

CHAPTER 5

The Self-existence of God

Lord of all being! Thou alone canst affirm I AM THAT I AM; yet we who are made in Thine image may each one repeat “I am,” so confessing that we derive from Thee and that our words are but an echo of Thine own. We acknowledge Thee to be the great Original of which we through Thy goodness are grateful if imperfect copies. We worship Thee, O Father Everlasting. Amen.

“God has no origin,” said Novatian and it is precisely this concept of no-origin which distinguishes That- which-is-God from whatever is not God.

Origin is a word that can apply only to things created. When we think of anything that has origin we are not thinking of God. God is self-existent, while all created things necessarily originated somewhere at some time. Aside from God, nothing is self-caused.

By our effort to discover the origin of things we confess our belief that everything was made by Someone who was made of none. By familiar experience we are taught that everything “came from” something else. Whatever exists must have had a cause that antedates it and was at least equal to it, since the lesser cannot produce the greater. Any person or thing may be at once both caused and the cause of someone or something else; and so, back to the One who is the cause of all but is Himself caused by none.

The child by his question, “Where did God come from?” is unwittingly acknowledging his creaturehood. Already the concept of cause and source and origin is firmly fixed in his mind. He knows that everything around him came from something other than itself, and he simply extends that concept upward to God. The little philosopher is thinking in true creature-idiom and, allowing for his lack of basic information, he is reasoning correctly. He must be told that God has no origin, and he will find this hard to grasp since it introduces a category with which he is wholly unfamiliar and contradicts the bent toward origin-seeking so deeply ingrained in all intelligent beings, a bent that impels them to probe ever back and back toward undiscovered beginnings.

To think steadily of that to which the idea of origin cannot apply is not easy, if indeed it is possible at all. Just as under certain conditions a tiny point of light can be seen, not by looking directly, at it but by focusing the eyes slightly to one side, so it is with the idea of the Uncreated. When we try to focus our thought upon One who is pure uncreated being we may, see nothing at all, for He dwelleth in light that no man can approach unto. Only by faith and love are we able to glimpse Him as he passes by our shelter in the cleft of the rock. “And although this knowledge is very cloudy, vague and general,” says Michael de Molinos, being supernatural, it produces a far more clear and perfect cognition of God than any sensible or particular apprehension that can be formed in this life; since all corporeal and sensible images are immeasurably remote from God.”

The human mind, being created, has an understandable uneasiness about the Uncreated. We do not find it comfortable to allow for the presence of One who is wholly outside of the circle of our familiar knowledge. We tend to be disquieted by the thought of One who does not account to us for His being, who is responsible to no one, who is self-existent, self-dependent and self-sufficient.

Philosophy and science have not always been friendly toward the idea of God, the reason being that they are dedicated to the task of accounting for things and are impatient with anything that refuses to give an account of itself. The philosopher and

the scientist will admit that there is much that they do not know; but that is quite another thing from admitting that there is something which they can never know, which indeed they have no technique for discovering.

To admit that there is One who lies beyond us, who exists outside of all our categories, who will not be dismissed with a name, who will not appear before the bar of our reason, nor submit to our curious inquiries: this requires a great deal of humility, more than most of us possess, so we save face by thinking God down to our level, or at least down to where we can manage Him. Yet how He eludes us! For He is everywhere while He is nowhere, for “where” has to do with matter and space, and God is independent of both. He is unaffected by time or motion, is wholly self-dependent and owes nothing to the worlds His hands have made.

*Timeless, spaceless, single, lonely,
Yet sublimely Three,
Thou art grandly, always, only
God is Unity!
Lone in grandeur, lone in glory,
Who shall tell Thy wondrous story? Awful Trinity!*

Frederick W. Faber

It is not a cheerful thought that millions of us who live in a land of Bibles, who belong to churches and labor to promote the Christian religion, may yet pass our whole life on this earth without once having thought or tried to think seriously about the being of God. Few of us have let our hearts gaze in wonder at the I AM, the self-existent Self back of which no creature can think. Such thoughts are too painful for us. We prefer to think where it will do more good - about how to build a better mousetrap, for instance, or how to make two blades of grass grow where one grew before. And for this we are now paying a too heavy price in the secularization of our religion and the decay of our inner lives.

Perhaps some sincere but puzzled Christian may at this juncture wish to inquire about the practicality of such concepts as I am trying to set forth here. “What bearing does this have on my life?” he may ask.

“What possible meaning can the self-existence of God have for me and others like me in a world such as this and in times such as these?”

To this I reply that, because we are the handiwork of God, it follows that all our problems and their solutions are theological. Some knowledge of what kind of God it is that operates the universe is indispensable to a sound philosophy of life and a sane outlook on the world scene.

The much-quoted advice of Alexander Pope, Know then thyself, presume not God to scan: The proper study of mankind is man, if followed literally would destroy any possibility of man’s ever knowing himself in any but the most superficial way. We can never know who or what we are till we know at least something of what God is. For this reason the self-existence of God is not a wisprof dry doctrine, academic and remote; it is in fact as near as our breath and as practical as the latest surgical technique.

For reasons known only to Himself, God honored man above all other beings by creating him in His own image. And let it be understood that the divine image in man is not a poetic fancy, not an idea born of religious longing. It is a solid theological fact,

taught plainly throughout the Sacred Scriptures and recognized by the Church as a truth necessary to a right understanding of the Christian faith.

Man is a created being, a derived and contingent self, who of himself possesses nothing but is dependent each moment for his existence upon the One who created him after His own likeness. The fact of God is necessary to the fact of man. Think God away and man has no ground of existence.

That God is everything and man nothing is a basic tenet of Christian faith and devotion; and here the teachings of Christianity coincide with those of the more advanced and philosophical religions of the East. Man for all his genius is but an echo of the original Voice, a reflection of the uncreated Light. As a sunbeam perishes when cut off from the sun, so man apart from God would pass back into the void of nothingness from which he first leaped at the creative call.

Not man only, but everything that exists came out of and is dependent upon the continuing creative impulse. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... All things were made by him and without him was not any thing made that was made." That is how John explains it, and with him agrees the apostle Paul: "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." To this witness the writer to the Hebrews adds his voice, testifying of Christ that He is the brightness of God's glory and the express image of His Person, and that He upholds all things by the word of His power.

In this utter dependence of all things upon the creative will of God lies the possibility for both holiness and sin. One of the marks of God's image in man is his ability to exercise moral choice. The teaching of Christianity is that man chose to be independent of God and confirmed his choice by deliberately disobeying a divine command. This act violated the relationship that normally existed between God and His creature; it rejected God as the ground of existence and threw man back upon himself. Thereafter he became not a planet revolving around the central Sun, but a sun in his own right, around which everything else must revolve.

A more positive assertion of selfhood could not be imagined than those words of God to Moses: I AM THAT I AM. Everything God is, everything that is God, is set forth in that unqualified declaration of independent being. Yet in God, self is not sin but the quintessence of all possible goodness, holiness and truth.

The natural man is a sinner because and only because he challenges God's selfhood in relation to his own. In all else he may willingly accept the sovereignty of God; in his own life he rejects it. For him, God's dominion ends where his begins. For him, self becomes Self, and in this he unconsciously imitates Lucifer, that fallen son of the morning who said in his heart, "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. . . . I will be like the Most High."

Yet so subtle is self that scarcely anyone is conscious of its presence. Because man is born a rebel, he is unaware that he is one. His constant assertion of self, as far as he thinks of it at all, appears to him a perfectly normal thing. He is willing to share himself, sometimes even to sacrifice himself for a desired end, but never to dethrone himself. No matter how far down the scale of social acceptance he may slide, he is still in his own eyes a king on a throne, and no one, not even God, can take that throne from him.

Sin has many manifestations but its essence is one. A moral being, created to worship before the throne of God, sits on the throne of his own selfhood and from that elevated position declares, "I AM." That is sin in its concentrated essence; yet because it is natural it appears to be good. It is only when in the gospel the soul is brought before the face of the Most Holy One without the protective shield of ignorance that the frightful moral incongruity is brought home to the conscience. In the language of evangelism the man who is thus confronted by the fiery presence of Almighty God is said to be under conviction. Christ referred to this when He said of the Spirit whom He would send to the world, "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment."

The earliest fulfilment of these words of Christ was at Pentecost after Peter had preached the first great Christian sermon. "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" This "What shall we do?" is the deep heart cry of every man who suddenly realizes that he is a usurper and sits on a stolen throne. However painful, it is precisely this acute moral consternation that produces true repentance and makes a robust Christian after the penitent has been dethroned and has found forgiveness and peace through the gospel.

"Purity of heart is to will one thing," said Kierkegaard, and we may with equal truth turn this about and declare, "The essence of sin is to will one thing," for to set our will against the will of God is to dethrone God and make ourselves supreme in the little kingdom of Mansoul. This is sin at its evil root. Sins may multiply like the sands by the seashore, but they are yet one. Sins are because sin is. This is the rationale behind the much maligned doctrine of natural depravity which holds that the independent man can do nothing but sin and that his good deeds are really not good at all. His best religious works God rejects as He rejected the offering of Cain. Only when he has restored his stolen throne to God are his works acceptable.

The struggle of the Christian man to be good while the bent toward self-assertion still lives within him as a kind of unconscious moral reflex is vividly described by the apostle Paul in the seventh chapter of his Roman Epistle; and his testimony is in full accord with the teaching of the prophets. Eight hundred years before the advent of Christ the prophet Isaiah identified sin as rebellion against the will of God and the assertion of the right of each man to choose for himself the way he shall go. "All we like sheep have gone astray," he said, "we have turned every one to his own way," and I believe that no more accurate description of sin has ever been given.

The witness of the saints has been in full harmony with prophet and apostle, that an inward principle of self lies at the source of human conduct, turning everything men do into evil. To save us completely Christ must reverse the bent of our nature; He must plant a new principle within us so that our subsequent conduct will spring out of a desire to promote the honor of God and the good of our fellow men. The old self-sins must die, and the only instrument by which they can be slain is the Cross. "If any man come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me," said our Lord, and years later the victorious Paul could say, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

*My God, shall sin its power maintain
And in my soul defiant live!
'Tis not enough that Thou forgive, The cross must rise and self be slain.
O God of love, Thy power disclose:*

*'Tis not enough that Christ should rise, I, too, must seek the brightening
skies, And rise from death, as Christ arose.*
Greek hymn

CHAPTER 6

The Self-sufficiency of God

Teach us, O God, that nothing is necessary to Thee. Were anything necessary to Thee that thing would be the measure of Thine imperfection: and how could we worship one who is imperfect? If nothing is necessary to Thee, then no one is necessary, and if no one, then not we. Thou dost seek us though Thou does not need us. We seek Thee because we need Thee, for in Thee we live and move and have our being. Amen

“The Father hath life in himself,” said our Lord, and it is characteristic of His teaching that He thus in a brief sentence sets forth truth so lofty as to transcend the highest reaches of human thought. God, He said, is self-sufficient; He is what He is in Himself, in the final meaning of those words.

Whatever God is, and all that God is, He is in Himself. All life is in and from God, whether it be the lowest form of unconscious life or the highly self-conscious, intelligent life of a seraph. No creature has life in itself; all life is a gift from God.

The life of God, conversely, is not a gift from another. Were there another from whom God could receive the gift of life, or indeed any gift whatever, that other would be God in fact. An elementary but correct way to think of God is as the One who contains all, who gives all that is given, but who Himself can receive nothing that He has not first given.

To admit the existence of a need in God is to admit incompleteness in the divine Being. Need is a creature-word and cannot be spoken of the Creator. God has a voluntary relation to everything He has made, but He has no necessary relation to anything outside of Himself. His interest in His creatures arises from His sovereign good pleasure, not from any need those creatures can supply nor from any completeness they can bring to Him who is complete in Himself.

Again we must reverse the familiar flow of our thoughts and try to understand that which is unique, that which stands alone as being true in this situation and nowhere else. Our common habits of thought allow for the existence of need among created things. Nothing is complete in itself but requires something outside itself in order to exist. All breathing things need air; every organism needs food and water. Take air and water from the earth and all life would perish instantly. It may be stated as all axiom that to stay alive every created thing needs some other created thing and all things need God. To God alone nothing is necessary.

The river grows larger by its tributaries, but where is the tributary that can enlarge the One out of whom came everything and to whose infinite fullness all creation owes its being?

*Unfathomable Sea:
all life is out of Thee,
And Thy life is Thy blissful Unity.*

Frederick W. Faber

The problem of why God created the universe still troubles thinking men; but if we cannot know why, we can at least know that He did not bring His worlds into being to

meet some unfulfilled need in Himself, as a man might build a house to shelter him against the winter cold or plant a field of corn to provide him with necessary food. The word necessary is wholly foreign to God.

Since He is the Being supreme over all, it follows that God cannot be elevated. Nothing is above Him, nothing beyond Him. Any motion in His direction is elevation for the creature; away from Him, descent. He holds His position out of Himself and by leave of none. As no one can promote Him, so no one can degrade Him. It is written that He upholds all things by the word of His power. How can He be raised or supported by the things He upholds?

Were all human beings suddenly to become blind, still the sun would shine by day and the stars by night, for these owe nothing to the millions who benefit from their light. So, were every man on earth to become atheist, it could not affect God in any way. He is what He is in Himself without regard to any other. To believe in Him adds nothing to His perfections; to doubt Him takes nothing away.

Almighty God, just because He is almighty, needs no support. The picture of a nervous, ingratiating God fawning over men to win their favor is not a pleasant one; yet if we look at the popular conception of God that is precisely what we see. Twentieth century Christianity has put God on charity. So lofty is our opinion of ourselves that we find it quite easy, not to say enjoyable, to believe that we are necessary to God. But the truth is that God is not greater for our being, nor would He be less if we did not exist. That we do exist is altogether of God's free determination, not by our desert nor by divine necessity.

Probably the hardest thought of all for our natural egotism to entertain is that God does not need our help. We commonly represent Him as a busy, eager, somewhat frustrated Father hurrying about seeking help to carry out His benevolent plan to bring peace and salvation to the world, but, as said the Lady Julian, "I saw truly that God doeth all-thing, be it never so little." The God who worketh all things surely needs no help and no helpers.

Too many missionary appeals are based upon this fancied frustration of Almighty God. An effective speaker can easily excite pity in his listeners, not only for the heathen but for the God who has tried so hard and so long to save them and has failed for want of support. I fear that thousands of younger persons enter Christian service from no higher motive than to help deliver God from the embarrassing situation His love has gotten Him into and His limited abilities seem unable to get Him out of. Add to this a certain degree of commendable idealism and a fair amount of compassion for the underprivileged and you have the true drive behind much Christian activity today.

Again, God needs no defenders. He is the eternal Undefended. To communicate with us in all idiom we can understand, God in the Scriptures makes full use of military terms; but surely it was never intended that we should think of the throne of the Majesty on high as being under siege, with Michael and his hosts or some other heavenly beings defending it from stormy overthrow. So to think is to misunderstand everything the Bible would tell us about God. Neither Judaism nor Christianity could approve such puerile notions. A God who must be defended is one who can help us only while someone is helping Him. We may count upon Him only if He wins in the cosmic seesaw battle between right and wrong. Such a God could not command the respect of intelligent men; He could only excite their pity.

To be right we must think worthily of God. It is morally imperative that we purge from our minds all ignoble concepts of the Deity and let Him be the God in our minds that He is in His universe. The Christian religion has to do with God and man, but its focal point is God, not man. Man's only claim to importance is that he was created in the divine image; in himself he is nothing. The psalmists and prophets of the Scriptures refer with scorn to weak man whose breath is in his nostrils, who grows up like the grass in the morning only to be cut down and wither before the setting of the sun. That God exists for himself and man for the glory of God is the emphatic teaching of the Bible. The high honor of God is first in heaven as it must yet be in earth.

From all this we may begin to understand why the Holy Scriptures have so much to say about the vital place of faith and why they brand unbelief as a deadly sin. Among all created beings, not one dare trust in itself. God alone trusts in himself; all other beings must trust in Him. Unbelief is actually perverted faith, for it puts its trust not in the living God but in dying men. The unbeliever denies the self-sufficiency of

God and usurps attributes that are not his. This dual sin dishonors God and ultimately destroys the soul of the man.

In His love and pity God came to us as Christ. This has been the consistent position of the Church from the days of the apostles. It is fixed for Christian belief in the doctrine of the incarnation of the Eternal Son. In recent times, however, this has come to mean something different from, and less than, what it meant to the early church. The Man Jesus as He appeared in the flesh has been equated with the Godhead and all His human weaknesses and limitations attributed to the Deity. The truth is that the Man who walked among us was a demonstration, not of unveiled deity but of perfect humanity. The awful majesty of the Godhead was mercifully sheathed in the soft envelope of Human nature to protect mankind. "Go down," God told Moses on the mountain, "charge the people, lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish"; and later, "Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live."

Christians today appear to know Christ only after the flesh. They try to achieve communion with Him by divesting Him of His burning holiness and unapproachable majesty, the very attributes He veiled while on earth but assumed in fullness of glory upon His ascension to the Father's right hand. The Christ of popular Christianity has a weak smile and a halo. He has become Someone-up-There who likes people, at least some people, and these are grateful but not too impressed. If they need Him, He also needs them.

Let us not imagine that the truth of the divine self-sufficiency will paralyse Christian activity. Rather it will stimulate all holy endeavor. This truth, while a needed rebuke to human self-confidence, will when viewed in its Biblical perspective lift from our minds the exhausting load of mortality and encourage us to take the easy yoke of Christ and spend ourselves in Spirit-inspired toil for the honor of God and the good of mankind. For the blessed news is that the God who needs no one has in sovereign condescension set Himself to work by and in and through His obedient children.

If all this appears self-contradictory - Amen, be it so. The various elements of truth stand in perpetual antithesis, sometimes requiring us to believe apparent opposites while we wait for the moment when we shall know as we are known. Then truth which now appears to be in conflict with itself will arise in shining unity and it will be seen that the conflict has not been in the truth but in our sin-damaged minds.

In the meanwhile our inner fulfilment lies in loving obedience to the commandments of Christ and the inspired admonitions of His apostles. "It is God which worketh in you." He needs no one, but when faith is present He works through anyone. Two statements are in this sentence and a healthy spiritual life requires that we accept both. For a full generation the first has been in almost total eclipse, and that to our deep spiritual injury.

Fountain of good, all blessing flows From Thee; no want Thy fulness knows; What but Thyself canst Thou desire? Yet, self-sufficient as Thou art, Thou dost desire my worthless heart. This, only this, dost Thou require.

Johann Scheffler

CHAPTER 7

The Eternity of God

This day our hearts approve with gladness what our reason can never fully comprehend, even Thine eternity, O Ancient of Days. Art Thou not from everlasting, O Lord, my God, mine Holy One?

We worship Thee, the Father Everlasting, whose years shall have no end; and Thee, the love-begotten Son whose goings forth have been ever of old; we also acknowledge and adore Thee, Eternal Spirit, who before the foundation of the world didst live and love in coequal glory with the Father and the Son.

Enlarge and purify the mansions of our souls that they may be fit habitations for Thy Spirit, who dost prefer before all temples the upright heart and pure. Amen.

The concept of everlastingness runs like a lofty mountain range throughout the entire Bible and looms large in orthodox Hebrew and Christian thought. Were we to reject the concept, it would be altogether impossible for us to think again the thoughts of prophets and apostles, so full were they of the long dreams of eternity.

Because the word everlasting is sometimes used by the sacred writers to mean no more than long-lasting (as “the everlasting hills”), some persons have argued that the concept of unending existence was not in the minds of the writers when they used the word but was supplied later by the theologians. This is of course a serious error, and, as far as I can see, has no ground in serious scholarship. It has been used by certain teachers as an escape from the doctrine of eternal punishment. These reject the eternity of moral retribution, and to be consistent they are forced to weaken the whole idea of endlessness. This is not the only instance where an attempt was made to slay a truth to keep it quiet lest it appear as a material witness against an error.

The truth is that if the Bible did not teach that God possessed endless being in the ultimate meaning of that term, we would be compelled to infer it from His other attributes, and if the Holy Scriptures had no word for absolute everlastingness, it would be necessary for us to coin one to express the concept, for it is assumed, implied, and generally taken for granted everywhere throughout the inspired Scriptures. The idea of endlessness is to the kingdom of God what carbon is to the kingdom of nature. As carbon is present almost everywhere, as it is an essential element in all living matter and supplies all life with energy, so the concept of everlastingness is necessary to give meaning to any Christian doctrine. Indeed I know of no tenet of the Christian creed that could retain its significance if the idea of eternity were extracted from it.

“From everlasting to everlasting, thou art God,” said Moses in the Spirit. “From the vanishing point to the vanishing point” would be another way to say it quite in keeping with the words as Moses used them. The mind looks backward in time till the dim past vanishes, then turns and looks into the future till thought and imagination collapses from exhaustion: and God is at both points, unaffected by either.

Time marks the beginning of created existence, and because God never began to exist it can have no application to Him. “Began” is a time-word, and it can have no personal meaning for the high and lofty

One that inhabited eternity.

No age can heap its outward years on Thee;

Dear God! Thou art; Thyself, Thine own eternity. Frederick F. Faber

Because God lives in an everlasting now, He has no past and no future. When time-words occur in the Scriptures they refer to our time, not to His. When the four living creatures before the throne cry day and night, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come,” they are identifying God with the flow of creature-life with its familiar three tenses; and this is right and good, for God has sovereignly willed so to identify Himself. But since God is uncreated, He is not himself affected by that succession of consecutive changes we call time.

God dwells in eternity but time dwells in God. He has already lived all our tomorrows as He has lived all our yesterdays. An illustration offered by C. S. Lewis may help us here. He suggests that we think of a sheet of paper infinitely extended. That would be eternity. Then on that paper draw a short line to represent time. As the line begins and ends on that infinite expanse, so time began in God and will end in Him.

That God appears at time’s beginning is not too difficult to comprehend, but that He appears at the beginning and end of time simultaneously is not so easy to grasp; yet it is true. Time is known to us by a succession of events. It is the way we account for consecutive changes in the universe. Changes take place not all at once but in succession, one after the other, and it is the relation of “after” to “before” that gives us our idea of time. We wait for the sun to move from east to west or for the hour hand to move around the face of the clock, but God is not compelled so to wait. For Him everything that will happen has already happened.

This is why God can say, “I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning.” He sees the end and the beginning in one view. “For infinite duration, which is eternity’s self, includeth all succession,” says Nicholas of Cusa, “and all which seemeth to us to be in succession existeth not posterior to Thy concept, which is eternity.... Thus, because Thou art God almighty, Thou dwellest within the wall of Paradise, and this wall is that coincidence where later is one with earlier, where the end is one with the beginning, where Alpha and Omega are the same.... For NOW and THEN coincide in the circle of the wall of Paradise. But, O my God, the Absolute and Eternal, it is beyond the present and the past that Thou dost exist and utter speech.”

When He was a very old man, Moses wrote the psalm from which I have quoted earlier in this chapter. In it he celebrates the eternity of God. To him this truth is a solid theological fact as firm and hard as that Mount Sinai with which he was so familiar, and for him it had two practical meanings: since God is eternal, He can be and continue forever to be the one safe home for His time-driven children. “Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.” The second thought is less comforting: God’s eternity is so long and our years on earth are so few, how shall we establish the work of our hands? How shall we escape the abrasive action of events that would wear us out and destroy us? God fills and dominates the psalm, so it is to Him that Moses makes his plaintive appeal, “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.” May the knowledge of Thy eternity not be wasted on me!

We who live in this nervous age would be wise to meditate on our lives and our days long and often before the face of God and on the edge of eternity. For we are made for eternity as certainly as we are made for time, and as responsible moral beings we must deal with both.

“He hath set eternity in their heart,” said the Preacher, and I think he here sets forth both the glory and the misery of men. To be made for eternity and forced to dwell in time is for mankind a tragedy of huge proportions. All within us cries for life and permanence,

and everything around us reminds us of mortality and change. Yet that God has made us of the stuff of eternity is both a glory and a prophecy yet to be fulfilled.

I hope it will not be found unduly repetitious if I return again to that important pillar of Christian theology, the image of God in man. The marks of the divine image have been so obscured by sin that they are not easy to identify, but is it not reasonable to believe that one mark may be man's insatiable craving for immortality?

Thou wilt not leave us in the dust: Thou madest man, he knows not why; He thinks he was not made to die

And Thou hast made him: Thou art just.

So reasons Tennyson, and the deepest instincts of the normal human heart agree with him. The ancient image of God whispers within every man of everlasting hope; somewhere he will continue to exist. Still he cannot rejoice, for the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world troubles his conscience, frightening him with proofs of guilt and evidences of coming death. So is he ground between the upper millstone of hope and the nether stone of fear.

Just here the sweet relevancy of the Christian message appears. "Jesus Christ ... hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." So wrote the greatest Christian of them all just before he went out to meet his executioner. God's eternity and man's mortality join to persuade us that faith in Jesus Christ is not optional. For every man it must be Christ or eternal tragedy. Out of eternity our Lord came into time to rescue His human brethren whose moral folly had made them not only fools of the passing world but slaves of sin and death as well.

*Brief life is here our portion, Brief sorrow, short-lived care; The life that knows no ending, The tearless life is there.
There God, our King and Portion,
In fullness of His grace, We then shall see forever, And worship face to face.*

Bernard of Cluny

CHAPTER 8

God's Infinitude

Our Heavenly Father: Let us see Thy glory, if it must be from the shelter of the cleft rock and from beneath the protection of Thy covering hand. Whatever the cost to us in loss of friends or goods or length of days let us know Thee as Thou art, that we may adore Thee as we should. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The world is evil, the times are waxing late, and the glory of God has departed from the church as the fiery cloud once lifted from the door of the Temple in the sight of Ezekiel the prophet.

The God of Abraham has withdrawn His conscious Presence from us, and another God whom our fathers knew not is making himself at home among us. This God we have made and because we have made him we can understand him; because we have created him he can never surprise us, never overwhelm us, nor astonish us, nor transcend us.

The God of glory sometimes revealed Himself like a sun to warm and bless, indeed, but often to astonish, overwhelm, and blind before He healed and bestowed permanent sight. This God of our fathers wills to be the God of their succeeding race. We have only to prepare Him a habitation in love and faith and humility. We have but to want Him badly enough, and He will come and manifest Himself to us.

Shall we allow a saintly and thoughtful man to exhort us? Hear Anselm; or better still, heed his words:

Up now, slight man! Flee for a little while thy occupations; hide thyself for a time from thy disturbing thoughts. Cast aside now thy burdensome cares, and put away thy toilsome business. Yield room for some little time to God, and rest for a little time in Him. Enter the inner chamber of thy mind; shut out all thoughts save that of God and such as can aid thee in seeking Him. Speak now, my whole heart! Speak now to God, saying, I seek Thy face; Thy face, Lord, will I seek."

Of all that can be thought or said about God, His Infinitude is the most difficult to grasp. Even to try to conceive of it would appear to be self-contradictory, for such conceptualization requires us to undertake something which we know at the outset we can never accomplish. Yet we must try, for the Holy Scriptures teach that God is infinite and, if we accept His other attributes, we must of necessity accept this one too.

From the effort to understand, we must not turn back because the way is difficult and there are no mechanical aids for the ascent. The view is better farther up and the journey is not one for the feet but for the heart. Let us seek, therefore, such "trances of thought and mountings of the mind" as God may be pleased to grant us, knowing that the Lord often pours eyesight on the blind and whispers to babes and sucklings truths never dreamed of by the wise and prudent. Now the blind must see and the deaf hear. Now we must expect to receive the treasures of darkness and the hidden riches of secret places.

Infinitude, of course, means limitlessness, and it is obviously impossible for a limited mind to grasp the Unlimited. In this chapter I am compelled to think one step short of that about which I am writing, and the reader must of necessity think a degree under that about which he is trying to think. O, the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!

The reason for our dilemma has been suggested before. We are trying to envision a mode of being altogether foreign to us, and wholly unlike anything we have known in our familiar world of matter, space, and time.

"Here, and in all our meditations upon the qualities and content of God," writes Novatian, "we pass beyond our power of fit conception, nor can human eloquence put forth a power commensurate with His greatness. At the contemplation and utterance of His majesty all eloquence is rightly dumb, all mental effort is feeble. For God is greater than mind itself. His greatness cannot be conceived. Nay, could we conceive of His greatness He would be less than the human mind which could form the conception. He is greater than all language, and no statement can express Him. Indeed, if any statement could express Him, He would be less than human speech which could by such statement comprehend and gather up all that He is. All our thoughts about Him will be less than He, and our loftiest utterances will be trivialities in comparison with Him."

Unfortunately the word infinite has not always been held to its precise meaning, but has been used carelessly to mean simply much or a great deal, as when we say that an artist takes infinite pains with his picture or a teacher shows infinite patience with her class. Properly, the word can be used of no created thing, and of no one but God. Hence, to argue about whether or not space is infinite is to play with words. Infinitude can belong to but One. There can be no second.

When we say that God is infinite we mean that He knows no bounds. Whatever God is and all that God is, He is without limit. And here again we must break away from the popular meaning of words. "Unlimited wealth" and "boundless energy" are further examples of the misuse of words. Of course no wealth is unlimited and no energy boundless unless we are speaking of the wealth and energy of God.

Again, to say that God is infinite is to say that He is measureless. Measurement is the way created things have of accounting for themselves. It describes limitations, imperfections, and cannot apply to God. Weight describes the gravitational pull of the earth upon material bodies; distance describes intervals between bodies in space; length means extension in space, and there are other familiar measurements such as those for liquid, energy, sound, light, and numbers for pluralities. We also try to measure abstract qualities, and speak of great or little faith, high or low intelligence, large or meager talents.

It is not plain that all this does not and cannot apply to God? It is the way we see the works of His hands, but not the way we see Him. He is above all this, outside of it, beyond it. Our concepts of measurement embrace mountains and men, atoms and stars, gravity, energy, numbers, speed, but never God. We cannot speak of measure or amount or size or weight and at the same time be speaking of God, for these tell of degrees and there are no degrees in God. All that He is He is without growth or addition or development. Nothing in God is less or more, or large or small. He is what He is in Himself, without qualifying thought or word. He is simply God.

In the awful abyss of the divine Being may lie attributes of which we know nothing and which can have no meaning for us, just as the attributes of mercy and grace can have no personal meaning for seraphim or cherubim. These holy beings may know of these qualities in God but be unable to feel them sympathetically for the reason that they have not sinned and so do not call forth God's mercy and grace. So there may be, and I believe there surely are, other aspects of God's essential being which He has not revealed even to His ransomed and Spirit-illuminated children. These hidden facets of God's nature concern His relation to none but Himself. They are like the far side of the

moon, which we know is there but which has never been explored and has no immediate meaning for men on earth. There is no reason for us to try to discover what has not been revealed. It is enough to know that God is God.

*Thine own Self forever filling
With self-kindled flame,
In Thyself Thou art distilling
Uncions without name!
Without worshipping of creatures, Without veiling of Thy features, God
always the same!*

Frederick W. Faber

But God's infinitude belongs to us and is made known to us for our everlasting profit. Yet, just what does it mean to us beyond the mere wonder of thinking about it? Much every way, and more as we come to know ourselves and God better.

Because God's nature is infinite, everything that flows out of it is infinite also. We poor human creatures are constantly being frustrated by limitations imposed upon us from without and within. The days of the years of our lives are few, and swifter than a weaver's shuttle. Life is a short and fevered rehearsal for a concert we cannot stay to give. Just when we appear to have attained some proficiency we are forced to lay our instruments down. There is simply not time enough to think, to become, to perform what the constitution of our natures indicates we are capable of.

How completely satisfying to turn from our limitations to a God who has none. Eternal years lie in His heart. For Him time does not pass, it remains; and those who are in Christ share with Him all the riches of limitless time and endless years. God never hurries. There are no deadlines against which He must work. Only to know this is to quiet our spirits and relax our nerves. For those out of Christ, time is a devouring beast; before the sons of the new creation time crouches and purrs and licks their hands. The foe of the old human race becomes the friend of the new, and the stars in their courses fight for the man God delights to honor. This we may learn from the divine infinitude.

But there is more. God's gifts in nature have their limitations. They are finite because they have been created, but the gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus is as limitless as God. The Christian man possesses God's own life and shares His infinitude with Him. In God there is life enough for all and time enough to enjoy it. Whatever is possessed of natural life runs through its cycle from birth to death and ceases to be, but the life of God returns upon itself and ceases never. And this is life eternal: to know the one true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent.

The mercy of God is infinite too, and the man who has felt the grinding pain of inward guilt knows that this is more than academic. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Abounding sin is the terror of the world, but abounding grace is the hope of mankind. however sin may abound it still has its limits, for it is the product of finite minds and hearts; but God's much more" introduces us to infinitude. Against our deep creature-sickness stands God's infinite ability to cure.

The Christian witness through the centuries has been that "God so loved the world . . ."; it remains for us to see that love in the light of God's infinitude. His love is measureless. It is more: it is boundless. It has no bounds because it is not a thing but a facet of the essential nature of God. His love is something He is, and because He is infinite that love can enfold the whole created world in itself and have room for ten thousand times ten thousand worlds beside.

*This, this is the God we adore,
Our faithful, unchangeable Friend, Whose love is as great as His power,
And neither knows measure nor end.
'Tis Jesus, the first and the last,
Whose Spirit shall guide us safe home; We' praise Him for all that is
past,
And trust Him for all that's to come. Joseph Hart*

CHAPTER 9

The Immutability of God

O Christ our Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. As conies to their rock, so have we run to Thee for safety; as birds from their wanderings, so have we flown to Thee for peace. Chance and change are busy in our little world of nature and men, but in Thee we find no variableness nor shadow of turning. We rest in Thee without fear or doubt and face our tomorrows without anxiety. Amen.

The immutability of God is among those attributes less difficult to understand, but to grasp it we must discipline ourselves to sort out the usual thoughts with which we think of created things from the rarer ones that arise when we try to lay hold of whatever may be comprehended of God.

To say that God is immutable is to say that He never differs from Himself. The concept of a growing or developing God is not found in the Scriptures. It seems to me impossible to think of God as varying from Himself in any way. Here is why:

For a moral being to change it would be necessary that the change be in one of three directions. He must go from better to worse or from worse to better; or, granted that the moral quality remain stable, he must change within himself, as from miniature to mature or from one order of being to another. It should be clear that God can move in none of these directions. His perfections forever rule out any such possibility.

God cannot change for the better. Since He is perfectly holy, He has never been less holy than He is now and can never be holier than He is and has always been. Neither can God change for the worse. Any deterioration within the unspeakably holy nature of God is impossible. Indeed I believe it impossible even to think of such a thing, for the moment we attempt to do so, the object about which we are thinking is no longer God but something else and someone less than He. The one of whom we are thinking may be a great and awesome creature, but because he is a creature he cannot be the self-existent Creator.

As there can be no mutation in the moral character of God, so there can be none within the divine essence. The being of God is unique in the only proper meaning of that word; that is, His being is other than and different from all other beings. We have seen how God differs from His creatures in being self-existent, self-sufficient, and eternal. By virtue of these attributes God is God and not some other being. One who can suffer any slightest degree of change is neither self-existent, self-sufficient, nor eternal, and so is not God. Only a being composed of parts may change, for change is basically a shift in the relation of the parts of a whole or the admission of some foreign element into the original composition. Since God is self-existent, He is not composed. There are in Him no parts to be altered. And since He is self-sufficient, nothing can enter His being from without.

"Whatever is composed of parts," says Anselm, "is not altogether one, but is in some sort plural, and diverse from itself, and either in fact or in concept is capable of dissolution. But these things are alien to Thee, than whom nothing better can be conceived of. Hence, there are no parts in Thee Lord., nor art Thou more than one. But Thou art so truly a unitary being, and so identical with Thyself, that in no respect art Thou unlike Thyself, rather Thou art unity itself, indivisible by any conception."

"All that God is He has always been, and all that He has been and is He will ever be." Nothing that God has ever said about Himself will be modified; nothing the inspired prophets and apostles have said about Him will be rescinded. His immutability guarantees this.

The immutability of God appears in its most perfect beauty when viewed against the mutability of men. In God no change is possible; in men change is impossible to escape. Neither the man is fixed nor his world, but he and it are in constant flux. Each man appears for a little while to laugh and weep, to work and play, and then to go to make room for those who shall follow him in the never-ending cycle.

Certain poets have found a morbid pleasure in the law of impermanence and have sung in a minor key the song of perpetual change. Omar the tentmaker was one who sang with pathos and humor of mutation and mortality, the twin diseases that afflict mankind. "Don't slap that clay around so roughly," he exhorts the potter, "that may be your grandfather's dust you make so free with". "When you lift the cup to drink red wine," he reminds the reveler, "you may be kissing the lips of some beauty dead long ago."

This note of sweet sorrow expressed with gentle humor gives a radiant beauty to his quatrains but, however beautiful, the whole long poem is sick, sick unto death. Like the bird charmed by the serpent that would devour it, the poet is fascinated by the enemy that is destroying him and all men and every generation of men.

The sacred writers, too, face up to man's mutability, but they are healthy men and there is a wholesome strength in their words. They have found the cure for the great sickness. God, they say changes not. The law of mutation belongs to a fallen world, but God is immutable, and in Him men of faith find at last eternal permanence. In the meanwhile change works for the children of the kingdom, not against them. The changes that occur in them are wrought by the hand of the in-living Spirit. "But we all," says the apostle, "with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

In a world of change and decay not even the man of faith can be completely happy. Instinctively he seeks the unchanging and is bereaved at the passing of dear familiar things.

*O Lord! my heart is sick,
Sick of this everlasting change; And life runs tediously quick
Through its unresting race and varied range: Change finds no likeness to
itself in Thee And wakes no echo in Thy mute Eternity. Frederick W.
Faber*

These words of Faber find sympathetic response in every heart; yet much as we may deplore the lack of stability in all earthly things, in a fallen world such as this the very ability to change is a golden treasure, a gift from God of such fabulous worth as to call for constant thanksgiving. For human beings the whole possibility of redemption lies in their ability to change.

To move across from one sort of person to another is the essence of repentance: the liar becomes truthful, the thief honest, the lewd pure, the proud humble. The whole moral texture of the life is altered. The thoughts, the desires, the affections are transformed, and the man is no longer what he had been before. So radical is this change that the apostle calls the man that used to be "the old man" and the man that now is "the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him."

Yet the change is deeper and more basic than any external acts can reveal, for it includes also the reception of life of another and higher quality. The old man, even at his best, possesses only the life of Adam: the new man has the life of God. And this is more than a mere manner of speaking; it is quite literally true. When God infuses eternal life into the spirit of a man, the man becomes a member of a new and higher order of being.

In the working out of His redemptive processes the unchanging God makes full use of change and through a succession of changes arrives at permanence at last. In the Book of Hebrews this is shown most clearly.

"He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second," is a kind of summation of the teaching of that remarkable book. The old covenant, as something provisional, was abolished, and the new and everlasting covenant took its place.

The blood of goats and bulls lost its significance when the blood of the Paschal Lamb was shed. The law, the altar, the priesthood - all were temporary and subject to change; now the eternal law of God is engraven forever on the living, sensitive stuff of which the human soul is composed. The ancient sanctuary is no more, but the new sanctuary is eternal in the heavens and there the Son of God has His eternal priesthood.

Here we see that God uses change as a lowly servant to bless His redeemed household, but He Himself is outside of the law of mutation and is unaffected by any changes that occur in the universe.

*And all things as they change proclaim
The Lord eternally the same.* Charles Wesley

Again the question of use arises. "Of what use to me is, the knowledge that God is immutable?" someone asks. "Is not the whole thing mere metaphysical speculation? Something that might bring a certain satisfaction to persons of a particular type of mind but can have no real significance for practical men?"

If by "practical men" we mean unbelieving men engrossed in secular affairs and indifferent to the claims of Christ, the welfare of their own souls, or the interests of the world to come, then for them such a book as this can have no meaning at all; nor, unfortunately, can any other book that takes religion seriously. But while such men may be in the majority, they do not by any means compose the whole of the population. There are still the seven thousand who have not bowed their knees to Baal. These believe they were created to worship God and to enjoy His presence forever, and they are eager to learn all they can about the God with whom they expect to spend eternity.

In this world where men forget us, change their attitude toward us as their private interests dictate, and revise their opinion of us for the slightest cause, is it not a source of wondrous strength to know that the God with whom we have to do changes not? That His attitude toward us now is the same as it was in eternity past and will be in eternity to come?

What peace it brings to the Christian's heart to realize that our Heavenly Father never differs from Himself. In coming to Him at any time we need not wonder whether we shall find Him in a receptive mood. He is always receptive to misery and need, as well as to love and faith. He does not keep office hours nor set aside periods when He will see no one. Neither does He change His mind about anything. Today, this moment, He feels toward His creatures, toward babies, toward the sick, the fallen, the sinful, exactly as He did when He sent His only-begotten Son into the world to die for mankind.

God never changes moods or cools off in His affections or loses enthusiasm. His attitude toward sin is now the same as it was when He drove out the sinful man from the eastward garden, and His attitude toward the sinner the same as when He stretched forth His hands and cried, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

God will not compromise and He need not be coaxed. He cannot be persuaded to alter His Word nor talked into answering selfish prayer. In all our efforts to find God, to please Him, to commune with Him, we should remember that all change must be on our part. "I am the Lord, I change not." We have but to meet His clearly stated terms, bring our lives into accord with His revealed will, and His infinite power will become instantly operative toward us in the manner set forth through the gospel in the Scriptures of truth.

*Fountain of being! Source of Good! Immutable Thou dost remain!
Nor can the shadow of a change
Obscure the glories of Thy reign.
Earth may with all her powers dissolve,
If such the great Creator will; But Thou for ever art the same, I AM is
Thy memorial still. From Walker's Collection*

CHAPTER 10

The Divine Omniscience

Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest my downsitteing and mine uprising and art acquainted with all my ways. I can inform Thee of nothing and it is vain to try to hide anything from Thee. In the light of Thy perfect knowledge I would be as artless as a little child. Help me to put away all care, for Thou knowest the way that I take and when Thou hast tried me I shall come forth as gold. Amen.

To say that God is omniscient is to say that He possesses perfect knowledge and therefore has no need to learn. But it is more: it is to say that God has never learned and cannot learn.

The Scriptures teach that God has never learned from anyone. "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to Him the way of understanding?"

"For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor?" These rhetorical questions put by the prophet and the apostle Paul declare that God has never learned.

From there it is only a step to the conclusion that God cannot learn. Could God at any time or in any manner receive into His mind knowledge that He did not possess and had not possessed from eternity, He would be imperfect and less than himself. To think of a God who must sit at the feet of a teacher, even though that teacher be an archangel or a seraph, is to think of someone other than the Most High God, maker of heaven and earth.

This negative approach to the divine omniscience is, I believe, quite justified in the circumstances. Since our intellectual knowledge of God is so small and obscure, we can sometimes gain considerable advantage in our struggle to understand what God is like by the simple expedient of thinking what He is not like. So far in this examination of the attributes of God we have been driven to the free use of negatives. We have seen that God had no origin, that He had no beginning, that He requires no helpers, that He suffers no change, and that in His essential being there are no limitations.

This method of trying to make men see what God is like by showing them what He is not like is used also by the inspired writers in the Holy Scriptures. "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard," cries Isaiah, "that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?" And that abrupt statement by God Himself, "I am the Lord, I change not," tells us more about the divine omniscience than could be told in a ten-thousand word treatise, were all negatives arbitrarily ruled out. God's eternal truthfulness is stated negatively by the apostle Paul, "God... cannot lie"; and when the angel asserted that "with God nothing shall be impossible," the two negatives add up to a ringing positive.

That God is omniscient is not only taught in the Scriptures, it must be inferred also from all else that is taught concerning Him. God perfectly knows Himself and, being the source and author of all things, it follows that He knows all that can be known. And this He knows instantly and with a fullness of perfection that includes every possible item of knowledge concerning everything that exists or could have existed anywhere in the universe at any time in the past or that may exist in the centuries or ages yet unborn.

God knows instantly and effortlessly all matter and all matters, all mind and every mind, all spirit and all spirits, all being and every being, all creaturehood and all creatures, every plurality and all pluralities, all law and every law, all relations, all causes, all thoughts, all mysteries, all enigmas, all feeling, all desires, every unuttered secret, all thrones and dominions, all personalities, all things visible and invisible in heaven and in earth, motion, space, time, life, death, good, evil, heaven, and hell.

Because God knows all things perfectly, He knows no thing better than any other thing, but all things equally well. He never discovers anything. He is never surprised, never amazed. He never wonders about anything nor (except when drawing men out for their own good) does He seek information or ask questions.

God is self-existent and self-contained and knows what no creature can ever know - Himself, perfectly.

"The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." Only the Infinite can know the infinite.

In the divine omniscience we see set forth against each other the terror and fascination of the Godhead. That God knows each person through and through can be a cause of shaking fear to the man that has something to hide - some unforsaken sin, some secret crime committed against man or God. The unblessed soul may well tremble that God knows the flimsiness of every pretext and never accepts the poor excuses given for sinful conduct, since He knows perfectly the real reason for it. "Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance." How frightful a thing to see the sons of Adam seeking to hide among the trees of another garden. But where shall they hide? "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?... If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day."

And to us who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope that is set before us in the gospel, how unutterably sweet is the knowledge that our Heavenly Father knows us completely. No talebearer can inform on us, no enemy can make an accusation stick; no forgotten skeleton can come tumbling out of some hidden closet to abash us and expose our past; no unsuspected weakness in our characters can come to light to turn God away from us, since He knew us utterly before we knew Him and called us to Himself in the full knowledge of everything that was against us. "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee."

Our Father in heaven knows our frame and remembers that we are dust. He knew our inborn treachery, and for His own sake engaged to save us (Isa. 48:8-11). His only begotten Son, when He walked among us, felt our pains in their naked intensity of anguish. His knowledge of our afflictions and adversities is more than theoretic; it is personal, warm, and compassionate. Whatever may befall us, God knows and cares as no one else can.

He doth give His joy to all; He becomes an infant small; He becomes a man of woe; He doth feel the sorrow too.

Think not thou canst sigh a sigh

And thy Maker is not by;

Think not thou canst weep a tear

And thy Maker is not near.

O! He gives to us His joy

*That our griefs He may destroy; Till our grief is fled and gone He doth
sit by us and moan. William Blake*

CHAPTER 11

The Wisdom of God

Thou, O Christ, who wert tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin, make us strong to overcome the desire to be wise and to be reputed wise by others as ignorant as ourselves. We turn from our wisdom as well as from our folly and flee to Thee, the wisdom of God and the power of God. Amen.

In this brief study of the divine wisdom we begin with faith in God. Following our usual pattern, we shall not seek to understand in order that we may believe, but to believe in order that we may understand. Hence, we shall not seek for proof that God is wise. The unbelieving mind would not be convinced by any proof and the worshipping heart needs none.

"Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever," cried Daniel the prophet, "for wisdom and might are his:

. . . he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: he revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him." The believing man responds to this, and to the angelic chant, "Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever." It never occurs to such a man that God should furnish proof of His wisdom or His power. Is it not enough that He is God?

When Christian theology declares that God is wise, it means vastly more than it says or can say, for it tries to make a comparatively weak word bear an incomprehensible plenitude of meaning that threatens to tear it apart and crush it under the sheer weight of the idea. "His understanding is infinite," says the psalmist. It is nothing less than infinitude that theology is here laboring to express.

Since the word infinite describes what is unique, it can have no modifiers. We do not say "more unique" or "very infinite." Before infinitude we stand silent.

There is indeed a secondary, created wisdom which God has given in measure to His creatures as their highest good may require; but the wisdom of any creature or of all creatures, when set against the boundless wisdom of God, is pathetically small. For this reason the apostle is accurate when he refers to God as "only wise" That is, God is wise in Himself, and all the shining wisdom of men or angels is but a reflection of that uncreated effulgence which streams from the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.

The idea of God as infinitely wise is at the root of all truth. It is a datum of belief necessary to the soundness of all other beliefs about God. Being what He is without regard to creatures, God is of course unaffected by our opinions of Him, but our moral sanity requires that we attribute to the maker and sustainer of the universe a wisdom entirely perfect. To refuse to do this is to betray the very thing in us that distinguishes us from the beasts.

In the Holy Scriptures wisdom, when used of God and good men, always carries a strong moral connotation. It is conceived as being pure, loving, and good. Wisdom that is mere shrewdness is often attributed to evil men, but such wisdom is treacherous and false. These two kinds of wisdom are in perpetual conflict. Indeed, when seen from the lofty peak of Sinai or Calvary, the whole history of the world is discovered to be but a contest between the wisdom of God and the cunning of Satan and fallen men. The

outcome of the contest is not in doubt. The imperfect must fall before the perfect at last. God has warned that He will take the wise in their own craftiness and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.

Wisdom, among other things, is the ability to devise perfect ends and to achieve those ends by the most perfect means. It sees the end from the beginning, so there can be no need to guess or conjecture. Wisdom sees everything in focus, each in proper relation to all, and is thus able to work toward predestined goals with flawless precision.

All God's acts are done in perfect wisdom, first for His own glory, and then for the highest good of the greatest number for the longest time. And all His acts are as pure as they are wise, and as good as they are wise and pure. Not only could His acts not be better done: a better way to do them could not be imagined. An infinitely wise God must work in a manner not to be improved upon by finite creatures.

O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! In wisdom hast Thou made them all. The earth is full of Thy riches!

Without the creation, the wisdom of God would have remained forever locked in the boundless abyss of the divine nature. God brought His creatures into being that He might enjoy them and they rejoice in Him.

"And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good."

Many through the centuries have declared themselves unable to believe in the basic wisdom of a world wherein so much appears to be so wrong. Voltaire in his *Candide* introduces a determined optimist, whom he calls Dr. Pangloss, and into his mouth puts all the arguments for the "best-of-all-possible-worlds" philosophy. Of course the French cynic took keen delight in placing the old professor in situations that made his philosophy look ridiculous.

But the Christian view of life is altogether more realistic than that of Dr. Pangloss with his "sufficient reason." It is that this is not at the moment the best of all possible worlds, but one lying under the shadow of a huge calamity, the Fall of man.

The inspired writers insist that the whole creation now groans and travails under the mighty shock of the Fall. They do not attempt to supply "sufficient reasons"; they assert that the "creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope." No effort here to justify the ways of God with men; just a simple declaration of fact. The being of God is its own defense.

But there is hope in all our tears. When the hour of Christ's triumph arrives, the suffering world will be brought out into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. For men of the new creation the golden age is not past but future, and when it is ushered in, a wondering universe will see that God has indeed abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence. In the meantime we rest our hope in the only wise God, our Saviour, and wait with patience the slow development of His benign purposes.

In spite of tears and pain and death we believe that the God who made us all is infinitely wise and good. As Abraham staggered not at the promises of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving the glory to God, and was fully persuaded that what He had promised He was able to perform, so do we base our hope in God alone and hope against hope till the day breaks. We rest in what God is. I believe that this alone is true faith. Any faith that must be supported by the evidence of the senses is not real faith. "Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

The testimony of faith is that, no matter how things look in this fallen world, all God's acts are wrought in perfect wisdom. The incarnation of the Eternal Son in human flesh was one of God's mighty deeds, and we may be sure that this awesome deed was done with a perfection possible only to the Infinite. "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.

Atonement too was accomplished with the same flawless skill that marks all of God's acts. However little we understand it all, we know that Christ's expiatory work perfectly reconciled God and men and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. Our concern is not to explain but to proclaim. Indeed I wonder whether God could make us understand all that happened there at the cross. According to the apostle Peter not even angels know, however eagerly they may desire to look into these things.

The operation of the gospel, the new birth, the coming of the divine Spirit into human nature, the ultimate overthrow of evil, and the final establishment of Christ's righteous kingdom - all these have flowed and do flow out of God's infinite fullness of wisdom. The sharpest eyes of the honest watcher in the blest company above cannot discover a flaw in the ways of God in bringing all this to fruition, nor can the pooled wisdom of seraphim and cherubim suggest how an improvement might be made in the divine procedure. "I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him."

It is vitally important that we hold the truth of God's infinite wisdom as a tenet of our creed; but this is not enough. We must by the exercise of faith and by prayer bring it into the practical world of our day-by-day experience.

To believe actively that our Heavenly Father constantly spreads around us providential circumstances that work for our present good and our everlasting well-being brings to the soul a veritable benediction. Most of us go through life praying a little, planning a little, jockeying for position, hoping but never being quite certain of anything, and always secretly afraid that we will miss the way. This is a tragic waste of truth and never gives rest to the heart.

There is a better way. It is to repudiate our own wisdom and take instead the infinite wisdom of God. Our insistence upon seeing ahead is natural enough, but it is a real hindrance to our spiritual progress. God has charged himself with full responsibility for our eternal happiness and stands ready to take over the management of our lives the moment we turn in faith to Him.

Here is His promise: "And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them."

*Let Him lead the blindfold onwards, Love needs not to know;
Children whom the Father leadeth
Ask not where they go.
Though the path be all unknown, Over moors and mountains lone.
Gerhard Teersteegen*

God constantly encourages us to trust Him in the dark. I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the Lord, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel."

It is heartening to learn how many of God's mighty deeds were done in secret, away from the prying eyes of men or angels.

When God created the heavens and the earth, darkness was upon the face of the deep. When the Eternal Son became flesh, He was carried for a time in the darkness of the sweet virgin's womb. When He died for the life of the world, it was in the darkness, seen by no one at the last. When He arose from the dead, it was ,very early in the morning." No one saw Him rise. It is as if God were saying, "What I am is all that need matter to you, for there lie your hope and your peace. I will do what I will do, and it will all come to light at last, but how I do it is My secret. Trust Me, and be not afraid."

*With the goodness of God to desire our highest welfare, the wisdom of
God to plan it, and the power of
God to achieve it, what do we lack? Surely we are the most favored of all
creatures.
In all our Maker's grand designs, Omnipotence, with wisdom, shines;
His works, through all this wondrous frame, Declare the glory of His
Name.
Thomas Blacklock*

CHAPTER 12

The Omnipotence of God

Our Heavenly Father, we have heard Thee say, "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect." But unless Thou dost enable us by the exceeding greatness of Thy power how can we who are by nature weak and sinful walk in a perfect way?

Grant that we may learn to lay hold on the working of the mighty power which wrought in Christ when Thou didst raise Him from the dead and set Him at Thine own right hand in the heavenly places. Amen.

In the time of his vision John the Revelator heard as it were the voice of a great multitude and as the voice of many waters and as the voice of mighty thunderings sounding throughout the universe, and what the voice proclaimed was the sovereignty and omnipotence of God: "Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

Sovereignty and omnipotence must go together. One cannot exist without the other. To reign, God must have power, and to reign sovereignly, He must have all power. And that is what omnipotent means, having all power. The word derives from the Latin and is identical in meaning with the more familiar almighty which we have from the Anglo-Saxon. This latter word occurs fifty-six times in our English Bible and is never used of anyone but God. He alone is almighty.

God possesses what no creature can: an incomprehensible plenitude of power, a potency that is absolute. This we know by divine revelation, but once known, it is recognized as being in full accord with reason. Grant that God is infinite and self-existent and we see at once that He must be all-powerful as well, and reason kneels to worship before the divine omnipotence.

"Power belongeth unto God," says the psalmist, and Paul the apostle declares that nature itself gives evidence of the eternal power of the Godhead (Rom 1:20). From this knowledge we reason to the omnipotence of God this way: God has power. Since God is also infinite, whatever He has must be without limit; therefore God has limitless power, He is omnipotent. We see further that God the self-existent Creator is the source of all the power there is, and since a source must be at least equal to anything that emanates from it, God is of necessity equal to all the power there is, and this is to say again that He is omnipotent.

God has delegated power to His creatures, but being self-sufficient, He cannot relinquish anything of His perfections and, power being one of them, He has never surrendered the least iota of His power. He gives but He does not give away. All that He gives remains His own and returns to Him again. Forever He must remain what He has forever been, the Lord God omnipotent.

One cannot long read the Scriptures sympathetically without noticing the radical disparity between the outlook of men of the Bible and that of modern men. We are today suffering from a secularized mentality. Where the sacred writers saw God, we see the laws of nature. Their world was fully populated; ours is all but empty. Their world was alive and personal; ours is impersonal and dead. God ruled their world; ours is ruled by the laws of nature and we are always once removed from the presence of God.

And what are these laws of nature that have displaced God in the minds of millions? Law has two meanings. One is all external rule enforced by authority, such as the common rule against robbery and assault. The word is also used to denote the uniform way things act in the universe, but this second use of the word is erroneous. What we see in nature is simply the paths God's power and wisdom take through creation. Properly these are phenomena, not laws, but we call them laws by analogy with the arbitrary laws of society.

Science observes how the power of God operates, discovers a regular pattern somewhere and fixes it as a "law." The uniformity of God's activities in His creation enables the scientist to predict the course of natural phenomena. The trustworthiness of God's behavior in His world is the foundation of all scientific truth. Upon it the scientist rests his faith and from there he goes on to achieve great and useful things in such fields as those of navigation, chemistry, agriculture, and the medical arts.

Religion on the other hand, goes back of the nature of God. It is concerned not with the footprints of God along the paths of creation, but with the One who treads those paths. Religion is interested primarily in the One who is the source of all things, the master of every phenomenon. For this One philosophy has various names, the most horrendous that I have seen being that supplied by Rudolph Otto: "The absolute, the gigantic, never-resting active world stress." The Christian delights to remember that this "world stress" once said "I AM" and the greatest teacher of them all directed His disciples to address Him as a person:

"When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name." The men of the Bible everywhere communed with this "gigantic absolute" in language as personal as speech affords, and with Him prophet and saint walked in a rapture of devotion, warm intimate and deeply satisfying.

Omnipotence is not a name given to the sum of all power, but an attribute of a personal God we Christians believe to be the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and of all who believe on Him to life eternal. The worshipping man finds this knowledge a source of wonderful strength for his inner life. His faith rises to take the great leap upward into the fellowship of Him who can do whatever He wills to do, for whom nothing is hard or difficult because He possesses power absolute.

Since He has at His command all the power in the universe, the Lord God omnipotent can do anything as easily as anything else. All His acts are done without effort. He expends no energy that must be replenished. His self-sufficiency makes it unnecessary for Him to look outside of Himself for a renewal of strength. All the power required to do all that He wills to do lies in undiminished fullness in His own infinite being.

The Presbyterian pastor A. B. Simpson, approaching middle age, broken in health, deeply despondent and ready to quit the ministry, chanced to hear the simple Negro spiritual,

Nothing is too hard for Jesus, No man can work like Him.

Its message sped like an arrow to his heart, carrying faith and hope and life for body and soul. He sought a place of retirement and after a season alone with God arose to his feet completely cured, and went forth in fullness of joy to found what has since become one of the largest foreign missionary societies in the world. For thirty-five years after this encounter with God, he labored prodigiously in the service of Christ. His faith in God of limitless power gave him all the strength he needed to carry on.

*Almighty One! I bend in the dust before Thee; Even so veiled cherubs
bend;*

*In calm and still devotion I adore Thee, All-wise, all-present friend
Thou to the earth its emerald robe hast given, Or curtained it in snow;
And the bright sun, and the soft moon in heaven, Before Thy presence
bow.*

Sir John Bowring

CHAPTER 13

The Divine Transcendence

O Lord our Lord, there is none like Thee in heaven above or in the earth beneath. Thine is the greatness and the dignity and the majesty. All that is in the heaven and the earth is Thine; Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, O God, and Thou art exalted as head over all. Amen.

When we speak of God as transcendent we mean of course that He is exalted far above the created universe, so far above that human thought cannot imagine it.

To think accurately about this, however, we must keep in mind that “far above” does not here refer to physical distance from the earth but to quality of being. We are concerned not with location in space nor with mere altitude, but with life.

God is spirit, and to Him magnitude and distance have no meaning. To us they are useful as analogies and illustrations, so God refers to them constantly when speaking down to our limited understanding. The words of God as found in Isaiah, “Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity,” give a distinct impression of altitude, but that is because we who dwell in a world of matter, space, and time tend to think in material terms and can grasp abstract ideas only when they are identified in some way with material things. In its struggle to free itself from the tyranny of the natural world, the human heart must learn to translate upward the language the Spirit uses to instruct us.

It is spirit that gives significance to matter and apart from spirit nothing has any value at last. A little child strays from a party of sightseers and becomes lost on a mountain, and immediately the whole mental perspective of the members of the party is changed. Rapt admiration for the grandeur of nature gives way to acute distress for the lost child. The group spreads out over the mountainside anxiously calling the child’s name and searching eagerly into every secluded spot where the little one might chance to be hidden.

What brought about this sudden change? The tree-clad mountain is still there towering into the clouds in breath-taking beauty, but no one notices it now. All attention is focused upon the search for a curly-haired little girl not yet two years old and weighing less than thirty pounds. Though so new and so small, she is more precious to parents and friends than all the huge bulk of the vast and ancient mountain they had been admiring a few minutes before. And in their judgment the whole civilized world concurs, for the little girl can love and laugh and speak and pray, and the mountain cannot. It is the child’s quality of being that gives it worth.

Yet we must not compare the being of God with any other as we just now compared the mountain with the child. We must not think of God as highest in an ascending order of beings, starting with the single cell and going on up from the fish to the bird to the animal to man to angel to cherub to God. This would be to grant God eminence, even pre-eminence, but that is not enough; we must grant Him transcendence in the fullest meaning of that word.

Forever God stands apart, in light unapproachable. He is as high above an archangel as above a caterpillar, for the gulf that separates the archangel from the caterpillar is but finite, while the gulf between God and the archangel is infinite. The caterpillar and the archangel, though far removed from each other in the scale of created things, are

nevertheless one in that they are alike created. They both belong in the category of that-which-is-not-God and are separated from God by infinitude itself.

Reticence and compulsion forever contend within the heart that would speak of God.

How shall polluted mortals dare To sing Thy glory or Thy grace? Beneath Thy feet we lie afar,

And see but shadows of Thy face. Isaac Watts

Yet we console ourselves with the knowledge that it is God Him-self who puts it in our hearts to seek Him and makes it possible in some measure to know Him, and He is pleased with even the feeblest effort to make Him known.

If some watcher or holy one who has spent his glad centuries by the sea of fire were to come to earth, how meaningless to him would be the ceaseless chatter of the busy tribes of men. How strange to him and how empty would sound the, flat, stale and profitless words heard in the average pulpit from week to week.

And were such a one to speak on earth would he not speak of God? Would he not charm and fascinate his hearers with rapturous descriptions of the Godhead? And after hearing him could we ever again consent to listen to anything less than theology, the doctrine of God? Would we not thereafter demand of those who would presume to teach us that they speak to us from the mount of divine vision or remain silent altogether?

When the psalmist saw the transgression of the wicked his heart told him how it could be. "There is no fear of God before his eyes," he explained, and in so saying revealed to us the psychology of sin. When men no longer fear God, they transgress His laws without hesitation. The fear of consequences is not deterrent when the fear of God is gone.

In olden days men of faith were said to "walk in the fear of God" and to "serve the Lord with fear." However intimate their communion with God, however bold their prayers, at the base of their religious life was the conception of God as awesome and dreadful. This idea of God transcendent rims through the whole Bible and gives color and tone to the character of the saints. This fear of God was more than a natural apprehension of danger; it was a nonrational dread, an acute feeling of personal insufficiency in the presence of God the Almighty.

Wherever God appeared to men in Bible times the results were the same - an overwhelming sense of terror and dismay, a wrenching sensation of sinfulness and guilt. When God spoke, Abram stretched himself upon the ground to listen. When Moses saw the Lord in the burning bush, he hid his face in fear to look upon God. Isalah's vision of God wrung from him the cry, "Woe is me!" and the confession, "I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips."

Daniel's encounter with God was probably the most dreadful and wonderful of them all. The prophet lifted up his eyes and saw One whose "body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude." "I Daniel alone saw the vision" he afterwards wrote, "for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no

strength. Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground.”

These experiences show that a vision of the divine transcendence soon ends all controversy between the man and his God. The fight goes out of the man and he is ready with the conquered Saul to ask meekly,

”Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”

Conversely, the self-assurance of modern Christians, the basic levity present in so many of our religious gatherings, the shocking disrespect shown for the Person of God, are evidence enough of deep blindness of heart.

Many call themselves by the name of Christ, talk much about God, and pray to Him sometimes, but evidently do not know who He is. “The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life,” but this healing fear is today hardly found among Christian men.

Once in conversation with his friend Eckermann, the poet Goethe turned to thoughts of religion and spoke of the abuse of the divine name. “People treat it,” he said, “as if that incomprehensible and most high Being, who is even beyond the reach of thought, were only their equal. Otherwise they would not say ‘the Lord God, the dear God, the good God.’ This expression becomes to them, especially to the clergy, who have it daily in their mouths, a mere phrase, a barren name, to which no thought whatever is attached. If they were impressed by His greatness they would be dumb, and through veneration unwilling to name Him.

*Lord of all being, throned afar,
They glory flames from sun and star; Center and soul of every sphere,
Yet to each loving heart how near!
Lord of all life, below, above,
Whose light is truth, whose warmth is love, Before Thy ever-blazing
throne
We ask no luster of our own. Oliver Wendell Holmes*

CHAPTER 14

God's Omnipresence

Our Father, we know that Thou art present with us, but our knowledge is but a figure and shadow of truth and has little of the spiritual savor and inward sweetness such knowledge should afford. This is for us a great loss and the cause of much weakness of heart. Help us to make at once such amendment of life as is necessary before we can experience the true meaning of the words "In thy presence is fulness of joy." Amen.

The word present, of course, means here, close to, next to, and the prefix *omni* gives it universality. God is everywhere here, close to everything, next to everyone.

Few other truths are taught in the Scriptures with as great clarity as the doctrine of the divine omnipresence. Those passages supporting this truth are so plain that it would take considerable effort to misunderstand them. They declare that God is immanent in His creation, that there is no place in heaven or earth or hell where men may hide from His presence. They teach that God is at once far off and near, and that in Him men move and live and have their being. And what is equally convincing is that they everywhere compel us to assume that God is omnipresent to account for other facts they tell us about Him.

For instance, the Scriptures teach that God is infinite. This means that His being knows no limits. Therefore there can be no limit to His presence; He is omnipresent. In His infinitude He surrounds the finite creation and contains it. There is no place beyond Him for anything to be. God is our environment as the sea is to the fish and the air to the bird. "God is over all things," wrote Hildebert of Lavardin, "under all things; outside all; within but not enclosed; without but not excluded; above but not raised up; below but not depressed; wholly above, presiding; wholly beneath, sustaining; wholly within, filling."

The belief that God is present within His universe cannot be held in isolation. It has practical implications in many areas of theological thought and bears directly upon certain religious problems, such, for instance, as the nature of the world. Thinking men of almost every age and culture have been concerned with the question of what kind of world this is. Is it a material world running by itself, or is it spiritual and run by unseen powers? Does this interlocking system explain itself or does its secret lie in mystery? Does the stream of existence begin and end in itself? Or is its source higher up and farther back in the hills?

Christian theology claims to have the answer to these questions. It does not speculate nor offer an opinion but presents its "Thus saith the Lord" as its authority. It declares positively that the world is spiritual: it originated in spirit, flows out of spirit, is spiritual in essence, and is meaningless apart from the Spirit that inhabits it.

The doctrine of the divine omnipresence personalizes man's relation to the universe in which he finds himself. This great central truth gives meaning to all truths and imparts supreme value to all his little life. God is present, near him, next to him, and this God sees him and knows him through and thorough.

At this point faith begins, and while it may go on to include a thousand other wonderful truths, these all refer back to the truth that God is and God is here. "He that cometh to God", says the Book of Hebrews, "must believe that he is" And Christ Himself said, "Ye believe in God, Believe also..." What ever "also" may be added to the elementary

belief in God is superstructure, and regardless of the heights to which it may rise, it continues to rest solidly upon the original foundation.

The teachings of the New Testament is that God created the world by the Logos, the Word, and the Word is identified with the second person of the Godhead who was present in the world even before He became incarnate in human nature. The Word made all things and remained in His creation to uphold and sustain it and be at the same time a moral light enabling every man to distinguish good from evil. The universe operates as an orderly system, not by impersonal laws but by the creative voice of the immanent and universal Presence, the Logos.

Canon W. G. Holmes of India told of seeing Hindu worshipers tapping on trees and stones and whispering "Are you there? Are you there?" to the god they hoped might reside within. In complete humility the instructed Christian brings the answer to that question. God is indeed there. He is there as He is here and everywhere, not confined to tree or stone, but free in the universe, near to everything, next to everyone, and through Jesus Christ immediately accessible to every loving heart. The doctrine of the divine omnipresence decides this forever.

This truth is to the convinced Christian a source of deep comfort in sorrow and of steadfast assurance in all the varied experiences of his life. To him "the practice of the presence of God" consists not of protecting an imaginary object from within his own mind and then seeking to realize its presence; it is rather to recognize the real presence of the One whom all sound theology declares to be already there, an objective entity, existing apart from any apprehension of Him on the part of His creatures. The resultant experience is not visionary but real.

The certainty that God is always near us, present in all parts of His world, closer to us than our thoughts, should maintain us in a state of high moral happiness most of the time. But not all the time. It would be less than honest to promise every believer continual jubilee and less than realistic to expect it. As a child may cry out in pain even when sheltered in its mother's arms, so a Christian may sometimes know what it is to suffer even in the conscious presence of God. Though "alway rejoicing," Paul admitted that he was sometimes sorrowful, and for our sakes Christ experienced strong crying and tears though He never left the bosom of the Father (John 1:18).

But all will be well. In a world like this tears have their therapeutic effects. The healing balm distilled from the garments of the enfolding Presence cures our ills before they become fatal. The knowledge that we are never alone calms the troubled sea of our lives and speaks peace to our souls.

That God is here both Scripture and reason declare. It remains only for us to learn to realize this in conscious experience. A sentence from a letter by Dr. Allen Fleece sums up the testimony of many others:

"The knowledge that God is present is blessed, but to feel His presence is nothing less than sheer happiness."

*God reveals His presence: Let us now adore Him,
And with awe appear before Him.*

*Him alone, God we own; He's our Lord and Saviour, Praise His name
forever.*

*God Himself is with us: Whom the angelic legions
Serve with awe in heavenly regions. Gerhard Tersteegen*