

W. Bentley

Prof. W. Bentley, Research
Institute for Theology and
Religion, University of
South Africa.

(orcid.org/0000-0002-1167-4858)

bentlw1@unisa.ac.za

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18820/23099089/actat.v40i2.10>

ISSN: 1015-8758 (Print)

ISSN: 2309-9089 (Online)

Acta Theologica 2020

40(2):185-199

Date received:

23 June 2020

Date accepted:

6 October 2020

Date published:

18 December 2020

IF GOD IS EVERYWHERE, IS GOD IN A BLACK HOLE? A THEOLOGY-SCIENCE DISCUSSION ON OMNIPRESENCE

ABSTRACT

This article explores the question of divine omnipresence in light of the recent visual representations of a black hole. It explores the notion of God's omnipresence by considering world views, scientific theory, and the notions of embodiment and incorporeal nature of God's being. The article then suggests an understanding of divine omnipresence against the backdrop of Psalm 139.

1. INTRODUCTION

On 10 April 2019, the science community was in ecstasy. The first image of a black hole had been captured. Until then, black holes had been objects of scientific theory, but now, with this image, the invisible became visible. Admittedly, capturing an image of a black hole is no mean feat, considering that the gravitational field in a black hole is so strong that no light is able to escape it. Hence, what light might be available to show us what the black hole actually looks like? Scientists explained that the *image* of the black hole is not a single image captured by one telescope; it is a carefully constructed conglomerate of data (roughly 5 petabytes in total) provided by a network of telescopes across the world. This information was



Published by the UFS

<http://journals.ufs.ac.za/index.php/at>

© Creative Commons

With Attribution (CC-BY)



then translated into an image by using complex algorithms to synchronise and sort through the information gained from the EHT (Event Horizon Telescope)¹ (Lutz 2019). Black holes are fascinating structures; their existence confounds our thinking of space-time. They are the inescapable collapse of matter, space and time into itself – the most beautifully mesmerising and destructive cosmological structure that we know of.

Not only scientists were captivated by this accomplishment; as a theologian with an interest in astrophysics, my ears perked up and my mind started exploring the theological questions raised by this event. What is the meaning of this? Did God create this? Is God in the black hole? If an astronaut somehow managed to travel to the black hole, could they have a spiritual experience, feeling close to God? What happens to God on the event horizon? Is God different outside the black hole to what God is in the black hole? I know that these questions are no more (ir)relevant to the lived experience of people around the world than asking the question: “How many angels can you fit on the head of a pin?”. Nonetheless, these questions are important as they guide our understanding of how religion and science form part of our experience of life and our understanding of our own meaning in light of the universe.

The very thought of black holes invites theological discourse and the rethinking of theological tenets that we usually take for granted. This article ventures into rethinking the doctrine of omnipresence in the context of these mega cosmological structures. If we say that God is *everywhere*, then what do we mean? Do we include in our understanding that God would even be in something like a black hole? This article explores the following points:

- The notion of omnipresence in tandem with contextual cosmological understandings.
- Omnipresence and the incorporeal nature of God.
- Anthropomorphism, theodicy and the dynamic nature of God.
- A concluding revisiting of Psalm 139.

2. COSMOLOGY AND OMNIPRESENCE

What do we mean when we say that God is everywhere (omnipresent)? First, we need to note that the idea of divine omnipresence is not new, especially to the Judeo-Christian tradition. Although it is not explicitly stated in Scripture, the omnipresence of God certainly seems to be an implied idea in various texts. In Genesis 1:2, we read that the *Ruach* of God hovered over the waters,

1 This is the name of the network of telescopes, that made up a virtual telescope with the aperture spanning nearly the diameter of the Earth.

suggesting that the presence of God was not confined to the heavenly realm, but was already present within the realm of nature.² In Psalm 139, the psalmist takes this thought further, by proclaiming that, when he explored the heavens, the depths, and the far sides of the seas, he found that God's reach was everywhere.³ In the book of Job, critical questions are asked about justice in light of God's all-encompassing presence. I will not give a full exegetical account of these texts, nor do I propose that these are the set texts to prove God's omnipresence. I merely cite these texts as examples of an assumed understanding of God's omnipresence that, in my view, resulted as a product of the contextual cosmological understandings of those in Scripture who gave testimony to their faith. I would like to contend that the notion of divine omnipresence was both a feasible and reliable doctrine, considering the cosmological understanding of the time.

During biblical times, specifically in the formation of the creation narrative of Genesis 1, it was a common belief that the cosmos consisted of a three-tier universe. Van Dyk (1987:10) provides the following explanation of the way the cosmos was perceived (paraphrased).

First, it was believed that the earth was a flat disc, suspended on pillars. The earth provided the first-level stage, on which life could be lived and experienced. The firmament separated the water above the earth from the earth (and the water below the earth). Above the firmament and its water, one finds the heavens, the dwelling place of God, and the space in which the spiritual operates. The heavens (or Heaven) is the tier above the earth, the canvas of the spiritual, containing the elements that point to destiny and ultimate divine reality. The third level manifested in the levels below the earth. In Judaism, *Sheol*, or the realm of the dead, gave space for those who did not find existence in the realm of earth, or yet present with God in the heavens.

From this perspective, it certainly makes sense that, if God were above the firmament, with a full view of the entire earth and all that is in and below it,

2 Of course, such a reading may imply a literal understanding of the creation narratives, but even with an allegorical hermeneutic approach, the message of God's omnipresence can be deduced.

3 Biblical scholars deduce that the form of omnipresence, as depicted in the Psalm, is expressed in terms of the psalmist's experiential reality and not merely an adopted doctrinal pronouncement. Buttrick (1955:712) expresses this perspective as follows: "The psalmist is deeply impressed with the omniscience and omnipresence of the Lord, not however as formal attributes of a sovereign God, but as what he has found to be true in his own experience. The psalm therefore is not an exercise in speculative theology ... It keeps within the rang of the psalmist's knowledge and convictions and reflects what his own humble walk with God has taught him." This interpretation of omnipresence will be further explored in the conclusion of this article.

the presence of God was inescapable. No wonder the psalmist, in particular, expressed that God's reach was everywhere! The omnipresence of God, in this biblical world view and in philosophical traditions (as I will explore later), was closely tied to the idea of God's omnipotence and omniscience. "Since God is everywhere, he is causally active throughout creation and able to know all things immediately" (McGuire & Slowik 2012:280).

The early Jewish doctrine of creation "proclaims that God is present equally in the totality of creation" (McGuire & Slowik 2012:280). Not only was God understood to be present everywhere, knowing all things, and able to do all things, but in this cosmos, God was understood to be the causal primer of all things. The experience of life itself was a manifestation of God's presence in the world. Not only did life give testimony to the presence of God, but so did the manifestation of the notion of divine judgement (justice), where it was believed that divine blessing or curse would present itself as a judgement on the expression of life lived. The righteous would prosper, while the wicked would find God's wrath – a formula that is conceivable only with an understanding that God is simultaneously omnipresent and omniscient.

The contested belief (in early Judaism) of the absence of an *afterlife* testified to this fact. God's justice would manifest in a blessed life for the righteous, while a life of suffering was in store for the wicked – justice happened in this life, not in the next. Even in the questioning of divine justice in, for instance, the Book of Job, divine justice is explained in the human inability to comprehend the presence of God throughout the universe. When Job asks God why he, a righteous man, should endure so much suffering, God responds with a series of rhetorical questions, starting with: "Where were you ...?" (Job 38:4). Through the questions, Job is made to realise that humanity has a finite perspective, for human beings live within the confines of space and time. God's justice is perfect, because God is all-knowing, and God is all-knowing, because God is omnipresent. Humankind is aware of locality, of immanence, but God is able to be perfect and to adjudicate fairly, for God is indeed omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent.

It was only much later, with the growing understanding that we do not live in a fixed three-tier universe, that the notion of God's omnipresence became more complicated. As the understanding of the cosmos changed, so did the interpretation of divine omnipresence. To fast-track the conversation past Ptolemy, Copernicus and Galileo, it is particularly in Isaac Newton that we find a groundbreaking shift in interpreting divine omnipresence.

McGuire, an avid scholar of Newton, highlights how Newton himself struggled with the notion of omnipresence, considering his growing understanding of the universe. To Newton, the dilemma of God's omnipresence

manifested in the magnitude of space and time. Although Newton, to a large degree, understood space to be infinite and some heavenly bodies to be static in space, it was clear that God was not *above* creation, as indicated by biblical world views. Newton made sense of God's omnipresence in this infinite cosmos by suggesting that the mere fact of its existence, the expanse of the universe testified to the presence of God, even the points of the cosmos that were unobservable and unreachable to human observation and influence. McGuire (1978:119) translates Newton, stating the following:

By reason of its eternity and infinity, space will neither be God nor wise nor powerful nor alive, but will merely be increased in duration and magnitude; whereas God by reason of the eternity and infinity of space (that is, by reason of his eternal omnipresence) will be rendered the most perfect being. A fixed star, whether it has come into existence as the first of all stars or after a succession of previous stars, whether the number of the stars be finite or infinite, will not thereby be either more perfect or more imperfect: God, however, will be demonstrated to be more powerful, wiser, better, and in every way more perfect from the eternal succession and infinite number of his works, that He would be from works merely infinite.

To Newton, God was still the external craftsman, whose handiwork can be seen in all of creation. The mere expanse of creation bears testimony to the presence of God, for nothing in the cosmos came into being without God. Because space is infinite, God's presence is infinite, and because time is eternal in duration, God's presence is also eternal (McGuire 1987:125). This does not mean that God's omnipresence is locked in the created order. To Newton, God's omnipresence is not a consequence of material space-time locality; God's omnipresence pre-empts space and eternal duration (McGuire 1987:126), being the causal mover of bringing all things in time and space into existence. This has consequences for the relationship between God and God's creation. If we take a linear view of time and space, if God is *outside* time and space, in essence, pre-stating time and space, then God can be understood as *causa prima efficiens* – and free will may well be negated. Is there something besides God that keeps the whole of the cosmos coherent?

To Newton, the common denominator in all of eternal space is time; everything moves in the same time frame in a linear direction. Qu (2014:436-449) compares this notion of time and space to the views of Einstein and Barth. To Einstein, time is not a common denominator and is subject to the changes in space as determined by gravity, spatial speed, mass, and the like. God's omnipresence in this instance becomes even more problematic, as there is no specific vantage point located in time, no point where God can divide eternal past and future into a fixed moment in time (and in space). God's

omnipresence would, therefore, cause “time-disturbances” and incongruity in the being of God, where, if God is in space and time, some parts of God will be moving faster, while other parts will move slower. We will get to the non-divisive nature of God later.

Barth, in turn, tried to make sense of the eternal and immanent natures of God, describing God’s presence as eternal immanence, penetrating the constructs of our space and time – *historie*. Therefore, “God’s eternity is both transcendent and immanent in human time” (Qu 2014:436). To Barth (2010:6-11, 46-48, 91-97), the incarnation must be viewed as the pivotal point around which God is simultaneously immanent and transcendent while being fully and comprehensively present in both states. The next section discusses the notion of incarnation.

We can conclude that the notion of God’s omnipresence has experienced increasing challenges as our understanding of the universe has unfolded. Omnipresence was first understood in a static and limited cosmos, where God’s presence was linked to God’s ability to see all things and do all things. This cosmos, as well as Newton’s cosmos, followed a time-linear trajectory, where God moved alongside the entire cosmos, being fully present in each moment (Shults 2007:48). God’s omnipresence was known to be causal and determinative of the cosmos’ existence. With time, the natural sciences have increasingly disputed any linear view of causality and temporality (Shults 2007:48) and, hence, questioned the nature of a theological (and philosophical) notion of divine omnipresence.

Is God therefore in a black hole? To the biblical writers, black holes were not known and this would, therefore, have been a nonsensical question. If they knew about black holes, then God would still be above the firmament, above the black holes, knowing, seeing and being able to influence black holes, according to God’s divine will. To Newton, the existence of black holes would have been an indicator that God was the causal mover of the existence of black holes. Because God is, black holes could exist, but God would move parallel alongside black holes in the linear continuum of time. To Einstein, a divine presence in a black hole would have been problematic, as God’s being would have had to experience the simultaneous collapse of time, space and matter as God would perpetuate outside the black hole in the rest of the cosmos. It would not be a question of *Is God in a black hole?* But rather *How/when/where would God be in a black hole?* To Barth, the incarnate Christ testifies to the unchanging nature of a transcendent God within the experience of earthly time and space. God is unchanging; therefore, God would be the same in a black hole as God would be in the person of Jesus Christ.

3. OMNIPRESENCE AND THE INCORPOREAL NATURE OF GOD

Another aspect of the question of omnipresence is of *how* God is present – whether God is present in body or whether God is a present *force* without a body. We refer to the latter as the incorporeal nature of God. To Dyck (1977:85), there is a definite relationship between God’s omnipresence and incorporeality. If God is everywhere, then it would not make sense for God to be limited or confined to the boundaries of an embodied form. Dyck (1977:85) then asks the question: Is it a contradiction to speak about an embodied omnipresent being? Here, the confusion centres around the notion of “body”, which implies form. This, in turn, implies spatial limitation and may even infer that God is a form of matter. If this were true, and if we were to assume that Newton is correct in indicating that the infinite nature of the universe in space and time is indicative of the presence of God, we could conclude that God is embodied in and through the universe. Dyck (1977:86) contests this thought by drawing a distinction between God and the universe; God and the universe are not the same, therefore, negating any notion of pantheism. To be fair to Newton, he did not suggest a form of pantheism, but he was quite adamant that both space and God have an incorporeal extension; they are both infinite (in duration and in spatial infinity), neither God nor the cosmos is contained, but they are not the same (McGuire & Slowik 2012:290). Space and time are “characteristics that stand as external affections of divine being” (McGuire & Slowik 2012:306). Newton, therefore, tends more towards an incorporeal omnipresence than the omnipresence of an embodied being.

This notion did not start with Newton, but is already vocalised in the writings of, for instance, Thomas Aquinas. To Aquinas, the incorporeal nature of God is not about the physical (embodied) presence of God; it refers to the contact with divine power as experienced throughout the cosmos (Aquinas 1964:283). God is the causal mover, bringing all things into existence, without whom, nothing can exist or fulfil its divine purpose in the greater scheme of the universe. There are clear lines between Aquinas and Newton on the topic of the incorporeal nature of God’s presence.

Another problem with pantheism, or any form of doctrine of an embodied God, would be the suggestion that the presence of God will be greater in the bigger things and less in the smaller. God is, therefore, proportionally divisible according to space, time, or any other dimension of our choosing in the cosmos! Dahl (2014:76) points out this dilemma, stating:

Because God fills all things, they must contain only parts of God. But if God is not divisible, it cannot be more of Him in bigger than smaller

parts of the world. God must therefore fill things with the whole of himself, but still nothing can contain God exhaustively.

On this point, I would like to draw from three theologians, whose current work focuses on theology and emergence (complexity theory).

The first is the Danish theologian, Niels Gregersen. To Gregersen (2010:173-176), God is part of all of creation's processes – the universe in its infinite state functions, maintains itself, and carries on despite any explicit *external* force. Yet, we speak of *someone* like God, suggesting that God has made Godself known in a *language* that we understand. To Gregersen, God's incorporeal presence is part of "the whole malleable matrix of materiality" (Gregersen 2010:176), but what makes it distinct from pantheism is the personal manner in which the incorporeal presence becomes embodied in the conveyance of self-revelation. We can only speak of incarnation *sub specie anthropos* (Bentley 2016:2), where our description of the embodied nature of God's presence is

locked within the limitations of human existence, experience and knowledge, allowing us to interpret the Incarnation, using solely our frame of reference (Bentley 2016:2).

Gregersen's notion of "deep incarnation", therefore, suggests that God's incorporeal nature and embodied self-revelation are not opposites, but that the embodied self-revelation is a distinct form of communication with a level of complexity that operates in, and understands the language of embodiment.

The second is Klaus Nürnberger. Nürnberger describes God as the ultimate source and destiny of reality. Concurring with Gregersen, Nürnberger's (2016:15) understanding of God hinges on the idea that God is not a force or power outside of the realm of physics, but that God is intimately involved in the cosmos as both its source and destiny. It is in God's transcendence that God's presence becomes immanent in the language of incarnation.

Similarly, Van Huyssteen (2006:10) suggests that the distinction between immanence and transcendence is constructed realities, formulated by our own epistemologies and ontologies. There exists one reality in which both the transcendent and the immanent, the incorporeal and the embodied natures of God are equally true.

It is interesting that theological language suggests that this seemingly contradictory nature of God is the combined lived experience of many. Take, for instance, African concepts of God. Byaruhanga-Akiiki (1980:360) sums it up beautifully: In African images of God, God is believed to be in all things, hence all medicines can work to address issues, as the Creator's power is

there. The transcendent becomes manifest, not in the limitations of bodily form, but rather by becoming embodied in the expression of power through nature, which God infuses.

From a more Western perspective, Oord (2019) suggests that God's affect is found in a human partnership with nature and with other people. While the presence of God is questioned, especially during times of trauma and suffering (Dicken 2013:132-151), it is equally true that the presence of God is experienced through the participatory presence and action of those around us. There is thus a link between *presence* and affect.

Is God in a black hole? When considering the notions of "embodied omnipresence" and the "incorporeal nature of God", we would be safe to say that, if God were present in a black hole in embodied form, the laws of physics would most certainly act on the being of God; God, with all other matter, time and space, would collapse into Godself. The incorporeal nature of God's omnipresence, however, can be present in a black hole without God's being being adversely affected. Yet, the same incorporeal presence of God is the presence of God manifest in the Incarnation. This leads us to the next point of discussion.

4. ANTHROPOMORPHISM, THEODICY AND THE DYNAMIC NATURE OF GOD

The incorporeal nature of God certainly makes sense, and it negates many of the philosophical stumbling blocks surrounding the fluctuating manifestations of time and space, particularly as it pertains to black holes. Gregersen, Van Huyssteen and Nürnberger provide some form of reconciliation between the immanence and transcendence of God, but incorporeal reality, as stated earlier, lacks in the personal dimension of a god-figure. If God were only an incorporeal presence, our experience of God would be very similar to "tapping into the *Force* of Star Wars". We need something more – we need a physical presence of God that becomes like us, speaks like us and, more than this, speaks our language. We need a God who understands, not merely a God who is an invisible force, hovering throughout eternal time and space without *persona*. It is important to locate God somewhere, even in symbolism. In Scripture and tradition, this attempt to locate God has found expression in different sacred metaphors: the presence of God in the Ark of the Covenant, the Temple, the people of God, the Church, the Sacraments – these are metaphors that create a sense of God's real, intimate and physical presence among us.

A metaphysical presence becomes ubiquitous, “in which we are all absorbed” (Dickens 2103:135). Such an omnipresent force does not seem to address sufficiently the experience of suffering and pain, nor of a personal interest that exudes justice, empathy, and intimate presence. If God is incorporeal, how do we account for unjust pain, destruction and suffering?

The “Problem of Divine Hiddenness” suggests that there is too much suffering to warrant the existence, particularly the incorporeal and omnipresent existence of God (Oakes 2008:115). In MacLeish’s play *J.B.: A play in verse*, based on the Book of Job, the character Nickles expresses the question concerning a God who allows suffering in the following words:

If God is God He is not good, if God is good He is not God; take the even, take the odd (MacLeish 1989:14).

Translated differently: If God is omnipresent, then is God good? If God is good, can God be omnipresent, and if so, then how?

The problem with theodicy is that it assumes some form of stasis in the created order, that reality (the reality of lived experience) is standard, predisposing an intended, universal notion of good and prosperity. Kauffman (2016:74) suggests that this notion is not a true reflection of reality. The universe, each moment, can be divided between actuals and potentialities. The right conditions and actions transform potentialities into realities. Suffering, pain and the like are, therefore, the actuals of a particular set of potentials that materialised, and have absolutely nothing to do with divine predeterminism, will, or influence. The universe itself is dynamic, giving rise to life, death, suffering, and prosperity, as it turns out. He and Suchocki (2010) further suggest that a dynamic universe needs a dynamic God. If God were static and the universe dynamic, there would be a growing gap between the existence of the universe and the presence of God.

God is dynamic, along with the universe – God is not static in the sense that God is locked into a being or in a body, which will limit the possibilities of *who* God can be, *where* God can be – along with the dynamism of the universe, the dynamic nature of God makes for endless possibilities of God’s being and God’s locality (Suchocki 2010:39-58). This makes God a partner in the experience of life and, hence, open to responding and inspiring responses in a dynamic universe.

God primordially and everlastingly enjoys a definiteness of satisfaction in the everlasting enfoldment of the world, and this satisfaction is appetitive, everlastingly generating a superjective nature that evokes the becoming of finite occasions (Suchocki 2010:51).

Taking these points into consideration, God is present in a black hole in the sense that God becomes the fulfilment of all potentialities and actuals, even the actual of black holes that seem to contradict the intuitive notion of a universe unfolding and expanding.

5. CONCLUSION

One of the go-to passages in Scripture regarding God's omnipresence is undoubtedly Psalm 139. The psalmist asks the question: "Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?". By exploring the heavens, the depths, and the far sides of the seas, the psalmist exclaims that God's presence is to be found everywhere. Admittedly, as we explored earlier in this article, the psalmist's views were shaped by his understanding of the universe. Is there anything that we can learn from the psalmist in trying to answer our research question?

I would like to argue that there is indeed an implied epistemology in this Psalm that helps us gain a different perspective on the question, not an epistemology that necessarily answers the question, but one that helps us place the question in perspective. It certainly seems that Psalm 139 is not so much about the omnipresence of God as it is about God's presence being inescapable (Oakes 2008:157). Is there a difference?

The difference is that the psalmist does not start from the perspective of transcendence, breaking into immanence. The Psalm starts from the perspective of an immanent, personal relationship between the psalmist and God and then works outwards. The dilemma we face in asking whether God is in a black hole is that we first have to contend with metaphysics and then try to reconcile the subsequent presuppositions with a notion of a person(al) God. This is virtually impossible. Even if we attempt to make sense of it through theological language such as "incarnation" or "transcendent immanence", it still remains a conundrum that makes God either impersonal, confined, limitless ..., something that is simply not within our frame of reference. To start, like the psalmist from a perspective of personal experience, leading to bigger and greater circles, I propose that the psalmist has a much better chance of making sense of the great mystery of God that, he discovers, transcends his notion of experienced reality. Let me illustrate this by breaking down the Psalm in its various stages of unfolding.

In verses 1 to 6, the psalmist does not ask the complicated, mysterious laden questions of God's existence. He simply states the known reality he experiences, namely that he, the psalmist, feels that God knows him personally. The extent of God's omnipresence and omniscience is located within the psalmist's lived experience – this is where God's omnipresence and

omniscience make sense. God's omnipresence is located in the expression: "You know me better than I know myself". One would assume that, to the psalmist, this would be enough, but he does not stop here.

The psalmist then moves from his own person to a wider context. In verses 7-12, the psalmist extends the omnipresence of God to space outside his lived experience. Is there a place where the psalmist can escape God's presence? The psalmist argues and is in awe that the same presence that is experienced in person is the presence that will be experienced irrespective of the psalmist's movements and searching! The personal, intimate God is consistently encountered wherever the psalmist may find himself.

One can already note a question of immanence and transcendence in this shift. The psalmist makes sense of the consistent presence of God by describing God as the causal mover, the one in whom all things (and all beings) find their identity (vv. 13-16). It is only because God is the same primal mover of all things that it is possible to experience the personal God in the impersonal spaces of that which exists outside ourselves.

The psalmist then makes a profound statement in verses 17 and 18. Although God is experienced in the personal, intimate spaces of being, God is beyond our comprehension and not embodied in our limited experiences of reality. Despite this God who confounds our thinking, the psalmist still draws back to the personal God who is known and who makes Godself known in experienced reality.

True to his world view and to the notion of God's omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence, this personal God who is incomprehensibly equally and similarly present in and through all things brings balance to all of experienced reality. God's justice (vv. 19-20) brings equilibrium in an inconsistent world. Without God, the balance of creation and all that is in it would not exist. Hence, without God's omnipresent justice, the world as we know it could not exist or continue to exist.

In verses 21 and 22, the psalmist pledges his allegiance to this personal and transcendent God. To live life, to experience the reality of self and this created order, is to become part of the divine movement (and divine wisdom) in the realm of experienced reality. The concluding verses 23 and 24 draw back to the personal, God, who is personal, who is consistent outside the psalmist as God is within, who is beyond understanding, yet the one who brings order in this creation, the one who allows participation from God's created beings in order to experience life, is the God whom the psalmist asks again to speak to him in a personal and intimate language, and so, to become the source of the psalmist's inner conviction and the great motivator, drawing the psalmist to Godself.

If we were to answer the question: “If God is omnipresent, then is God in a black hole?”, then we could follow in the psalmist’s footsteps. By starting with black holes, with the “out there”, with the mystery of transcendence and the complicated permutations of space and time, it would be difficult to bring God back to a personal being with personal interest in us. Perhaps we should start with God-talk in the space of the personal. From a human, created perspective, perhaps we should start with what we can be “certain” of, that we know God as a personal and immanent God. Yet, God is not locked in our personal experience. The same presence experienced in the mystery of worship is the presence to be experienced throughout the universe, irrespective of where we may be looking. The personal becomes transcendent. The transcendent God is the personal God. The *person* of God is the incorporeal presence of God.

If the psalmist were to be asked the question: “Is God in a black hole?”, then perhaps his answer would be: “Where can I go from your Spirit? If I live life on earth, you are here. If I get drawn into a black hole, you are there”.

Is this not enough to hold together the seemingly irreconcilable differences in our understanding of immanence and transcendence, embodiment and incorporeal nature, and infinity and the limits of our reality of space and time? The only place where we can speak of, is here, whether here is here, or here is in a black hole.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

AQUINAS, T.

1964. *Summa Theologiae. Vol. 2, Part 1a*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

BARTH, K.

2010. *Church Dogmatics. Vol. 2.1, Sections 28-30: The doctrine of God, Study Edition 8*. Twenty-second edition. New York: T&T Clark. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9780567690715>

BENTLEY, W.

2016. Re-visiting the notion of deep incarnation in light of 1 Corinthians 15:28 and emergence theory. *HTS Theological Studies* 72(4):1-8. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v72i4.3425>

BUTTRICK, G.A.

1955. *The interpreter's Bible. Vol. 4*. New York: Abingdon Press.

BYARUHANGA-AKIKI, A.B.T.

1980. The philosophy and theology of time in Africa: The Bantu case. *Afer* 22:357-369.

DAHL, E.

2014. Beginning, ending and remembering: Wittgenstein's Augustinian inheritance. *Studia Theologica* 68(1):73-91. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0039338X.2014.904815>

DICKEN, T.M.

2013. Whitehead, trauma, and the presence of God. *Process Studies* 42(1):132-151. <https://doi.org/10.5840/process20134219>

DYCK, G.M.

1977. Omnipresence and incorporeality. *Religious Studies* 13(1):85-91. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034412500009732>

GREGERSEN, N.H.

2010. Deep incarnation: Why evolutionary continuity matters in Christology. *Toronto Journal of Theology* 26(2):173-187. <https://doi.org/10.3138/tjt.26.2.173>

KAUFFMAN, S.A.

2016. *Humanity in a creative universe*. New York: Oxford University Press.

LUTZ, O.

2019. How scientists captured the first image of a black hole – Teachable Moments | NASA/JPL Edu. [Online.] Retrieved from: <https://www.jpl.nasa.gov/edu/news/2019/4/19/how-scientists-captured-the-first-image-of-a-black-hole/> [19 April 2019].

MACLEISH, A.

1989. *J.B.: A play in verse*. Chicago, ILL: Houghton Mifflin.

MCGUIRE, J.E.

1978. Newton on place, time, and God: An unpublished source. *The British Journal for the History of Science* 11(2):114-129. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S000708740001654X>

MCGUIRE, J.E. & SLOWIK, E.

2012. Newton's ontology of omnipresence and infinite space. In: D. Garber & D. Rutherford (eds.), *Oxford studies in early modern philosophy*. Vol. VI (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 279-308. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199659593.003.0009>

NÜRNBERGER, K.

2016. *Faith in Christ today: Invitation to systematic theology*. Vol. 1. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.

OAKES, R.

2018. Life, death, and the hiddenness of God. *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 64(3):155-160. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11153-008-9172-y>

OORD, T.J.

2019. *God can't: How to believe in God and love after tragedy, abuse, and other evils*. Grasmere: SacraSage Press.

QU, LI.

2014. Newton, Einstein and Barth on time and eternity. *Scottish Journal of Theology* 67(4): 436-449. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930614000209>

SHULTS, F.L.

2007. The philosophy of time: The turn to futurity in late modern philosophy. *Studia Theologica* 61:47-60. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00393380701325160>

SUCHOCKI, M.H.

2010. The dynamic God. *Process Studies* 39(1):39-58. <https://doi.org/10.5840/process20103913>

VAN DYK, P.J.

1987. Creation and theology of creation in the Old Testament. In: J. Engelbrecht & P.J. van Dyk (eds.), *On creation and re-creation: Themes from the Bible – Creation, justice, faith, and the church* (Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers), pp. 1-34.

VAN HUYSSTEEN, J.W.

2006. *Alone in the world? Human uniqueness in science and theology: The Gifford Lectures*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans.

Keywords

Trefwoorde

Omnipresence

Alomteenwoordigheid

Science and Religion

Wetenskap en godsdiens

Worldviews

Wêreldsiening

Incorporeal

Onliggaamlik

Embodiment

Beliggaming