

THE IMMENSITY OF GOD:

It is from the Holy Scriptures alone, that we can attain just views of the being, nature, and character of God. How sublime are the revelations of the divine perfections there made known to us! Who can grasp this one thought, "Thus says the high and lofty One, who inhabits eternity!" We are astonished when we read of the Egyptian pyramids, and the magnificent palaces of mighty monarchs; but what sightless atoms are they, when compared with eternity, that boundless habitation of the King of kings. "From everlasting to everlasting, you are God." The existence of one Supreme Being, who is without beginning, is consonant with right reason; for he who made all things, must necessarily be before all things. A creature cannot make itself. This would imply exertion before existence, which is an absurdity. And yet how far above our finite comprehension is the nature of the self-existent, eternal Jehovah. Our minds are lost when we plunge into infinity. "Who by searching can find out God? Who can find out the Almighty to perfection?" The volume of creation displays the wisdom, power, and goodness of God. What wonderful contrivance, what wise adaptation of one part to another; what power in upholding, what goodness in preserving the myriads of creatures which fill the air, the earth, the sea, is discoverable around us. A late eminent astronomer found, that in 41 minutes not less than 258,000 stars in that part of the heaven, called the milky way had passed through the field of view in his telescope! What must God be, who made, governs, and supports so many worlds, who, tells the number of the stars; and calls them all by their names.

It is, however, from the volume of Inspiration that we derive our knowledge of the moral attributes of the Deity; and obtain those awesome, yet sublimely interesting views of Him with whom we have to do, which at once elevate and purify the soul. The Holy Bible may well be called the BOOK of God; not only because it has God for its author, but because it is filled with such revelations of his glorious character, as surpass the powers of human reason fully to comprehend.

How fervently did the apostle pray for His Ephesian converts; that the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give unto them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: that the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, they might know the hope of His calling; and the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints; and the exceeding

greatness of His power towards those who believe; that being rooted and grounded in love, they might be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth and height; and know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, and so be filled with all the fullness of God. We stand upon the sea-shore and survey with admiring delight the wide extended ocean, whose distant waters lose themselves in the blue horizon. But what is this great abyss of waters, compared to that ocean of Almighty love, which is without a bottom and a shore?

"Oh! My God, when I contemplate your sovereign will, which, from eternity, in highest wisdom, consulted my welfare, I am lost in astonishment! When I reflect upon your omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence; upon your infinite holiness, inviolable justice, and unerring wisdom; upon your faithfulness, and truth; your everlasting love, your sovereign grace, your patience and long-suffering, how am I filled with awe and dread! Yet faith can contemplate this bright display of uncreated excellence, and rejoice in your infinite perfections as exhibited and harmonized in Jesus, the incarnate Word. Here I behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord. Oh! That while beholding, I may be transformed into the lovely image of the Saviour, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Who does not long to feel the purifying effect of these sacred views of God in Christ? "Lord, make me humble, while I meditate on your humility; loving, while I think upon your love; holy, while I dwell upon your purity; just, while I contemplate your righteousness; merciful, while I behold your grace; joyful, while I review your everlasting covenant. Oh! Fill my heart with gratitude, and my mouth with praise. To you, blessed Jesus, do I look? Remove all spiritual darkness from my mind: all spiritual deadness from my heart. Cause me to know you as my Saviour; to follow you as my leader; to love you as my friend; to trust in you as my atonement; to be found in you as my righteousness; to feed on you as the living bread; to walk in you as the way to the Father; and to dwell with you in heaven forever."

What comfort may every humble believer derive from the declaration of his Lord! "Am I a God at hand and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? Do not I fill heaven and earth, says the Lord?"

"Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the

midst of them." "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." How happy must that soul be whose refuge is always near. But to have an enemy always near us; an enemy armed with omnipotence, an enemy, made so by our willful transgressions; is a consideration most appalling. Yet this is the case, as it respects every impenitent sinner. The thought of such a God being ever near, whose eye is ever upon us, whose power can crush us in a moment, and drive the outcast spirit into outer darkness, would, one would think, awaken every dormant sensibility, and arouse every sleeping sinner! Yet, alas surrounded with such peril, the soul sleeps on in dreadful security, until either grace quickens it to repentance, or justice awakens it in the fire that shall never be quenched. "Lord, awaken my drowsy sense. Quicken all my powers. Draw me by the powerful, constraining influence of your love; and cause me to rejoice in this sacred truth, that you are always near, my help in trouble and my life in death."

When we begin to measure distances with respect to natural objects, we are lost in astonishment. What thought can reach the boundary of creation? Many stars have probably been sending forth their rays in quick succession from the first moment of creation, whose light has not reached our earth. Who, then, can measure such distances? And yet, what are millions of worlds revolving round each other, compared with infinite space, and eternal duration? If we cannot, by the boldest flight of imagination, conceive the mighty stretch of creation, how shall we dare to sin against that inconceivably glorious Being who fills heaven and earth with his presence, who inhabits eternity! How truly sublime are the questions of the enraptured prophet Isaiah! "Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand; and meted out heaven with a span: and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?"

"Behold the nations are as the drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold he takes up the islands as a very little thing." "All nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing and vanity." "It is he that sits upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers. It is he that stretches out the heavens as a curtain; and spreads them out as a tent to dwell in." "Have you not known, have you not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fains not, neither is weary? There is no searching of His understanding. He gives power to the faint; and to those who have no might, He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary; and the

young men shall utterly fall. But those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."

Every doctrine of Scripture is designed to promote our growth in grace. They are given to us, not for speculation, but for practice. From this view of the divine immensity, we are taught humility, reverence, and circumspection. Wherever we are, whatever we are doing, the eye of God is upon us, viewing us, not as an indifferent spectator, but taking cognizance of every action, of every word, yes of every thought that rises in our minds; that, from His awesome gaze; His continued, His never to be avoided scrutiny, our eternal condition will be fixed at the judgment day.

How plain are the declarations of Scripture: "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil:" Eccles. 12:14. "He has appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness:" Acts 16:31. "God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ:" Rom. 2:16. "Every one of us shall give an account of himself to God:" Rom.14:12. "The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels: and then he shall reward every man according to his works:" Matt.16: 27. For by actions, the sincerity of faith in Christ is best known and evidenced. And our reward, though not of debt but of grace, will be more or less glorious according to our works, those fruits of faith, done for Christ in this present world. See Matt.25:42, 34, 40. Dan. 12:3. 1 Cor. 15: 41-42.

In like manner, the punishment of unbelievers will be proportionate to their respective degrees of wickedness, and their comparative abuse of light, mercies, and privileges vouchsafed to them. "Woe unto you, Chorazin; Woe unto you, Bethsaida: for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the Day of Judgment, than for you." "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment; for by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall condemned." Because our words will evidence the state of our hearts; and therefore prove us either in the faith, or unregenerate, before an assembled world.

"He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart:" I Cor. 4:5.

How infinite is that omniscient God, who can search the deep recesses of every heart; yes, of hundreds of millions of hearts in every age, and at the same moment of time, without confounding in the least degree the motives and purposes of his rational creatures; and who at the great day of account will reveal to each his secret sins, while all shall stand speechless and self-condemned before his awful tribunal!

"Lord, give me grace to judge myself now, that I may not be condemned in that day. Oh, send down your blessed Spirit into my heart! Sanctify every thought, every affection and desire. Purge me with the cleansing blood of your dear Son. Clothe me with his spotless righteousness; that, being viewed by you in Christ my Savior, I may be saved with an everlasting salvation; and never be confounded, world without end."

"YOU, GOD, SEE ME." To feel the abiding impression of this solemn truth would be a sacred preservation from sin. When an evil thought arises in my heart, should I like to divulge it to my nearest friend? Ah! No. Conscience, shame, or a regard to his good opinion checks the disclosure. What! And shall I dare to indulge such a thought, exposed to my Almighty friend, and naked in His sight, when I would not dare to mention it to a fellow worm! Where is the fear of God? Where is the belief of His omniscience? Where is the awe of His omnipresence? Where is the dread of final judgment? Yes, where is my love to Christ, who died to save me from my sins? "Does not he see my ways, and count all my steps?" Job 31:4. This method of addressing conscience may, through grace, present a powerful barrier against the injections of Satan, and the workings of natural corruption.

"Lord, strengthen me more and more. Give me grace never to harbor a thought which I should be ashamed to express. May I never forget, that, as speaking is but thinking aloud, so thinking is speaking to you, who require not, like weak mortals, the medium of words and sounds? You hear the inward voice of the soul, pouring out itself before you in silent yet fervent breathings of desire; and you know the subtle workings of inbred sin. May I ever consider myself as in your immediate presence; surrounded by your immensity. 'YOU, GOD, SEE ME.' May this thought constrain me to act with purity, truth, and sincerity, when no human eye can observe my actions; or, if my actions are visible, when they cannot unveil my motives. May I do all from a principle of love to you, and with a simple desire in all things to promote your glory; for your eyes 'run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show yourself strong

in the behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards you.'?"

How consoling is this view of the divine immensity, with respect to our distant Christian friends! Wherever they are, whether crossing tempestuous oceans, or dwelling in distant climates; whether traversing dreary deserts, or climbing craggy steeps; God is still near them, to protect and bless them. Should he call them out of the body, when separated from all they love upon earth; yet he is still near, to cheer their departing spirits, and to conduct them in safety to their eternal home.

"Let me then rejoice, Oh Lord, in your presence. Let me be always happy in this sweet assurance, that you are a sun and shield, and will give grace and glory to every humble follower of the Lamb. Oh may I live daily nearer to you by faith and prayer! Unite my heart to fear your name. Bind my affections to your cross; and allow me not one moment to wander from you, or lose the thought of your immensity and glory. It is in you that I live, and move, and have my being; it is from you that I derive every spiritual and temporal blessing; and it is through you that I humbly hope to be brought in safety, as a monument of mercy, into your everlasting kingdom."