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The Coherence of the Traditional Model of Omnipresence and Divine Simplicity

Abstract

Throughout Church history God's omnipresence and the doctrine of divine simplicity have been widely affirmed. However, the coherence of the two doctrines are brought into question here. In this paper I argue that if the traditional model of God's omnipresence and divine simplicity are both affirmed, then the traditional model of God's omnipresence is incoherent. It follows then if this is true that one either needs to adopt a different model of God's omnipresence or bring into question the doctrine of divine simplicity. Both of which any Christian adhering to traditional theology would be hard pressed to do. Perhaps, however, there is some potential way of harmonizing the two.

Keywords

omnipresence, divine, simplicity, traditional, model, coherence, philosophy

Cover Page Footnote

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The Coherence of the Traditional Model of Omnipresence and Divine Simplicity

A crucial pillar of a systematic theology is that it be internally coherent. In other words, what a theologian affirms in one doctrine, that belief must be consistently applied throughout the entirety of that systematic theology. Additionally, the convictions that one holds in regard to a certain doctrine cannot contradict what is affirmed in another. The goal of this article is to apply this concept to the traditional model of God's omnipresence in relation to divine simplicity. What is meant by the traditional model of God's omnipresence is that He is present by His knowledge, power, and essence. Additionally, in its basic form, divine simplicity is the belief that God is not composed of parts. Both of these will be covered in detail below. Consequently, the argument will be made that if divine simplicity is consistently applied to the traditional model of God's omnipresence, then the model is rendered incoherent.

The first section begins with a historical survey of the doctrine of omnipresence. The aim is to analyze the prominent models that have been offered in order to demonstrate how it is that the traditional model of God's omnipresence has come to be widely accepted. Section two concisely covers the doctrine of divine simplicity. Lastly, section three critically analyzes the implications of divine simplicity for the traditional model of God's omnipresence.

A Historical Survey

To understand how the traditional model of God's omnipresence developed, it is important to survey what historical figures have had to say in regard to omnipresence. While the Bible clearly affirms God's omnipresence, the passages are underdetermined as to *how* this can be so. This section will cover the writings of Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, and then finish with some more contemporary literature on God's omnipresence.

Augustine

Attempting to come up with a coherent model of God's omnipresence is a difficult task. It would therefore be wise to begin our discussion of Augustine by affirming his confession that God can do something which is beyond our comprehension and proceed with humility.¹

Augustine's foundational belief with the doctrine of omnipresence is that God is not a physical being. He writes, "Turn your mind away from all images of

¹ Augustine, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Volume 1*, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1886). 476.

bodies that human thought usually considers.”² Augustine continues to argue that wisdom, justice, nor love are thought of in this physical way, so God’s presence should not be thought of in this manner either. Augustine is right to affirm the incorporeality of God. He makes mention of this not only because Scripture clearly affirms God’s incorporeality, but because he recognizes that a being cannot be omnipresent if He is to possess a material body as man does.

Additionally, Augustine believes that God is wholly present at every point whether He is manifested or concealed. He illustrates this by saying that light is present to the eyes of the seeing and the blind, but it is only felt to be present to the man who sees and absent from him who is blind.³ By this he means to argue that even to those who God is concealed, He is still wholly present. In other words, what Augustine intends to convey is that God is present everywhere even though He is not seen physically by man.

Another important aspect of Augustine’s doctrine of omnipresence is that he believes that God is spread out through all things, not because He is a quality of the world, but because He is the substance that creates the world.⁴ Although Augustine believes God to be spread out through all things, he emphasizes that he does not mean that half of Him is present in this half of the world, and the other half present in the other half. But rather he states that God is “Whole in the heavens alone and whole on the earth alone and whole in the heavens and in the earth, contained in no place, but whole everywhere in himself.”⁵

Furthermore, Augustine did not like the idea of saying that God is present in the unbeliever just as in the believer, he therefore made the distinction that God is present everywhere by the presence of His divinity, but not everywhere by the indwelling of His grace. So, Augustine would say that God is not present inside of the unbeliever, in that God’s grace does not dwell in them, rather it is better understood by saying that God is present to the unbeliever by His divinity. This distinction may also be used to make sense of God filling heaven and earth in Jeremiah 23:24. Namely, we do not mean that God physically fills up heaven and earth. Rather we may say that God’s divinity, or glory, fills heaven and earth. Augustine thus concludes in this way that God does not dwell in the unbeliever just as He does in the believer in whom He makes His temple.⁶

In summary, Augustine argues that God is not to be thought of as present everywhere as a physical mass. Rather, He is an incorporeal being who is wholly present throughout the heavens and the earth and cannot be contained. This view

² Augustine, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century; Letters 156-210*, trans. Ronald Teske (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2004). 249.

³ Augustine, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Volume 1*, 475.

⁴ Augustine, *The Works of Saint Augustine*, 237.

⁵ Augustine, *The Works of Saint Augustine*, 237.

⁶ Augustine, *The Works of Saint Augustine*, 247.

of Augustine is correct because a physical body would not have the capability of being omnipresent and would rather be contained to the space which it occupies. Furthermore, Augustine holds to the belief that God is spread out in that He is the substance that creates and rules the world. By this he means that God created all things and is therefore present by His essence. So, as early as Augustine's writings on God's omnipresence, the traditional model begins to take shape. In his work Augustine set forth the pillars of incorporeality and presence by essence in relation to the traditional model.

Anselm

Saint Anselm delivers a philosophical meditation on the omnipresence of God. From a reading of the *Monologion* and *Proslogion*, Anselm's thought process can be followed as he reaches the conclusion that God does not live in space or time, nor is God contained by anything, but all things exist in God and God contains all.⁷ By saying that all things exist in God, it seems right to take that similarly as when Augustine states that God's presence is everywhere as the substance of all He created. Anselm argues that God is omnipresent because nothing can exist without God's preserving presence, God must therefore exist everywhere, throughout all things, and in all. For where God is not, nothing could be.⁸ The difficulty with a belief such as this is not crossing the line into pantheism. Anselm, however, did not mean that God exists throughout all things in the pantheistic way. However, more work and clarification would be needed here to make that distinction. But the important aspect of Anselm's statement is that he takes God's creative and sustaining work in the universe to entail His presence.

Anselm deals with the question of whether God is present in parts, or rather as a whole. He determines that God, as the greatest possible being, does not exist everywhere and always in part, but is present as a whole in all places.⁹ This statement seems to touch on the relation of God's omnipresence and divine simplicity. Namely, what Anselm intends to convey is that there cannot be only a part of God that is present somewhere, and some other part of Him is lacking simultaneously.

When meditating on God's presence, Anselm thinks it important to also deal with God's relationship to time. He asks, "How, then, can what exists as a whole, in any place, exist simultaneously, as a whole, in another place, if no part

⁷ Anselm, *Proslogium; Monologium; an Appendix in Behalf of the Fool by Gaunilon; and Cur Deus Homo*, trans. Sidney Deane (Chicago, IL: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1926). 25.

⁸ Anselm, 60-61.

⁹ Anselm, 74.

of it can at that time exist in another place?”¹⁰ Here Anselm asks how it is that God can be wholly present in *all* places at the same *time*. Anselm argues that God does not live at distinct times, nor does He exist as a whole simultaneously in different individual times.¹¹ Additionally, Anselm believes that ultimately, no place or time can be attributed to God. He writes:

For it seems to be rightly said, that place is predicable only of objects whose magnitude place contains by including it, and includes by containing it; and that time is predicable only of objects whose duration time ends by measuring it, and measures by ending it... Hence, to any being, to whose spatial extent or duration no bound can be set, either by space or time, no place or time is properly attributed.¹²

In summary, Anselm believes that God exists as a whole *with* all places and *with* all times. It is because God transcends space-time that He can be everywhere at once. One can say things such as God is here, or God is there, but He is by no means contained. This assessment of God’s presence seems to be right because as already mentioned, if God did not transcend space-time He would have to possess some sort of material presence and would only be able to be at one place at a given moment. And a being possess those attributes, cannot be omnipresent.

Aquinas

Aquinas is one of the latest major contributors to the doctrine of God’s omnipresence, specifically on the development of what has been accepted as the traditional model of God’s omnipresence. Much of the traditional model is rooted in the works of Thomas Aquinas and has come to be accepted as a standard explanation of God’s omnipresence. Aquinas’ doctrine of omnipresence can be found in his *Summa Theologica* within question eight of part one.

Aquinas believes that a thing is wherever it operates, and that God operates in all things, therefore making God present in all things.¹³ However, he does not believe God to be in all things as part of their essence, but as an agent is present upon that which it works. In other words, Aquinas believes that God is in all things as the cause of the being of all things. Aquinas also describes God as in all things because no action of an agent acts at a distance, except through a

¹⁰ Anselm, 75.

¹¹ Anselm, 77.

¹² Anselm, 78-79.

¹³ Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York, NY: Benziger Brothers, 1947). I, Q8, 1.

medium, but God acts immediately in all things, therefore nothing is distant from Him.

Aquinas believes that to be in place is to be understood in a twofold sense. Namely, either by way of other things, or by a way proper to place.¹⁴ He understands God to be everywhere by both means. He argues that “He is in all things giving them being, power and operation; so He is in every place as giving it existence and locative power.”¹⁵ Furthermore, Aquinas maintains that something can be considered to be in place inasmuch as that thing fills place, and God fills every place. However, he did not believe this to be in a physical sense as our bodies fill a place. Aquinas concludes article two by stating that by the very fact that God gives being to all things that fill every place, He Himself fills every place. In other words, Aquinas believes that incorporeal things are in place by contact of power.

In article three of question eight, Aquinas really hits home what is now the traditional model of God’s omnipresence. The heading of the article reads, “Whether God is everywhere by essence, presence and power?” and Aquinas answers in the affirmative. He gives the analogy of a king and his power. He argues that a king is said to be present in the whole kingdom by his power, although he himself is not everywhere present.¹⁶ In a similar way, Aquinas believes that God is present in all of His creation because He has power in all of His creation. This illustration seems to be very poor because one now deals with the conflict of God’s power actuating His presence. Thereby making God’s presence subverted to His power. More on this in section three.

In summary, Aquinas understands God to be omnipresent by His essence, presence, and power. His essence is in all things, not as the essence of the thing themselves, but by His own essence because His substance is present in all things as the cause of their being. And by His power in that God can be said to be present everywhere because His power is present everywhere.

Contemporary Literature

In the following section, more contemporary commentary is surveyed that has been offered as an attempt to explain God’s omnipresence. beginning with a mention of the works of Charles Hartshorne. Hartshorne believes that the relation of God to the world must necessarily be conceived by analogy to our experience.¹⁷ He likens our souls being present in our bodies to God’s presence in

¹⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica*, I, Q8, 2.

¹⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica*, I, Q8, 2.

¹⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica*, I, Q8, 3

¹⁷ Charles Hartshorne, *Man’s Vision of God, and the Logic of Theism* (Willett, Clark and Company, 1941). 174.

the world. Just as we have immediate control and knowledge of our bodies, so God does with the world. So it is in this sense that Hartshorne argues that the world is God's body.¹⁸

While this analogy may assist us in appreciating the magnitude of God's omnipresence, this attempt to explain God's omnipresence runs into many difficulties. First, the control that one has over their bodies does not seem to be the sort of control God has of the world. There are many functions that the human body performs that one would not want them to. Sometimes bodies develop cancerous cells, other times bodies communicate that the restroom must be used at inconvenient times. However, the biblical God does not lack control of a single strand of the universe such as a human lacks control of parts of the body. Rather, God providentially brings about everything which comes to pass.

Additionally, the knowledge God has of the world is far greater than the sort of knowledge humans have of their bodies. Consider the fact that an individual does not know what will happen to their bodies in the future. God's knowledge of the world does not lack any future knowledge but rather knows exactly what will come to pass. It seems then, that the most beneficial part of Hartshorne's analogy is his likening of God's omnipresence to the presence of our souls in our bodies. Namely, in that it may help bring appreciation to the magnitude of God's presence. But his explanation of *how* it can be so does not do justice to the relevant biblical data.

L. J. Van Den Brom offers yet another model of God's omnipresence. He argues in his work that it is improper to ascribe agency to a non-embodied being.¹⁹ Working from the assumption that God must be embodied, Van Den Brom then maintains that it is possible that God is in space and has a spatial dimension of His own which He does not share with the created cosmos.²⁰ God's body then does not occupy three-dimensional space such as His creation does. Rather, God's body on this view would be existing in His own dimension. He states, "It is therefore possible to say that God, by existing in a higher-dimensional system, is also present in the places of all the objects in the three-dimensional space of created cosmos without being contained by that three-dimensional space."²¹ Van Den Brom seems to believe that God exists in a sort of fifth dimension.

Holding to this view of God's omnipresence runs into some of the similar problems that arise if we attempt to ascribe corporeality to God in our three-dimensional sense. For suppose that God does have a body, yet it is in His own

¹⁸ Charles Hartshorne, *Man's Vision of God, and the Logic of Theism.*, 174-185.

¹⁹ L. J. Van Den Brom, "God's Omnipresent Agency," *Religious Studies* 20, no. 4 (December 1984): 637-655. 637.

²⁰ L. J. Van Den Brom, "God's Omnipresent Agency, 653.

²¹ L. J. Van Den Brom, "God's Omnipresent Agency, 654.

dimension, so it does not occupy space in creation's three-dimensional sense. Yet on Van Den Brom's model His body does occupy space at least in some sense. The question that then arises is who created that dimension and space which God occupies now? It seems that in order to posit a model such as Van Den Brom's, one is forced into a world of speculation and sacrifice of traditional Christian theology. The argument will be made below that an omnipresent God is best thought of as incorporeal and indeed cannot be omnipresent if He possess a physical body. It is for these reasons why Van Den Brom's model requires further work.

In their collaborative work, Moreland and Craig state that there are two sorts of models that can be developed for God's omnipresence, "We can say either that God is spatially located in the universe but is wholly present at every point in it or else that God is not spatially located in the universe but is causally active at every point in it."²² They argue that it is incoherent to say that God occupies space. For example, if God occupies space and He is present in all of it, then two locations that are light years away from one another would be considered "here" and that is difficult to comprehend. Furthermore, Moreland and Craig maintain that the doctrine of creation provides better reason for thinking that God transcends space.²³ God existed spacelessly prior to creation, and Moreland and Craig believe there is no reason to think He has acquired a body since. In summary, if God exists spacelessly, then according to Moreland and Craig, omnipresence amounts to God being present at every point in space in the sense that He is cognizant of and causally active at every point in space.²⁴ This explanation is very similar to that of Aquinas' and therefore it is categorized as a modern take of the traditional model.

Summary

In summation, the development of the traditional model of God's omnipresence is seen in the works of Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas. The traditional model states that God is present by His knowledge, power, and essence. And since those are present in and to all things, God Himself is present everywhere. Additionally, some contemporary literature on the doctrine of omnipresence has been surveyed in an attempt to highlight some of the varying models of God's omnipresence. This article has by no means exhausted the various models that have been offered

²² James Porter Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2017). 517.

²³ James Porter Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, 517.

²⁴ James Porter Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, 518.

throughout Church history, rather the goal was to cover the more prominent ones. The attempts, other than the traditional model, at explaining God's omnipresence come into various difficulties and the traditional model does seem to be the best explanation. However, the traditional model is not without its difficulties either. For one, it seems that describing God as present by His knowledge, power, and essence comes into potential conflict with the doctrine of divine simplicity.

Divine Simplicity

Thus far the argument has been made that the traditional model of omnipresence is the most plausible given the many difficulties that arise with the others. As many readers are familiar with the doctrine of divine simplicity, this article does not spend much time laying out a complete argument for divine simplicity as the aim for the paper is to focus rather on the coherence of omnipresence as it is traditionally accepted and divine simplicity. Therefore, the goal for section two is to present a working knowledge of divine simplicity.

Classic statements of divine simplicity can be found in Christian literature at least as far back as Augustine. However, divine simplicity is typically articulated by utilizing the work of Thomas Aquinas, so the doctrine will be presented as it is found in his *Summa Theologica*.

At its root, divine simplicity states that God is not metaphysically composed. In other words, it is the belief that God does not have parts that make up His being, but rather is simple. This leads Aquinas to argue that essence and existence are the same in God.²⁵ He states, "Whatever a thing has besides its essence must be caused either by the constituent principles of that essence...or by some exterior agent. ---as heat is caused in water by fire. Therefore, if the existence of a thing differs from its essence, this existence must be caused either by some exterior agent or by its essential principles."²⁶ He continues to argue that nothing can be the cause of its own existence, if its existence is caused. It follows then that the thing whose existence differs from its essence must have been caused by something else. So, if God's existence differs from His essence, we would have to conclude that His existence was caused by something else. But this is obviously false.

Aquinas uses another analogy to argue his point. He states that whatever is on fire, is not itself fire but is on fire by participation. Likewise, whatever has existence but is not itself existence, is a being by participation.²⁷ If God were a being by participation, He would not be essential. But this is absurd. Therefore, God must be His own existence and essence.

²⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica*, I, Q3, 4.

²⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica*, I, Q3, 4.

²⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica*, I, Q3, 4.

Additionally, Aquinas argues that God must be absolutely simple because any composite thing is posterior to its component parts and dependent upon them²⁸ Furthermore, if there are different components which are united in one, there must be some cause which cause them to unite. But God is not composed of varying components which are united and make up His being.

In whatever thing is composed, there must be both potentiality and actuality. But Aquinas holds to the belief that God is pure act and has no potentiality. God is the first being, posterior to none, dependent on none, not united with varying components by none, and does not have any potentiality as a composite would. Therefore, Aquinas concludes that God must be absolutely simple.

Divine simplicity, as argued by Aquinas, is said to be a strong version of the doctrine. These sorts of versions, as outlined by Ortlund, are called the identity thesis.²⁹ This would be because on such a strong version, God is identical to His existence and essence. However, there are weaker versions of the doctrine that exist which affirm the lack of spatial and temporal parts in God, but do not go as far as identifying God with His existence.³⁰ Since the doctrine is typically thought of in this “strong” version, it is this version which is implied for the purposes of this article.

Implications

There are many difficulties, however, that arise from affirming these two doctrines as they have been laid out. At first thought, it seems that affirming God’s omnipresence by His knowledge, power, and essence is not compatible with divine simplicity. Recall that in the introduction to this paper it was stated that a systematic theology must be coherent throughout. In this last section, the goal is to carefully consider both of these doctrines, discuss the implications, and attempt to harmonize the two.

An initial difficulty that arises when God’s omnipresence is affirmed as His knowledge, power, and essence being everywhere is that one is now combining attributes of God to explain another. The traditional model of God’s omnipresence is understood as being equivalent to the following:

²⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica*, I, Q3, 7.

²⁹ Gavin Ortlund, “Divine Simplicity in Historical Perspective: Resourcing a Contemporary Discussion,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 16, no. 4 (2014): 436–53. 438-39.

³⁰ Gavin Ortlund, “Divine Simplicity in Historical Perspective: Resourcing a Contemporary Discussion,” 439.

God's omnipresent knowledge +/- God's omnipresent power +/- God's
omnipresent essence = God's omnipresence

This would seem to contradict Aquinas' doctrine of divine simplicity. Aquinas argues that, "In every composite there must be potentiality and actuality; but this does not apply to God; for either one of the parts actuates another, or at least all the parts are potential to the whole."³¹ With the traditional model of omnipresence, there is God's knowledge and/or power and/or essence actuating His omnipresence. But this cannot be so if one accepts that God has no potentiality such as Aquinas suggests. Interestingly enough, Leftow seems to think that Aquinas' view of simplicity is crucial to understanding his doctrine of omnipresence.³² Such an argument, Leftow argues, would look something like this. (1) God's knowledge is in all things. (2) God and God's knowledge are identical. (3) Therefore, God is in all things.

However, such an argument is problematic because the very issue this paper is attempting to avoid is a dependence relationship when attempting to explain the attributes of God. Namely, no part of God can be dependent upon another because this is to compose God of metaphysical parts. The traditional model of omnipresence composes metaphysical parts of God (knowledge, power, and essence) to equate another (omnipresence). Therefore, it seems that such a model is in direct conflict with divine simplicity.

Furthermore, this is an issue because God is understood to be immutable (Mal. 3:6). Aquinas himself affirmed the immutability of God. He argued that what is moved acquires something and attains something new by its movement but affirmed that this in no way belongs to God.³³ However, the traditional model seems to follow a sequential pattern. Namely, God is omnipresent because He first possesses *a*, *b*, and *c*. Those who want to deny immutability must accept that God's level of perfection changes. This is because if God is mutable He must acquire something in the move that makes Him more perfect. But that is absurd since God has always been most perfect for eternity past. Therefore, it cannot be accepted that God changes in such a sequential manner as the traditional model of omnipresence suggests.

Another way the traditional model suggests that God changes is that it makes God's omnipresence reliant upon creation. Recall that Aquinas' believes that by God giving being to all things that are in place, He Himself is in every place by contact of power. Aquinas demonstrates this with God's knowledge and essence as well.³⁴ But how does one harmonize this with God's presence prior to

³¹ Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica*, I, Q3, 7.

³² Charles Taliaferro and Chad Meister, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Philosophical Theology* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010). 52.

³³ Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica*, I, Q9, 1.

³⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica*, I, Q8, 2.

creation? If God's omnipresence is understood by His knowledge, power, and essence in all things, could He be considered omnipresent prior to creating space? It would have to be argued that omnipresence is an attribute that is ascribed to God only post creation, and that is a tough pill to swallow. Such a belief contradicts divine simplicity because given divine simplicity in God there is no potentiality or accidents. But what follows from the traditional model of omnipresence is that God's presence is potential prior to creation and actuated post creation, thus making His omnipresence an accidental property. It would seem that if God has no potentiality, one would need a model of omnipresence that is more immediate rather than mediated.

One can begin to develop such a model by considering Jeremiah 23:24. The passage itself suggests that God's knowledge is because of His omnipresence. It reads, "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." The inference is that a man cannot hide from God because He fills heaven and earth, and therefore has knowledge of all things. But the traditional model of omnipresence seems to reverse this sequence. Perhaps this can be harmonized though by utilizing divine simplicity. God's knowledge is identical to God. God's presence is also identical to God. Therefore, if God's knowledge and presence are both identical to God, that would make God's presence identical to His knowledge. On these grounds one could harmonize Jeremiah 23:24 with the traditional model because the sequence wouldn't matter if all of God's properties are identical to one another.

However, this has just created another issue. If it is the case that God's knowledge is identical to His presence, which follows from divine simplicity, how could one explain God's presence by His knowledge if that is identical with itself? In other words, how can something explain itself? Consider the following:

1. God's omnipresence S , can be explained by God Q having knowledge P of all things (traditional model of omnipresence).
2. God's omnipresence and knowledge are both identical to God (follows from divine simplicity).
3. Therefore, S is equivalent to Q and P is equivalent to Q .
4. Therefore, S is equivalent to P .
5. Therefore, God's omnipresence with the traditional model can be summarized by saying that Q is Q , because Q .

It seems that there are three options. First, either God's omnipresence is explained by His knowledge in all things, which makes His omnipresence dependent upon and inferior to His knowledge. The second option is that His knowledge can be explained by His omnipresence, which makes His knowledge dependent upon and

inferior to His omnipresence. The third option, which can only be affirmed by divine simplicity, would be something equivalent to the syllogism above. Namely, that Q (God) is Q (God), because Q (God). In other words, God just simply is omnipresent and there need not be any further explanation. It is difficult to imagine that anyone would be willing to accept either the first or second option, making God's attributes dependent upon another. So, it seems that to avoid God's omnipresence being dependent upon another attribute, the only way out is to affirm option three and make them equivalent. This solution, however, does not help at all with the coherence of the traditional model of omnipresence. For the issue of how something can explain itself still remains.

So, on one hand divine simplicity is beneficial because it helps avoid the dependence issue of God's attributes, but on the other hand, by affirming divine simplicity the traditional model of God's omnipresence seems rather absurd. This is because it seems that the doctrine of omnipresence is attempting to be its own explanation. In the end one is left with a few options for proceeding.

The first option would be to accept these conclusions and affirm God's omnipresence as a brute fact, or a necessary fact that need not any further explanation. Perhaps a closer consideration of the word *omnipresence* could be of benefit. The prefix *omni* comes from the Latin stem *omnis*, meaning, "all" or "of all things." So, when one says that God is omnipresent, what is really meant is that God is all-present. The word omnipresent is not found in Scripture but is rather a conclusion that is reached from many biblical texts (Jer. 23:24; Ps 139:7-10; 1 Kgs 8:27; Prv 15:3). This need not be of concern though since the word Trinity is not found within Scripture either. So, to say that God is omnipresent is to say that God is all-present in His fullness. This means that His glory, justice, grace, love, mercy, faithfulness, knowledge, essence, power, and all else that is God are all-present. So, when it is said that God is present somewhere, why restrict that presence to His knowledge, power, or essence, as the traditional model does. It does not make sense that a word is used which implies God is *all* present, and then attempt to explain that by only His knowledge or power. So, what would be a simpler explanation of God's omnipresence than just saying that He just *is*? All explanation is within Himself and nothing short or outside of His all-present fullness can explain His omnipresence.

Accepting God's omnipresence as a brute fact is not the only option though. One could also reject divine simplicity and then still attempt to make sense of the traditional model. Or one could reject the traditional model and harmonize another one with divine simplicity in its place. Lastly, one could reject both the traditional model and divine simplicity and begin from square one. Given the firm stance on divine simplicity this paper holds to, and the absurd difficulties that arise from the traditional model of God's omnipresence, it seems best to conclude that God's omnipresence is best understood as a brute fact: God is.

Conclusion

In summation, this paper began by affirming God's omnipresence and placing a special focus on the traditional model. From there arguments in favor of divine simplicity were surveyed and the implications that arise from accepting both doctrines were mentioned. Lastly, this paper made an attempt to harmonize the two. It was suggested that if one affirms both doctrines and consistently applies them in their systematic theology, the conclusion that is reached is that the traditional model is rendered quite incoherent. The paper then concluded that it is best to think of God's omnipresence as a brute fact. This need not be something to worry about. For God's omnipresence as a brute fact can cause one to revere Him more as it is humbling when one recognizes that the fullness of God is truly incomprehensible.

A lot of potential models, objections, and options were left out of the discussion. This was intentional due to the natural limits of this paper. The aim was to hopefully cover the most prominently held positions. There are yet many difficulties that remain to be answered. This paper is thereby an invitation to all willing theologians and philosophers to further the conversation, *solī Deo gloria*.

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