

A Lord's Day Snippet!

Biblical and Southern Studies

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SBSS

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1 They who seek the throne of grace
Find that throne in every place;
If we live a life of prayer,
God is present everywhere.

2 In our sickness and our health,
In our want, or in our wealth,
If we look to God in prayer,
God is present everywhere.

3 When our earthly comforts fail,
When the woes of life prevail,
'Tis the time for earnest prayer;
God is present everywhere.

4 Then, my soul, in every strait
To thy Father come, and wait;
He will answer every prayer;
God is present everywhere.

Oliver Holden (1765-1844)

The Majesty of the Immanent God

“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 part of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.”

Psalm 139:7-10

Where is God? God is everywhere! God's immanence might seem to contradict His transcendence. “Transcendence” means that God is beyond the range of creation, but even this word is too confining for God is infinitely above all else. God is above creation or independent of it as creator or originator. He transcends time and space, and yet is present in every point of space with His whole being. God's immanence means that He continues in creation which He is beyond. Yes, creation is distinct from God, but dependent on His sustaining power. The verses referred to in Psalm 139 indicate that God

is everywhere present in His creation. Someone might be saying be careful of pantheism; it is dangerous heresy! It certainly is dangerous and it is heresy. God's presence in the world He created is certainly not pantheism. Pantheism teaches that everything is God and God is everything. Pantheism denies the transcendence of God by saying everything is God and God is everything thus denying the personality of God making Him a thing. No, the Bible teaches us that God is in His creation and its processes for He is the Creator, and the counterpart is His transcendence which says He is distinct from and totally sovereign over His creation. The fruit of God's creatorship does not become Him, but is separate from His personhood which is eternal, although it is a part of His work and maintenance.

"What now does the divine immanence mean in direct Christian experience? It means simply that *God is here*. Wherever we are, *God is here*. There is no place, there can be no place, where He is not. Ten million intelligences standing at as many points in space and separated by incomprehensible distances can each one say with equal truth, *God is here*" [A. W. Tozer]. Our God is infinite or without limit and this is why in our limitations we have trouble comprehending immanence and transcendence because we are so finite or limited. There is a great gulf fixed between who God is and what God made, although what God made bears witness of His presence, but it is not God. What He perfectly made does not become Him. He is transcendent to His creation as its originator for before it was, He has always been. Matter did not make itself for in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. However, God is immanent and transcendent for He cannot be limited. So, God is Creator and Sustainer and therefore present, but He is also other or transcendent.

The Psalmist said anywhere you go you cannot get away from God's presence; if you take flight into heaven *there He is*; if you descend to Sheol *there He is*; if you fly where the mariner has never been on the most remote sea even there His hand is leading and His right hand is securing. There is no way to escape the presence of God. God is everywhere present for He is immanent. Fallen Adam tried, in his fallen state, to escape God, but God was there. An immanent God cannot be contained. Solomon said of the temple he had constructed for the worship of God that it "cannot contain thee."

Thy children shall not faint nor fear,
Sustained by this delightful tho't;
Since Thou, their God, art ev'rywhere,
They cannot be where Thou art not.

The apostle Paul on Mars Hill spoke to the philosophers at Athens and said, "(God) is not far from any one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:27, 28). We are told that the presence and the manifestation of His presence are not the same because you can have the one without the other. You may not be aware that God is here

unless He were to manifest Himself. Jacob as he escaped his brother and lay down his head in a deep sleep, being in the wilderness headed to the country of his mother's relatives, saw a ladder connecting heaven and earth in his dream, angels were going up and down on it, and he exclaimed when he awoke: "Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not" (Gen. 29:16). Jacob realized that all the time Jehovah had been there whether he was aware of it or not! There is no place you can go that God is not there already and has always been there since it was there. This immanent God also sent His Son into this world to claim a people for His name. Yes, Jesus came to seek and save that which was lost.

A. W. Tozer (1897-1963) noted, "Our pursuit of God is successful just because He is forever seeking to manifest Himself to us. The revelation of God to any man is not God coming from a distance upon a time to pay a brief and momentous visit to the man's soul. Thus, to think of it is to misunderstand it all. The approach of God to the soul or of the soul to God is not to be thought of in spatial terms at all. There is no idea of physical distance involved in the concept. It is not a matter of miles but of experience....

So, when we sing, 'Draw me nearer, nearer, blessed Lord,' we are not thinking of the nearness of place, but of the nearness of relationship. It is for increasing degrees of awareness that we pray for a more perfect consciousness of the divine Presence. We need never shout across the spaces to an absent God. He is nearer than our own soul, closer than our most secret thoughts."