

## Chapter 10

### The Divine Omniscience

Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest my downsit-ting and mine uprising and art acquainted with all my ways. I can inform Thee of nothing and it is vain to try to hide anything from Thee. In the light of Thy perfect knowledge I would be as artless as a little child. Help me to put away all care, for Thou knowest the way that I take and when Thou hast tried me I shall come forth as gold. Amen.

To say that God is omniscient is to say that He possesses perfect knowledge and therefore has no need to learn. But it is more: it is to say that God has never learned and cannot learn.

The Scriptures teach that God has never learned from anyone. ¶¶¶ Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to Him the way of understanding? ¶¶¶ ¶¶¶ For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor?" These rhetorical questions put by the prophet and the apostle Paul declare that God has never learned.

From there it is only a step to the conclusion that God cannot learn. Could God at any time or in any manner receive into His mind knowledge that He did not possess and had not possessed from eternity, He would be imperfect and less than himself. To think of a God who must sit at the feet of a teacher, even though that teacher be an archangel or a seraph, is to think of someone other than the Most High God, maker of heaven and earth.

This negative approach to the divine omniscience is, I believe, quite justified in the circumstances. Since our intellectual knowledge of God is so small and obscure, we can sometimes gain considerable advantage in our struggle to understand what God is like by the simple expedient of thinking what He is not like. So far in this examination of the attributes of God we have been driven to the free use of negatives. We have seen that God had no origin, that He had no beginning, that He

requires no helpers, that He suffers no change, and that in His essential being there are no limitations.

This method of trying to make men see what God is like by showing them what He is not like is used also by the inspired writers in the Holy Scriptures. ¶¶¶Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, ¶¶¶ cries Isaiah, ¶¶¶that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? ¶¶¶ And that abrupt statement by God Himself, ¶¶¶I am the Lord, I change not, ¶¶¶ tells us more about the divine omniscience than could be told in a ten-thousand word treatise, were all negatives arbitrarily ruled out.

God's eternal truthfulness is stated negatively by the apostle Paul, ¶¶¶God... cannot lie ¶¶¶; and when the angel asserted that ¶¶¶with God nothing shall be impossible, ¶¶¶ the two negatives add up to a ringing positive.

That God is omniscient is not only taught in the Scriptures, it must be inferred also from all else that is taught concerning Him. God perfectly knows Himself and, being the source and author of all things, it follows that He knows all that can be known. And this He knows instantly and with a fullness of perfection that includes every possible item of knowledge concerning everything that exists or could have existed anywhere in the universe at any time in the past or that may exist in the centuries or ages yet unborn.

God knows instantly and effortlessly all matter and all matters, all mind and every mind, all spirit and all spirits, all being and every being, all creaturehood and all creatures, every plurality and all pluralities, all law and every law, all relations, all causes, all thoughts, all mysteries, all enigmas, all feeling, all desires, every unuttered secret, all thrones and dominions, all personalities, all things visible and invisible in heaven and in earth, motion, space, time, life, death, good, evil, heaven, and hell.

Because God knows all things perfectly, He knows no thing better than any other thing, but all things equally well. He never discovers anything. He is never surprised, never amazed. He never wonders about anything nor (except when drawing

men out for their own good) does He seek information or ask questions.

God is self-existent and self-contained and knows what no creature can ever know - Himself, perfectly. ¶¶¶ The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. ¶¶¶ Only the Infinite can know the infinite.

In the divine omniscience we see set forth against each other the terror and fascination of the Godhead. That God knows each person through and through can be a cause of shaking fear to the man that has something to hide - some unforsaken sin, some secret crime committed against man or God. The unblessed soul may well tremble that God knows the flimsiness of every pretext and never accepts the poor excuses given for sinful conduct, since He knows perfectly the real reason for it. ¶¶¶ Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance. ¶¶¶ How frightful a thing to see the sons of Adam seeking to hide among the trees of another garden. But where shall they hide? ¶¶¶ Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?... If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day. ¶¶¶

And to us who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope that is set before us in the gospel, how unutterably sweet is the knowledge that our Heavenly Father knows us completely. No talebearer can inform on us, no enemy can make an accusation stick; no forgotten skeleton can come tumbling out of some hidden closet to abash us and expose our past; no unsuspected weakness in our characters can come to light to turn God away from us, since He knew us utterly before we knew Him and called us to Himself in the full knowledge of everything that was against us. ¶¶¶ For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee. ¶¶¶

Our Father in heaven knows our frame and remembers that we are dust. He knew our inborn treachery, and for His own sake engaged to save us (Isa. 48:8-11). His only begotten Son,

when He walked among us, felt our pains in their naked intensity of anguish. His knowledge of our afflictions and adversities is more than theoretic; it is personal, warm, and compassionate. Whatever may befall us, God knows and cares as no one else can.

He doth give His joy to all;

He becomes an infant small;

He becomes a man of woe;

He doth feel the sorrow too.

Think not thou canst sigh a sigh

And thy Maker is not by;

Think not thou canst weep a tear

And thy Maker is not near.

O! He gives to us His joy

That our griefs He may destroy;

Till our grief is fled and gone

He doth sit by us and moan.

William Blake