it as something already proved in order to infer therefrom a needful conclusion.



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## Real Argument From the Mundane Zeitgeist

While returning now to the temporalists' explanation of why there are still many theists who continue to adhere to the traditional doctrine of Divine atemporality, we may consider a question proceeding in the opposite direction, i.e., why there are still more numerous theologians today who deny it? One possible explanation is that they are simply getting tired of the transcendental God (one whose rays have drawn, as we saw, numerous eminent thinkers with sound religious reasons and feelings for many ages from very different cultural regions). In truth, the process God, whom many contemporary theologians wish to substitute for the transcendental God who has been venerated during the ages of Christian theology, is of ultimately the same "stuff" as the universe itself, thus not being "not of this world" (John 18: 36) per se but overcomes it more quantitatively (in terms of duration, ubiquity, power, etc.) than in terms of His essentiality and is thus more likely to be its soul than its Creator. Then another question arises concerning why such a God captivates the sympathies of not only super-liberal but also more conservative philosophical theologians. Here we may simply refer to a Zeitgeist that inclines intellectuals to align with evolutionism (regarded as the indisputable foundation of all scientific and therefore rational thinking) as more concomitant with the ideas of a "self-transforming God". Given that evolutionism does not acknowledge any exclusions to its rules, God therefore also cannot be one of them, and should evolve, albeit in His own divine manner, e.g., from the Pure Will into the Trinity etc. Although another possible explanation is still more "practical": the transcendental God is much more exacting than the process God. In past times, theologians taught that God descended to the earth to elevate man (not without the latter's efforts) to heaven, but now a contrary way is virtually offered—to "democratise" God Himself.

This last point deserves attention in the context of some more general approaches to contemporary religiosity in the West, albeit which involve some misunderstandings. It is well known that the conception of post-secular society has been commonly regarded (especially following Jürgen Habermas's manifestos) as a dogma for those involved in religious studies and sociology, which can be only specified, but not placed under question. The majority of sociological reports supporting this doctrine are unanimous in identifying this shift to the post-secular in the spread of new loosely connected, non-confessional networks without doctrinal commitments, in which humanitarian communication is substituted for traditional ecclesiastical authority<sup>21</sup>. From a semantic point of view, it can certainly be questioned whether such a shift should not more properly be called not post-secular but post-religious, since *religiō* was originally derived (at least from the times of Lactantius and Augustine) from "bound" or "connection" between God and humans in the first place, and between the latter (with each other) in the second. However, in the context of a "post-secular" society, these connections resolutely trade places. For this reason, a modest, "more democratic God" is much more suitable than "the royal God" of the former times. Such

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<sup>21</sup> As a cyclopaedia of interpretations of the post-secular, the enormous volume (Beaumont, 2018) can be heartily recommended.

attitudes occur not only in postmodernist “weak theology”, but even in such traditional disciplines as fundamental theology wherein the apology of traditional theism was predominant from the times of Pierre Charron<sup>22</sup>: here, God himself is regarded not as the eternal goal of human aspiration but more as a means for providing human well-being in this world<sup>23</sup>. However, the history of such shifts in religious consciousness and the “subsurface exploration” of “ground displacements” find themselves beyond the scope of this paper.

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<sup>22</sup> This famous Christian apologist and a follower of philosophical scepticism at the same time formulated three main tasks of apologetics which framed the subject matter of the Catholic discipline of fundamental theology for ages: to demonstrate advantages of religious faith over unbelief, of Christianity over other religions, of Catholicism over other Christian confessions, see Charron (1593, p. 3).

<sup>23</sup> A good example of such a sincere shift of theological intentionality in today's Catholic fundamental theology is given in Knapp (2009).

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