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Dear Dr. Lamm,

I'm reading your excellent study of R. Haim of Volozhin. Of course, it's no mystery why you would do this, given his place in the (you should pardon the expression) evolution of Modern Orthodoxy.

You reiterated the Orthodox/Misnagid position re: Divine Immanence -- i.e. if G-d is in everything, everywhere, in the sense taught by Hasidut, it may cause them to make no halachic distinction between clean and unclean, and therefore the Divine Name could be mentioned in inappropriate places.

However, I don't think it's the necessary conclusion.

Water is water and wood is wood; no Hasid would try to set water on fire for warmth in winter. In Kabbalah, only in Atzilut do distinctions cease; in all else -- Yetzirah, Briah, Asiyah, multiplicity must still be considered. These "worlds" represent different levels of perception, or "consciousness," if you will. Only on the level of "Atzilut" is the truth of "Achdut" (i.e. Ehn Od: there's nothing other than G-d) also a truth of experience. On the physical level: always multiplicity. The highest development of life (in this world) would actually encompass all four. There can be distinctions, even in a world filled with G-d.

The subsequent history of Hasidut demonstrates that, whatever variations in observance they made based on their belief-system, their fundamental allegiance to halachah has been unshakeable.

For the record, I'm neither Orthodox nor Hasidic. But I can appreciate the importance of these issues, and derive deep satisfaction from your presentation of them.

Sincerely,

