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SERMON I.

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In memoriam of James W. Alexander, D.D.

"THEY that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever."—DAN. 12 : 3.

GREAT work rewarded by great wages! When the multitude of them "that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt," said the celestial messenger to Daniel, the man greatly beloved, "then they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever."

Do these words need an interpreter? Nay, their meaning is transparent. They require meditation, not exposition. If an explanatory remark be at all needed, it is in regard to the terms in which those who are to be rewarded by the exceeding and eternal

SERMON II.*

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THE OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD.

“WHITHER shall I flee from thy presence?”—PSALM 139 : 7.

By a form of words which has common use rather than classical authority on its side, we are said to realize certain truths. They were not desired before; we gave them a certain degree of credence; but they were not vividly present to our thoughts, lay with no weight upon our affections, exerted no motive power upon our will. The change which has now taken place, expressed in language true at once to philosophy and theology, is that we now believe them; and, as faith has degrees, that we believe them greatly. The sublime fundamental doctrine of the being of God, may be cited, as a capital illustration. We believe it, we always believed it, yet how inoperatively, until a certain epoch in our lives; and, since then, what immeasurable distance between the varying degrees of their acquiescence! So also of the particular attributes of God. Each of them is admitted as part of our creed; yet how far are most of us from yielding to the vast, over-powering idea, which, nevertheless, we never think of denying! In the present case, let us expand this thought with regard to a particular attribute of God, namely, his Omnipresence, and let us consider not so much the proofs by which that doctrine is established, as the modes by which it may be brought home with efficacy to our daily feelings and acts.

There is a mystery about the Divine Omnipresence, which we do not learn to solve, after years of meditation. As God is a simple spirit, without dimensions, parts, or susceptibility of division, he is equally, that is, fully, present at all times in all places. At any given moment he is not present partly here and partly in the utmost skirt of the furthest system which revolves about the dimmest telescopic star, as if like a galaxy of perfection he stretched a sublime magnificence through universal space, which admitted of

* Furnished by a brother of Dr. Alexander, at the request of the Editor of the NATIONAL PREACHER.

separation and partition; but he is present, with the totality of his glorious properties in every point of space. This results undeniably from the simple spirituality of the Great Supreme. All that God is in one place he is in all places. All there is of God is in every place. Indeed his presence has no dependence on space or matter. His attribute of essential presence were the same if universal matter were blotted out. Only by a figure can God be said to be in the universe; for the universe is comprehended by him. All the boundless glory of the Godhead is essentially present at every spot in his creation, however various may be the manifestations of this glory at different times and places.

Here we have a case which ought to instruct and sober those, who, in their shallow philosophy, demand a religion without mysteries. It would be a religion without God; for "who by searching can find out God?" Such Omnipresence as we have predicated of the Most High is absolutely incomprehensible. Yet we have to believe it, because the reverse would be absurd. Such is our position with regard to some of the most incontestable doctrines, not merely of revelation, but of natural religion. We bow, and wonder, and adore, and where we can not fathom, we still believe.

But it will be more pleasing as well as more useful to pass from these speculative considerations, to the important topic already pointed out. And it seems to me that we shall succeed in bringing this vital and precious doctrine more near to our apprehensions if we so revolve it on its axis as to present to us some of the several perfections of God as concerned in his Omnipresence. As the idea of God is the idea of his collective attributes, the omnipresence of God is the presence every where and at all times of all these attributes. To think of the all-present God as a vague entity, without the rich and impressive qualities which we justly assert of Divine Being, leaves us totally unaffected. It is only when we conceive of him as present with us and all creatures in the separate yet blending excellencies of the one glorious nature, that we begin to know and believe the true omnipresence. Above all is it necessary to religion, that we contemplate the Most High as present, not so much with worlds, or heavens, or angels, as with us; or rather to view ourselves as ever present with him, and wrapt in the divine atmosphere of his Omnipresence. And this we shall more easily comprehend and feel, if we regard ourselves as brought nigh to one lovely, awful, and adorable attribute after another. All our religion refers itself at length to God, and is modified according to our views of the Divine nature. It is not necessary to show this by a formal induction of all the particular perfections; but the application of this principle to a few, can not fail to be interesting and instructive.

I. *It is the OMNIPOTENT God who is omnipresent.* His name is

the Almighty. This is one of the earliest views which we are led to take of the Great First Cause. No sooner do we refer to him the frame of nature, with all things in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, than we pass swiftly forward to the belief of One whose power has no limitation. Our souls breathe the ascription: "None can stay thy hand, or say unto thee, what doest thou?" An all-pervading, adequate power, actually making itself felt in every system, world, realm of nature, species, individual, particle, and pure intelligence; a power, not the mere prime-mover, original physical impulse, or blind *anima mundi*; a living power, not the impersonal summation of forces and phenomena which the pantheist dreams; but conscious, intelligent, identical, one—that is, personal—the "living and true God," is a conception so high, so peculiar, so pure, so refreshing, so exalting, that every one who apprehends it must believe it, and every one who ponders it must crave to believe it more.

That he is thus mightily present in all other parts of his dominions, is less delightful to us, than for each of us to say, he is present here! this Lord, thus boundless in strength and originating all the causes of nature, is all this to me! I dwell amidst the plenitude of this omnipotence! Then may we cry, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Then can we readily cease to fear them that kill the body, when we stand in awe of one who is Almighty, and at our very side. Grace goes yet further, and the Gospel reveals to us this present power, which might be adverse, and so destructive, as ranging itself on our side; so that we may glory in all the might of God, as ready to sustain, deliver, and bless us. This will the rather appear to faith, when we consider that He who created the world, (and no higher manifestation of omnipotence is known to us) is the Eternal Son of God, the Word, who became flesh and died upon the cross for our salvation; by whom we have perpetual access to the Father; and in beholding whom, we behold the Father, as the present Omnipotent God.

II. *God is Omnipresent as the ALLWISE.* Language, and even conception fail when we approach the handling of such a topic. He who is omnipresent, and therefore this instant present with me, is the primeval light, the increate, original, causative, essential, real truth; giving truth to all that is true; giving intelligence to all that understands; in comparison with whose radiance, all the wisdom and knowledge of all men and all angels, in all time, are but as a dim rushlight to the aggregate of all the suns which his hand has sown broadcast through the track of illimitable space. How shall we climb to the altitude of such normal, substantial, all-comprehensive truth? How shall we voyage in every radiating path toward the surrounding sphere of luminous wisdom? Jehovah, the Ever True, is Eternal wisdom, and he is here! I

stand amidst the blaze and am unconsumed; like the high priest beside the ark, in the mellowed light of the holy of holies. In no direction can I travel, whither this personal wisdom shall not accompany me. The Divine Word, as the second person of the adorable Trinity is named, from this very relation, is that wisdom who in the Old Testament declares: "My delights are with the sons of men." It is Emanuel, God with us, "who of God is made unto us wisdom." In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and we are complete in him; for he is the "true light." Could we oftener recollect that he whom we avouch as present, is the impersonation of wisdom, and is such to us, we should be ready at certain moments to pause and to uncover our heads, even in the busy walks of life, that we might do homage to "God only wise." To effect such persuasions, the Spirit of Wisdom descends and dwells in the soul. Let us watch for his descent, and cheer our hearts with the belief of a Divine Omniscience which is not far from every one of us.

III. *He who is Omnipresent is the HOLY ONE of Israel.* Infinite holiness surrounds us when we are in the presence of Jehovah. The serene, spotless effulgence of this divine attribute throws sin into hideous contrast; indeed only thus can we be said to know ourselves as sinful; just as blemishes in a robe are best seen when spread in meridian sunlight. All human, all angelic holiness, are as nothing to that abyss of purity belonging to God, and in which we are at all times floating and lost. The presence of a holy man deeply awes us; we are restrained from sin by his very look, and feel ourselves drawn to more elevated thoughts by the sympathy of his superior pious sentiments. How then ought we to be affected by the full and perpetual presence of the All-holy God, from whom we can not escape, and in whom "we live, and move, and have our being." He is glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders. In our profoundest and most silent solitude, a voice says to us, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." If the presence of human witnesses would deter us from impurity, how ought we to be arrested by the known presence of the Holy One! Shall we pollute and desecrate the sanctuary where he dwells? Pious men and exalted angels are smitten with this majesty. Thus, at the burning bush, the place where Moses stood was holy ground. Thus, at Bethel, Jacob awoke to say: "Surely God is in this place, and I knew it not." Thus Isaiah shuddered when he saw in vision the Lord, sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and heard the veiled and burning seraphim responsively crying, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory;" and hearing, cried: "Wo is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." "These

things said Esaias, (says John 12: 41,) when he saw [Christ's] glory, and spake of him." Thus the same John, long after our Lord's ascension, beholding the Jesus on whose bosom he had reclined, now among the golden candlesticks, in countenance "as the sun shineth in his strength;" "and when I saw him," such is his own report, "I fell at his feet as dead." All these are instances of the awe produced by the nearness of a holy God. My brethren, he is not far from every one of us; and at every instant we are enveloped in the luminous cloud of an omnipresent holiness. There are numberless degrees in the faith which thus apprehends God as here in his ineffable sanctity; from the faint glimmering of light which you or I possess, up to the open vision of an Enoch, who walks with God. Here is a power to repress vain thoughts, to awaken conscience, and to warm devotion. He who thus believes in a holiness all about him, hovering over his common walks and penetrating with intimate search to his heart's intentions, will need no architectural pomp or cathedral ceremonies to lift his aspirations. He has that which hallows the humblest worship, rendered to him who will be worshiped "in spirit and in truth." This Divine attribute gives name to the third adorable Person of the Godhead, the Holy Ghost. In this personality God dwells in the Church and in each believer, thus affording both motive and cause of eminent holiness. (1 Cor. 3 : 16 :) "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are!" Lovely yet awful thought! Ye, Christians, are the holy, living temple. Sin now has new colors of turpitude. Every sin harbored in your bosom is a pollution nestling in the shrine. To walk among all the duties of life as under this impression, and in such companionship with a holy God, is to be godly in the Scripture sense. This is that fear of the Lord which is perfectly compatible with love. It maintains nearness to the Divine throne, by means of him who is "holy, harmless, and undefiled," at once the Mediator and the Exemplar. Let the ever-present holiness of God overshadow us with a perpetual recognition of its reality, and earth will begin to be transformed to heaven, temptation will begin to lose its power, devils will fear and flee, and pure obedience will increase day by day.

IV. DIVINE JUSTICE *is Omnipresent.* If the former thought was full of awe, this, to sinners, is full of terror. It is another aspect of the same pillar of fire and cloud; it is the one indivisible majesty of the Godhead, breaking through a new cleft in the heavenly curtain; it is the essential sanctity of the Lord Almighty manifesting itself in antagonism to sin, vindicating the Divine glory, and turning its lightning-edge towards offenders in due and eternal "recompense of reward." Justice is that perfection, in the exercise

of which God rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked. It is infinite rectitude, demanding rectitude of the creature. It gives and guards the holy law. It is "benignity, administered with wisdom." It is the constant and immutable will of God to enforce the distinctions of good and evil, by consequent happiness and misery. The Justice of God is omnipresent. We need not ascend the height of heaven to find the Just God. He is here. He surrounds us. We are already and in every act arraigned before his tribunal. As the All-seeing Eye beholds, as the immaculate holiness loves or hates, so the infallible Justice adjudicates, upon every deed, word, and thought as it rises. We are always with our witness and our Judge. It is to Justice, on the omnipresent throne, that the soul, under promptings of conscience, says, "Thou God seest me!" The secret sin you lately committed was in God's presence-chamber; it was judged on the spot. Offenses in open court need no other witnesses. The solemnity of the great day is only the sum of these prior judgments, and their august publication before the universe. You err, you err, my fellow-sinner, if you think of God's award as altogether adjourned to some coming hour. Now, now, and as you here sit and sin before God, you are in the forum of an infinite and operative Justice. And this truth, if adequately carried home to the conviction, would be annihilating, unless along with it were communicated the knowledge of the "Lord our righteousness." This only can be our shelter, when we shall be brought into the unveiled presence of Eternal Justice, at our dissolution.

V. *He who is Omnipresent is infinite in GOODNESS.* How this relieves the bright but stupendous scene! Wisdom might prescribe my ruin. Holiness might hold off from my sinfulness by an everlasting repulsion. Justice might demand my death. The nearness of all these might be only the omnipresence of destruction. But to be surrounded by Eternal Goodness—this reassures my heart! All the modes of Goodness are here included, benevolence, mercy, and grace. God is present with them all. Tokens of them all are visible on every side, as I walk through the palace of creation, and discern in every part of his handiwork the marks of the Maker's goodness. There, we learn to interpret better, by the word of truth in the Scriptures, where we see more of Divine benevolence in the gospel of Christ. But thus instructed, by nature and revelation, we walk in the never-ceasing rays of infinite Love. It is the view of this which gives all the encouragements of religion. All our hopes and comforts flow from persuasion of God's gracious disposition towards us, drawing out our reliance and our filial confidence. But our present point is, that God, thus good and gracious, this condescending and sympathizing Father, is not merely in the distant heavens, but here, beside us, and every moment

overhanging our path. Nay, as the word made flesh, Jesus Christ, he walks by our side, grasps our hand, and allows us to lean the weary head upon his bosom. Take in the full impression of the Infinite Goodness, as a circumambient Love, nearer and more penetrating than the surrounding air, or the universal light, embosoming us more closely than your body does your soul, and you will have found the secret of happiness. Such a condition needs only to be purged of certain earthly impurities to become celestial joy. Thus to "see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living," is the privilege of the believer, increasing as he grows in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

In times of solitary affliction these are God's comforts, which delight the soul. When every thing else is taken away, and all helpers are gone, faith exclaims, "Yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation!" During the earlier stages of our Christian experience, even though we trust in the Lord, this trust is mingled with much reliance on creatures; and if the creature-prop be taken away, unless faith be strong, we fall to the earth. We lean on some pastor or teacher, himself a broken reed compassed about with infirmities, and liable to be broken suddenly from beneath us; on a father, the guide of our youth, whose face has been to us second only to the face of God, who more than shared our sorrows, who lifted the burden of responsibility by the wisdom of his counsel, and towards whom our homage was little short of worship; on a husband, whose whole heart was ours, and who at the same time led our steps in the way of truth; on a wife, whose countenance was a perpetual admonition, and whose soul throbbed responsively to every spiritual care, who was our guardian angel. Blessed be God for such means of solace! But ah! we repose on them too much; ah! these supports are perishing from around us! I see some already thus bereft. In such an hour, and amidst such desolation of hopes, the soul finds itself alone with God; and oh! how precious the experience, when he is known and felt as omnipresent Love! Then can the breaking heart cry: "My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him!"

It has often been the lot of God's people to endure long sufferings at a distance from all sympathy and help. The exile has sighed in a strange land, where there was no human eye to pity. The decrepit victim of disease has languished for years upon the bed of pain, without family or near friends. The prisoner for conscience' sake, has watched the changeful shadow come and go for years upon the wall which echoed no voice but his own. The haggard dying saint has breathed out his spirit by the wayside or on his wreck, all alone, yet God, the God of infinite goodness, was present, and present to him. And who can tell what joys have irradiated such solitudes, when the soul has found itself bathed in the light of God's favor? The God whom we adore, and who is every

moment with us, in all his power, wisdom, holiness, justice, and love, is infinite and eternal in all these perfections, and at the same time true and faithful in his covenant. "This God is our God, even unto death." The doctrine, I trust, has been applying itself to our hearts during all the discussion. Its practical lesson is one and simple. Walk in the power of the truth which you know. Live in the deep conviction that God, as thus apprehended, is every where present, and is with you. Hail the tokens of his holy, loving presence on every side; in heaven, in nature, in the word. How will this great light of faith extend your horizon, and lift your sky, and make your air ethereal! Not so should we bless you, if we could open your eyes to behold the world peopled with angelic natures, prompt to serve you. God is here; he filleth all things; he seeks your heart as his temple. Know this; believe it; recall it a thousand times; live in it; act on it. Give yourself up, again and again, every moment, in every act, to this glorious All-present One. Rejoice exceedingly that you can not escape his pervading essence, or resist the penetrating virtue of his immense diffusive love. In the toils of day, make oblation of all to him. Let your heart be as an altar ever dressed and displaying its tribute in that presence. And when slumber with its sweet illapse interrupts these thoughts, let the soul's whisper be, "When I awake I am still with thee!" Religion, in its highest moods, is nothing but a reference of every thing to a present God, with adoring love. Heaven is begun, when the human soul is thus again knit to God; separation from whom was its spiritual death. Meditation on the Divine Nature and Perfections, and contemplation of infinite beauty in his works, and providence, and word, are the means of rising into this blessed state. Think of God. Think of him repeatedly. Call back your roving mind to think of him. Think of him always. The sublime idea need not conflict with the tenor of duties. It shall rather be the deep accompaniment of life's melody, the basis of all the harmony. There is no such secret of tranquillity as abiding belief in God as present. "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee." (Job 22 : 21.) But, if we have tasted that the Lord is gracious, we may draw the curtain, and disclose an inner pavilion of approach. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant." The general and essential presence of God is only the holy place; his revealed and manifested presence through the rent veil of Jesus, "that is, his flesh," is the holy of holies. The adorable Spirit makes the gracious presence of divinity to be felt. Then the favored soul has not only presence, but communion. The friend was with us before, but he was strange, yea, unapproachable; now his eye beams upon us with the look of love. To have our best human friend always with us, to hear his voice, to lean on his arm, to share his inmost thought,

this were a trifle too mean to name, compared with having the assured love of an ever-present God. If this is true, we need not die to reach our paradise. And it is not fancy, but revelation and promise. The world knows nothing of the secrets of this our sanctuary; how should it? The world knew not him who is its charm, and admits not him who is its Comforter. "I will pray the Father," said Jesus, "and he shall give you another comforter that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world can not receive because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." This is the communion of which the apostle speaks thus: "And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

SERMON III.

BY REV. JOHN A. TODD,

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ON THE CHARACTER AND DEATH OF WASHINGTON IRVING.*

"FOR, behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water. The mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient. The captain of fifty, and the honorable man, and the counselor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator."—ISAIAH 3: 1-3.

THE subject of this chapter is continued from the one which precedes it. The threatenings of God against Judah are here set forth in solemn and impressive array. The opening portion of the chapter is occupied with the general announcement that the peo-

* A discourse delivered in the Second Reformed Dutch Church of Tarrytown, New-York, on Sabbath morning, Dec. 11, 1859.

TARRYTOWN, Dec. 13, 1859.

REV. JOHN A. TODD: DEAR SIR: Having heard with great satisfaction the sermon delivered by you on Sunday last, on the death of the late Washington Irving, and desiring that it should be more extensively known, we would respectfully solicit a copy for publication. Very truly your friends,

Sanford Cobb, Jr., Abraham Storms, Wm. P. Lyon, John C. Mallory, George Howard, David S. Rowe, S. P. York, John Butler, Jr., Wm. H. Townsend, Wm. Hoge, Edward B. Cobb, Frank Vincent, Chas. L. Davis, Jacob Storm, Benson Ferris, Sr., H. Caruthers, M.D., Benson Ferris, Jr., Charles Starr, J. G. Dudley.