

Omnipresence.

THE OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD.

The Omnipresence of God is no other than His Immensity referred to the creature, and restricted, so to speak, within the universe. There are three ways in which we may regard this attribute, as we find it everywhere presented in Scripture.

God every-  
where  
Present.  
Jer. xliii  
24.

1. It is the actual presence of the Deity in every part of created nature. *Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord.* This is one aspect; and it asserts that the Divine Essence, though not extended nor diffused, is to be regarded as present to every portion of the universe, whether more material or more spiritual. God is not present by circumscription of space; nor by the occupation of any one locality rather than any other. He is present in every force or energy of created things; nor can He be absent from any region of the universe or any act of the beings He has created. This, with all its inevitable consequences, may be called His absolute, or, so to speak, natural omnipresence.

All Pre-  
sent to  
Him  
Acts xvii.  
28.

2. But there is another view of the matter which we profitably take. *In Him we live, and move, and have our being,* which makes God's omnipresence the presence of every creature to Him. The relation is rather of the creature to Him than His relation to the creature. Before His perfect Divinity, not extended but in its one and unextended perfection, every creature stands and moves and runs its course; every thought is conceived, every word is spoken, and every deed is done. It is this aspect of the attribute that the Word of God constantly bids us remember.

The Pre-  
sence of  
His Power  
Psalm  
cxxxix.  
7—12.

3. And there is yet another, which connects it specially with the Divine omnipotence. *Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me.* This makes the God of the universe present wherever the special operation of His power is. Thus we may speak of Him as present in the mightiest and in the gentlest forces of nature, which no physical science can account for or explain without this fundamental supposition. Thus also we may speak of His special

presence in places set apart for the manifestation of His glory or of His grace: *The Lord is in this place. Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them.* And thus also we believe in a presence peculiar to heaven, and in a presence in the humble spirit of the soul that trembles at His word: the saints are *filled into all the fulness of God.*

Gen. xxviii. 16.  
Matt. xviii. 20  
Eph. iii. 19.

4. All these must be combined in our reverent study of this attribute. God is in all things; all things are present to Him; and His energy is everywhere felt, though not everywhere alike felt. Thus the attribute is protected from Pantheism on the one hand, and from every limitation of the Divine Essence on the other. But this subject will be more fully treated under the next.

United.

THE OMNISCIENCE OF GOD.

Omniscience.

The attribute of Omniscience assigns to God the perfection of that which in us is knowledge, the intellectual apprehension of things in their truth: *His understanding is infinite.* We must consider the plain Scriptural presentation of it; then our necessary theological distinctions, and the collision of omniscience generally with certain philosophical notions.

Ps. cxlvii. 5.

Connected with Omnipresence.

I. This perfection is closely allied with that of the Divine omnipresence: *The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good: He knows all things as they are, because all things are present to Him. Sheol and destruction are before the Lord: how much more then the hearts of the children of men?* This, so far as things present go, gives a most simple and clear view of the subject. What to man his consciousness is, and what the testimony of his senses tells him, all things in the universe are to Him Who is a present witness of all. *All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do.* It is the taking knowledge, or the marking of the procession of events, especially in this world the thoughts and conduct of men. *Thus have ye said, O house of Israel; for I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them.* But it leaves that attribute behind when it includes what is to us the past and the future as well as the present. Scripture ascribes to His infinite mind the intuitive, simultaneous, and perfect knowledge of all that can ever be the

Prov. xv. 3, 11.

Heb. iv. 13.

Ezek. xi. 5.

- object of knowledge: embracing in one eternal cognisance the actual, the possible, the contingent: *Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world.* In our apprehension and interpretation of it, the Divine omniscience is the knowledge of the past as past, of the developing present as present, and of the future as future. Particularly, as to the future, it is Foreknowledge, which must however be carefully kept distinct from predestination: between these there is no necessary connection.
- Acts xv. 18.** *Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son.* This foreknowledge of persons extends also to all events, not only known from the beginning of the world, but to the end of it. Prophecy is a constant element of revelation; and, whereas prediction might be supposed to refer to certain events of signal importance predetermined in the Divine counsel, the insight into all futurity is expressly assigned to God.
- Foreknowledge.**
- Rom. viii. 29.** *Jehovah, confounding the false god, cries: Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods.* On the other hand, He appeals to His own foreknowledge as absolute: *Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them.* He sees the thoughts of men very far off, even to the end of time. What is wanting in express declaration on this subject is implied in the whole current of testimony concerning the infinity of the Divine understanding, and His inhabiting eternity, and seeing *the end from the beginning.*
- Isa. xli. 23.** *As to the past, becoming the past, it is the infallible storing of the deeds of His creatures in what we may call, though Scripture does not, the infinite memory of God.* And this leads to a final observation, that the attribute of omniscience is, for the most part, brought into relation with the Divine moral government, as a large number of passages might be brought from Scripture to prove. Indeed, this is the predominant purpose for which this perfection is appealed to throughout revelation.
- Isa. xlii. 9.**
- Isa. xlvi. 10.**
- Theological Importance.** II. No attribute of God occupies a more important critical place in theology than this of the Divine omniscience. Its systematic presentation in dogmatic systems varies of course with the systems themselves. We may reduce all to two questions, relating respectively to the reality of knowledge generally in God,

and to the relation between the Divine foreknowledge and the Divine predestination.

1. Pantheism, and all theological speculation tinctured with Pantheism, tends to the denial of any knowledge in God properly so called. Knowledge in man is the intellectual apprehension of an objective thing known by a subject knowing it. Even when the object is the subject, as in the knowledge of consciousness, this distinction between subject and object must be maintained. But, on any supposition, the God of Pantheism cannot know with an infinite knowledge. He is conscious only in the consciousness of finite creatures; and that can never be infinite. In fact, there is no personal Being into whose one distinct consciousness may be gathered up the many consciousnesses of all creatures; and as to all phenomena that are not spiritual they are not known at all, save in finite parcels by the creature. But as soon as we accept the fact that the Infinite Creator has made intelligences reflecting His own personality, they must become objects to Him the Subject knowing. The same may be said of all material things. Meanwhile, the Infinite is eternally the Object known to Himself. And thus we have all the elements of the Divine omniscience.

2. The Predestinarian view of the Christian Faith has required the entire removal of any distinction between foreknowledge and foreordination. If from eternity God has foreknown all that is to be, it seems hard to separate this from an immutable destiny appointed for all things. Whatever is foreknown truly must come to pass as it is foreknown. But—granting the unsearchable mystery that to the Divine mind all processes are already results—we may be bold to say that logically there is no ground for such a conclusion. It is not the Divine foreknowledge that conditions what takes place, but what takes place conditions the Divine foreknowledge. We have seen again and again that the God of eternity has condescended to be also the God of time, with its past, and present, and future. Instead of saying with the Schoolmen that to God there is only an eternal now, it were better to say that to God as absolute essence there is the eternal now, and also to God as related to the creature there is the process of succession. Predestination must have its rights: all that God wills to do is foredetermined. But what human freedom accomplishes

Opposed  
to Pan-  
theism.

True  
Know-  
ledge in  
God.

Foreknow-  
ledge and  
Foreordi-  
nation.

God can only foreknow : otherwise freedom is no longer freedom. The other or determinist view is only Pantheism Augustinianised. St. Augustine says : " What is prescience but the knowledge of future things ? But what can be future to God, who transcends all time ? But of the knowledge God has of things themselves, they are not to Him future, but present, and consequently it cannot be called prescience but only knowledge." This is not Pantheism, but only Pantheism could teach it. The same humble submission we pay to the union of Infinite and finite in the Incarnation must be offered to the mystery of our Infinite knowledge which, not in words only, but in very deed is voluntarily subjected to finite forms. The analogy is perfect.

Relation  
to Predestinarianism.

3. We have some theological and philosophical compromises on this subject which demand brief attention.

Scientia media.

(1.) The Lutheran divines formulated the whole subject with their wonted skill in analysis. They distinguished in relation to the objects of the Divine omniscience between His necessary knowledge of Himself and of all things possible as determined by Himself, and His free knowledge of all things conditionally dependent on His will : the former was the *Scientia necessaria vel naturalis* ; the latter *Scientia libera vel visionis*. But this left room for another division, due to the sagacity of the Jesuit divines, opponents of Jansenist Predestinarianism. This they termed *Scientia media*, and it has been generally held by all anti-Predestinarian theologians. It is the Divine knowledge of the hypothetical or conditional as such : *scientia eorum quæ neque facta neque futura sunt, sed sub conditionibus quibusdam vel fuissent vel forent*. There is not so much importance in this distinction as is sometimes ascribed to it. If of the *Fuissent* and the *Forent* we take the latter, then we have simply the foreknowledge of men's acts on certain conditions : that such and such men will embrace the terms of salvation when presented to them. If we take the former, we are led to a subtle speculation which seems to some without much profit in it. When our Lord says, in His apostrophe to Capernaum, *If the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day*, this, if the Saviour used more than merely figurative or hypothetical language, is an instance of *Scientia media*, or

Matt. xi.  
23, 24.

intermediate knowledge. He knew what would have been but never was. But, when He goes on to say, *It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee*, we cannot but feel that this middle or conditional knowledge may have a most important influence on the destinies of men. At any rate, it constitutes a most important element in the Divine omniscience.

(2) The Socinians, on the other hand, boldly denied that free or contingent acts can be known beforehand, or known at all as such. They were misled by a false analogy with the omnipotence of God : as He does not accomplish all that He could accomplish, so He voluntarily wills not to know what is contingent : in other words, He knows things knowable as He performs things possible. Here we see the importance of the distinction already introduced : between the absolute attributes of God and the same attributes as related to the creature. The Divine allsufficiency is the power of doing what He will ; the Divine omnipotence is the power to do all that His creation and sustentation of the universe demands, and no more. So the Divine eternity embraces in perfect knowledge all that has been, is, or may be ; but the Divine omniscience knows according to the conditions of time, and all things future as what we call contingent. The free acts of His creatures are known to Him as certain though He foreknows them as free and not as dependent on His own will. Nothing can be imagined more derogatory to the perfection of God than that He should be made ignorant of contingent events. To Him they cannot be contingent : contingency is altogether a creaturely term. The notion is incompatible with any foreknowledge of human acts ; for in a certain sense every one of them is contingent. Even shortsighted man can be all but certain of some contingent events lying in the immediate future. In God the memory of the past, the vision of the present, the prescience of the future, are alike perfect : the very fact of creation involves all this.

Prescience  
and Con-  
tingency.

#### THE WISDOM OF GOD.

Wisdom.

No attribute is more abundantly ascribed to the God of the universe than Wisdom. This, in human affairs, is intimately connected with knowledge : in man there can be no wisdom without knowledge, though there may be knowledge without wisdom.