

THE ABIDING PRESENCE
OF THE HOLY GHOST
IN THE SOUL

BY

THE VERY REVEREND
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Chapter 2

God's Presence

1. Scripture is very full of the idea of the nearness of God to His creation, the Old Testament is alive with that inspiration, for there is hardly a chapter or verse that does not insist upon that truth. Naturally the New Testament, teaching so tenderly the Fatherhood of God, is even more explicit and more beautiful in its references to this intimate relationship. To the Athenians, St. Paul can develop no other point than this, and he finds in moving accents an eloquent appeal voiced by the touching dedication of an altar to the *Unknown God*. Now this notion of God's nearness to His world depends for its full appreciation on the central doctrine of creation. He has made the world, in consequence it is impressed with His personality; the more vigorous the artificer—the more vigorous that he is in character, will and personality, the more is his work stamped with his individuality; hence, the tremendous personality of God must be everywhere traceable in the things He has made.

2. When we say God is everywhere, we mean that He is in all things because He made all things. Not only does the whole world lie outstretched before His eye and is governed by His power, but He Himself lurks at the heart of everything. By Him things have come into existence, and so wholly is that existence of theirs His gift, that were He to withdraw His support they would sink back into nothingness. It is

a perpetual remark about man's works that they outlast him. Organizations we have toiled to establish outgrow our fostering care, perhaps grow tired of our interference and long to be free of our regulations. Wordsworth tells how a monk in Spain, pointing to the pictures on the walls of the monastery, which remained while the generations looking at them passed away, judged: "We are the shadows, they the substance." But the relationship established by creation is of a far greater dependence, so that nothing God has made can exist without His support. Out of human acts it is only music that bears some resemblance to this, for when the voice is silent there is no longer any song.

3. God, then, is within all creation, because He is its cause. He is within every stone and leaf and child. Nothing, with life or without, evil or good, can fail to contain Him as the source of its energy, its power, its existence; He is "the soul's soul." Not only, therefore, must I train myself to see with reverence that everything contains Him, but I must especially realize His intimacy and relationship to myself. Religion, indeed, in practice is little else than my personal expression of that relationship. I have in my prayers, in my troubles, in my temptations, to turn to God, not without but within, not to someone above me or beneath supporting me, but right at the core of my being. I can trace up to its source every power of my soul, my intelligence, my will, my love, my anger, my fear, and I shall find Him there. Nothing but opens its doors to Him as innermost in its shrine. Wholly is God everywhere, not as some immense being that with its hugeness fills the world, but as something that is within every creature He has made.

Chapter 3

Degrees of God's Presence

1. God is intimate with all creation because He made it, for creation implies that God remains within, supporting, upholding. God is within everything, and therefore He is everywhere. But while we thus believe that God is wholly everywhere, we also believe something which seems the exact opposite, for we believe that God is more in some places than in others, more in some people than in others. How is it if God is wholly everywhere that He can be more here than there? To understand this we must also understand that every created thing shares somehow in God's being. He communicates Himself to it in some fashion, for apart from Him it could have no perfections. We have a way of saying that we reflect God's greatness and that we are "broken lights" of Him. But that is far short of the truth; we do more than reflect, we actually have some participation in God, so that St. Thomas boldly takes over a saying of Plato: "The individual nature of a thing consists in the way it participates in the perfections of God".¹ Not, of course, that there is any community of being, but a direct participation.

2. Now since everything participates in God and since some things are more excellent than others, it stands to reason that some things express God better than others.

¹ *Summa* 1, 14:6

The eyes of a dog often are pitiful to see, because we can note its evident desire and yet its impossibility to express its feelings. The whole of nature has to seeing minds the same pitifulness. It is always endeavoring to express God, the inexpressible. Yet the higher a thing is in the scale of being the more of God it expresses, for it participates more in God's being. The more life a thing has and the more freedom it acquires, then the nearer does it approach to God and the more divinity it holds. Man, by his intelligence, his deeper and richer life, his finer freedom, stands at the head of visible creation, and, in consequence, is more fully a shrine of God than lower forms of life. He bears a closer resemblance to the Divine intelligence and will and has a greater share in them. It is then in that sense that we arrange in ascending order inanimate creation, the vegetable kingdom, the animal kingdom, and man.

3. Consequently we can now see in what sense God is said to be more in one thing than in another. He is more in it because He exercises Himself more in one thing than in another; one thing expresses more than another the perfections of God because it shares more deeply than another that inner being of God. The more nearly anything or anyone is united to God the more does His power exercise itself in them, so that, since God's gifts are variously distributed and are of various degrees, we are justified in saying that though He is wholly everywhere, He may be more fully here than there, just as, though my soul is in every part of my being, it is more perfectly in the brain than elsewhere, because there it exercises itself more fully and with more evidence of expression. Thus we say God is more in a man's

soul than anywhere else in creation, since in a man's soul God is more perfectly expressed. It is therefore with great reverence that I should regard all creation, but with especial reverence that I should look to the dignity of every human soul.

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