

THE PRESENCE OF GOD

The Attributes of God

Banska Bystrica, 25th September 2016

<p>אִם יִסְתֵּר אִישׁ בְּמִסְתָּרִים וְאֲנִי לֹא אֶרְאֶנּוּ נֹאמְרֵיהוּ הֲלוֹא אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֲנִי מִלֵּא נֹאמְרֵיהוּ</p>	<p>Jer 23:24 Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the LORD. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the LORD</p>
<p>יְהוָה חֲקַרְתָּנִי וַתִּדְרֹעַ אֶתָּה יְדַעְתָּ שִׁבְתִּי וְקוּמִי בַּנְּתָה לְרַעִי מִרְחוֹק אֶרְחִי וּרְבַעִי זָרִית וְכָל־דְּרָכֶי הִסְבַּנְתָּה כִּי אֵין מְלָה בְּלִשׁוֹנִי הֵן יְהוָה יְדַעְתָּ כְּלָה אַחֲוֹר וְקָדַם צִרְתָּנִי וַחֲשַׁת עָלַי כַּפְכָּה פְּלִיאָה דַעַת מִמֶּנִּי נִשְׁגְּבָה לֹא־אוּכַל לָהּ אֲנָה אֵלֶךְ מִרוּחְךָ וְאָנָה מִפְּנֵיךְ אֶבְרַח אִם־אֶסַּק שָׁמַיִם שָׁם אֶתָּה וְאַצִּיעָה שְׂאוֹל הַנֶּגֶד אִשָּׁא כְּנַפְי־שָׁחַר אֲשַׁכְּנָה בְּאַחֲרֵית יָם גַּם־שָׁם יִדְךָ תִּנְחַנֵּי וְתֵאחֲזֶנִּי וּמִיִּנְךָ וְאָמַר אֶדְחֹשֶׁךְ יִשׁוּפְנִי וְלִילָה אוֹר בְּעֵדְנִי גַם־חֹשֶׁךְ לֹא־יִחְשִׁיךְ מִמֶּךָ וְלִילָה כִּיֹּם יֵאִיר כַּחֲשִׁיכָה כְּאוֹרָה</p>	<p>Psalm 139:1-12 O LORD, you have searched me and known me! ² You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. ³ You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. ⁴ Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it altogether. ⁵ You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. ⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it. ⁷ Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? ⁸ If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! ⁹ If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, ¹⁰ even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. ¹¹ If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night," ¹² even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you.</p>
<p>מֵעַנָּה אֱלֹהֵי קָדַם וּמִתַּחַת זֶרַעַת עוֹלָם וּנְרָשׁ מִפְּנֵיךְ אוֹיֵב וַיֹּאמֶר הַשֹּׁמֵר</p>	<p>Dt 33:27 The eternal God is your dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms. And he thrust out the enemy before you and said, Destroy.</p>

OUTLINE

0. INTRODUCTION

- 0.1. THE "OMNI" ATTRIBUTES OF GOD
- 0.2. ABUSES OF GOD'S OMNIPRESENCE
- 0.3. THE EYES OF THE LORD

1. BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF PRESENCE

- 1.1. THE THRONE
- 1.2. THE SPACE
- 1.3. SHEOL
- 1.4. THE HUMBLE

2. THE PRESENCE IN THE OLD AND THE NEW TESTAMENTS

- 2.1. OT → THE TEMPLE
- 2.2. NT → THE CHURCH

3. PRACTICING THE PRESENCE OF GOD

- 3.1. SEEKING HIS FACE
- 3.2. IMAGINATION
- 3.3. JESUS' PROMISE
- 3.4. THE HOLY SPIRIT
- 3.5. FELLOWSHIP, THE LORD'S TABLE

4. TO REMEMBER

0. INTRODUCTION

- “Hallowed be thy Name” ⇒ let God’s attributes [= “name”] be (1) understood and admired, (2) revered and worshiped, (3) treasured and desired

0.1. THE “OMNI” ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

- (1) **omni**potence, (2) **omni**science, (3) **omni**presence

0.2. ABUSES OF GOD’S OMNIPRESENCE

Pantheism contrasts with monotheism (there is one God), polytheism (there are many gods), deism (God created the world in such a way that it is capable of existing and operating on its own, which God then allows it to do) and panentheism (in God there is a primordial and unchanging nature, and a consequent nature that changes and develops). Etymologically, pantheism is the view that Deity and Cosmos are identical. Theologically, it embraces divine immanence while rejecting divine transcendence. If atheism is the denial that anything is divine, pantheism is not atheism; if atheism is the claim that there is no Creator, Providence, transcendent Deity, or personal God, pantheism is atheistic.¹

- “Keyhole God” (SARTRE) → I am caught at looking through a keyhole → existential shame, loss of freedom (the “Other” “l’Autre”)

0.3. THE EYES OF THE LORD

- **2Chron 16:9** For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him.
- **Prov 15:3** The eyes of the LORD are in every place (בְּכָל-מְקוֹם עֵינֵי יְהוָה), keeping watch on the evil and the good.

1. BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF PRESENCE

- “Shekhinah” – not in the Bible

1.1. THE THRONE

- **Rev 4:2** At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated **on the throne**
- **Eze 1:26** And above the expanse over their heads there was the likeness of a **throne**, in appearance like sapphire; and seated above the likeness of a **throne** was a likeness with a human appearance.

1.2. THE SPACE

- **1Ki 8:27** "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built!
- **Is 66:1** Thus says the LORD: "Heaven is my **throne**, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest?"

1.3. SHEOL

- **Psalm 139:8** If I make my bed in **Sheol**, you are **there**!
- **Rev 14:10** ...and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the **presence** of the holy angels and in the **presence** of the **Lamb**.

1.4. THE HUMBLE

- **Is 57:15** For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity (עַד), whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit (רוּחַ נְשָׁפָל וְרַחֵם), to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite. (→ the Beatitudes)

¹ *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy.*

- **Jn 14:23** "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

2. THE PRESENCE IN THE OLD AND THE NEW TESTAMENTS

2.1. OT → THE TEMPLE

- **Ex 40:34-35** Then the **cloud** covered the tent of meeting, and the **glory** of the LORD filled the tabernacle. ³⁵ And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the **cloud** settled on it, and the **glory** of the LORD filled the tabernacle (הַמִּשְׁכָּן).
- **1Ki 8:11** And the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud (מִפְּנֵי הָעָנָן), for the glory of the LORD filled his temple (כְּבוֹד־יְהוָה אֶת־בַּיִת יְהוָה).
- sacrifices → the temple
- feasts of the Lord → the temple

2.2. NT → THE CHURCH

- **John 4:21-24** Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. ²² You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ But the hour is coming, **and** is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in **spirit and truth**, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. ²⁴ God is **spirit**, **and** those who worship him must worship in **spirit and truth**."
- **1Cor 3:16** Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?
- **Acts 2:2-3** And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them.
- **Mt 18:20** For where **two or three** are gathered in my name, there am I among them.
- **1Tim 3:15** ...the household of **God** (ἐν οἴκῳ θεοῦ), which is the **church** of the living **God**,...

3. PRACTICING THE PRESENCE OF GOD

3.1. SEEKING HIS FACE

- Ps 17:15; Ps 24:6; Ps 27:8; Ps 79:11; Ps 88:3; Ps 89:15; Ps 119:58, 69, 170
- **Ps 27:8** You have said, "Seek my face. (בְּקֶשׁוֹ פָּנָי)" My heart says to you, "Your face, LORD, do I seek.
- **Ps 119:58** I have sought your face with all my heart (הֲלִיתִי פָּנֶיךָ בְּכָל־לֵב)
- Brother Lawrence (Frere Laurent): "...his continual care has been, for above forty years past that he has spent in religion, to be always with GOD; and to **do** nothing, **say** nothing, and **think** nothing which may displease Him; and this without any other view than purely for the love of Him, and because He deserves infinitely more."²

3.2. IMAGINATION

- **Ps 16:8** I have set (שָׁחֵתִּי) the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.

3.3. JESUS' PROMISE

- **Mtt 28:20** ...And behold, **I am with you** always, to the end of the age.

3.4. THE HOLY SPIRIT

- **Eph 3:16-17** ...be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith...

² Frere Laurent *Maximes Spirituelles*, p. 109.

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3.5. FELLOWSHIP, THE LORD'S TABLE

- **Phil 2:1** ...participation in the Spirit (κοινωνία πνεύματος)...
 - **John 6:53-56** So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you **eat** the **flesh** of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴ Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. ⁵⁵ For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. ⁵⁶ Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. → **John 6:63** It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is of no avail. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.
- 2 Cor 13:14** The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit (κοινωνία τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος) be with you all.

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4. TO REMEMBER

- God is present everywhere by seeing.
- His personal presence is overwhelming – both in judgment, and in blessing.
- Desire for His presence (His “face”) is the key motive of the Christian life.