The divine attributes of immensity and omnipresence have been integral to classical Christian confession regarding the nature of the triune God. Divine immensity and omnipresence are affirmed in doctrinal standards such as the Athanasian Creed (circa 500), the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), the Council of Basel (1431-49), the Second Helvetic Confession (1566), the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647), the Second London Baptist Confession (1689), and the First Vatican Council (1869-70). In the first section of this chapter, I offer a brief historical overview of divine immensity and divine omnipresence in the Christian tradition. I then offer a brief taxonomy of contemporary models of divine omnipresence in the philosophical and theological landscape. In the second, more constructive section I aim to gesture toward the retrieval of several classical insights regarding immensity and omnipresence that remain unexplored in contemporary analytic work.

1. Divine Immensity and Omnipresence: Historical Landscape

In the Christian theological tradition, divine immensity and omnipresence have largely been understood to be distinct yet intimately related divine attributes. Divine immensity has been closely associated with divine infinity, where divine infinity has traditionally been understood in negative terms as God’s being without limitation of any kind, whether in essence, power, knowledge, wisdom, goodness, etc. (Eph. 3:20; Is. 40:12, 15, 17). In positive terms, God is understood to be qualitatively infinite in that the divine nature is intrinsically full and complete in the eternal, divine processions of paternity, filiation, and spiration. It is precisely because of the absolute fullness and plenitude of the triune God ad intra (Ps. 145:3) that there are no finite bounds to the range of God’s gratuitous relations to creatures ad extra (Job 11:7-8; Is. 40:12, 15; Dan. 4:34; Eph. 1:19; 2:7).

To say that God is immense, then, is to say that the divine nature is without limitation, particularly as it pertains to the limitations of space; the divine nature is uncircumscribable, immeasurable, and incapable of being contained or bound by space. Being qualitatively and positively infinite, God categorically transcends—and is entirely
unconditioned by—spatial limitations and boundaries due to the intrinsic fullness of the
divine life (correlatively, divine eternity has been classically understood as the infinity of
the divine nature with respect to time or duration). 1 Hillary of Poitiers (300-368 AD)
summarizes this close connection between divine infinity and immensity as follows: God is
“infinite, for nothing contains Him and He contains all things; He is eternally
unconditioned by space, for He is illimitable” (Poitiers 1994: 2.6). 2

As a corollary of divine infinity, and in contrast to divine omnipresence, immensity
has been taken to be an absolute, i.e., non-relational, divine attribute. God ad intra, apart
from his relation to creation, is immense in his essence. 3 Divine immensity entails that not
only is the triune God not conditioned or limited by space, but that this fact positively
indicates “the boundless liberty of God to be and act as he determines in relation to space.
Immensity concerns the plenitude, richness, sufficiency and effectiveness of God and so of
God’s disposition of himself in relation to creaturely space” (Webster 2016a: 93). The
attribute of divine omnipresence, on the other hand, has historically been understood to
be a relative divine attribute predicated on God’s works ad extra in relation to created space
and its occupants; God is omnipresent purely in relation to created, spatial reality (Bavinck

Common Scriptural passages cited in favor of divine immensity and omnipresence
include Psalm 139:7-10, Jeremiah 23:24, 1 Kings 8:23, 27, Acts, 17, and Isaiah 66:1. These
Scriptural texts emphasize both divine ubiquity, that the divine essence itself is everywhere
present throughout space, as well as divine immensity, that the divine essence cannot be
contained or limited by space.

The immensity of God is underscored in Solomon’s theologically rich prayer at the
temple dedication, “O Lord, God of Israel, there is no God like you, in heaven above or on

---

1 Arminius (1886: IV, XV-XVI) summarizes the classic view nicely: “From the simplicity and
infinity of the divine essence, arise infinity with regard to time, which is called ‘Eternity,’ and with
regard to place, which is called ‘Immensity.’”

2 For a sampling of patristic authors on immensity see Clement of Alexandria (1885: 2.2);
Athanasius (1982: 17); Cyril of Alexandria (1874: 1.9); John of Damascus (1958: 1.13); Augustine
(1994: 4.4.5) and (1961: 7.20.26). For a sampling of medieval authors see Anselm, Mon. (2007:
chs. 14, 22); Aquinas (2012: Ia, qs. 7-8).

rich correspondence with Samuel Clarke on immensity and space, underscores this traditional idea
as follows: “It is true that the immensity and eternity of God would subsist though there were no
creatures, but those attributes would have no dependence either on times or places. If there were
no creatures, there would be neither time nor place, and consequently no actual space. The
immensity of God is independent of space..."
earth beneath...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” (1 Kg. 8:23, 27).

The contrast between the immense, Holy One of Israel and the circumscribed gods of the nations is clear and deliberate; it is impossible for any created place to contain the true and living God of Israel. God, as immense and the ultimate source of all non-divine reality, is Lord of all spatial reality and thus cannot be contained by space (Is. 66:1). Along similar lines, and perhaps echoing Solomon’s prayer of dedication, the Apostle Paul wedds the sheer plenitude of God as the limitless creator and sustainer of all with God’s inability to be contained by place, “The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything” (Acts 17:24-25).

Perhaps the most commonly cited Scriptural text in the Christian dogmatic tradition in support of God’s ubiquitous presence is Psalm 139: 7-10:

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.

The Psalmist proceeds to recount that neither deep darkness (139: 11-12) nor the hidden place of a mother’s womb can escape the divine presence (139: 13-16). Through the prophet Jeremiah, God addresses the deceptive prophets of Israel who attempt to remove themselves from the council of the Lord by saying, “Am I a God at hand, declares the Lord, and not a God far away? Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declared the Lord. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the Lord” (Jer. 23:23-24).

Historically, dogmatic reflection on divine omnipresence in the Christian tradition has taken the form of the following three-fold schema: God is everywhere by (i) essence, (ii) power, and (iii) presence.4 This three-fold schema has been central to patristic, medieval, post-

---

4 The schema is often thought to originate with Peter Lombard (2007: bk. 1, d. 17, ch. 1), but Lombard himself points out that it extends back to Gregory the Great's Commentary on the Song of Songs. See also Aquinas (2012: Ia, q.8, a.3) and Turretin (1992) in particular.
reformation, and early modern Christian theological inquiry concerning divine omnipresence. In his *Sentences*, what was once the standard university text in Western medieval theology, Peter Lombard synthesized previous theological work on divine omnipresence as follows: “And so it is to be known that God, existing ever unchangeably in himself, by presence, power, and essence is in every nature or essence without limitation of himself, and in every place without being bounded, and in every time without change” (Lombard 2007: bk1, d.37, ch.1). While there have been a variety of ways of explicating this three-fold schema in the history of Christian dogmatics, one standard way to gloss tenets (ii) and (iii) has been in terms of God’s being everywhere by way of divine activity and operation, i.e., (i), and everywhere by way of divine knowledge, i.e., (iii), respectively. That is, God is everywhere by his power and operation in so far as God creates, sustains, and governs all spatial creatures (Acts 17:28). Moreover, God is also everywhere by presence, i.e. (iii), precisely because God is directly cognitively aware of each and every spatial creature and creaturely event (Heb. 4:13). Here it is important to underscore that tenet (i), God’s ubiquitous presence by essence, has traditionally been distinguished from tenets (ii) and (iii), i.e., God’s ubiquitous presence by power and knowledge. The divine essence or substance itself, not merely the divine power or the divine knowledge, is present to each and every place in space.

Patristic, medieval, and post-Reformation theologians were largely in agreement about the precise mode of presence at work in divine omnipresence, how the divine essence is present at every point in space, i.e., tenet (i). Classical theologians commonly distinguished three ways in which a being could be in or present at a place, whether a material being (e.g., body) or an immaterial being (e.g., God, angels, human souls). A clear statement of these various modes of presence—circumscriptive, definitive, and repletive—is offered (and endorsed) by Francis Turretin, in explicit reliance on the received medieval theological inheritance:

5 See Fuerst (1951), and Reynolds (1992).
6 See Fuerst (1951) for a thorough treatment of how this three-fold schema has been understood in the Christian tradition.
7 The distinction between circumscriptive, definitive, and repletive presence was a staple of patristic, medieval, and post-reformation reflection on the relationship between spiritual and material creation. See Augustine (2004: 187, 4.11); John of Damascus (1958: 1, c.13); Lombard (2007: bk. 1, d. 37 n. 6); Anselm, *Mon.* (2007: ch. 21); William of Ockham (1991) for a concise statement of each of these modes of spatial presence in the Latin West and Turretin (1992) for a representative work in the Post-Reformation period.
Three modes of being in a place are commonly held: (1) *circumscriptively*—attributed
to bodies because they are in a place and space so as to be commensurate with parts
of space; (2) *definitively*—applicable to created spirits and incorporeal substances
(which are defined by certain places, and are so here as not to be anywhere else); (3)
*repletively*—which is ascribed to God because his immense essence is present with all
and, as it were, completely fills all places. (Turretin 1992, my emphasis)

The core idea behind *circumscriptive presence*, a mode of presence that belongs exclusively to
material beings, is that material beings are both composed of proper parts (and thus not
mereologically simple) and are extended throughout a particular place by way of their
having distinct proper parts “spread out” across the place in question. My body, for
example, is circumscriptively present at a place *P* in virtue of its having distinct proper parts
(head, hands, heart, etc.) that are themselves present at the distinct sub-places, *ps*, of *P*
While my entire body is wholly present at *P*, my body is *partly* located where my right arm
is, and *partly* located where my head is, etc. More carefully, following William of Ockham
(1991), “What is *circumscriptively* in a place is a thing which is such that (i) a part of it is in a
part of the place and (ii) the whole of it is in the whole of the place.” In this way, that
which is circumscriptively present at a place is *circumscribed by* and *contained in* the place in
question; while my body can be *partly* present at distinct places at the same time, it is
incapable of being *wholly* present (without remainder) at distinct places at one and the same
time (it cannot simultaneously be *wholly* multi-located).

*Definitive presence* is the mode of presence that uniquely characterizes spiritual
creatures, both angels and human souls, in so far as they are both non-composite (and thus
mereologically simple) and limited in nature; what is devoid of proper parts cannot be
circumscriptively present at a place and thus cannot be *partly* present at distinct places at
the same time. Rather, angels and humans souls can be said to be at a place in virtue of
being *wholly* present at a place *P* as well as *wholly* present at every distinct sub-place, *ps*, of *P*
Where material beings are capable of being wholly present at only a single place at a time,
immaterial beings are able to be *wholly* present at distinct places at the same time. Again, as
Ockham (1991) puts it, “a thing is *definitively* in a place when (i) the whole of it is in the
whole place and not outside the place and (ii) the whole of it is in each part of the place...”
However, like created material beings, created spiritual beings like angels and human souls

---

8 Robert Pasnau (2011a: 18) uses the terms “meremeric existence” and “holenmeric existence” in
the place of the more traditional terminology of circumscriptive and definitive presence,
respectively.
are *bound* and *contained* by the places where they are present in so far as their natures are finite and limited. Spiritual creatures, as Turretin puts it above, “are defined by certain places, and are so here as not to be anywhere else.” While my immaterial soul, for example, can be wholly present in the whole of my body and wholly present in each part of my body, it cannot be wholly present at some distinct place where my body is not present (e.g., a white sandy beach in Bermuda).

Lastly, God alone is *repletively present* in so far as the divine essence, being spiritual, infinite, and immense, is capable of being *wholly present at each and every place at the same time.* As a mereological simple, the ubiquity of the divine essence, i.e. tenet (i) of the three-fold schema, is not to be glossed in terms of circumscriptive presence. Yet as infinite, immense, and neither contained nor bound by any place whatsoever, the ubiquitous presence of the divine essence is not to be glossed in terms of definitive presence either; the divine essence is wholly present to each existing place at the same time, yet bound by none. Augustine (2004) articulates and contrasts this unique mode of ubiquitous divine presence—repletive presence—with circumscriptive and definitive presence as follows:

> Yet he is not spread out in space like a mass such that in half of the body of the world there is half of him and half of him in the other half, being in that way whole in the whole. Rather, he 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. (Letter 187, 4.11.)

Note that the differences between the above modes of presence concern a difference in *kind* as well as *degree*. In contrast to definitive and repletive presence, circumscriptive presence is a distinct kind of presence at a place in so far as it is defined in terms of mereological extension, having proper parts distributed across distinct places. Definitive and repletive presence, however, arguably differ only in degree. Thomas Aquinas, for instance, states that both the human soul and God are similarly present in the places where...

---

9 Thomas Aquinas (2012: Ia, q. 8, a. 4) would qualify this by saying that God alone is repletively present both *primarily* (the divine nature itself is wholly present everywhere, and not some proper part of the divine nature) and *intrinsically* (i.e., not conditional on circumstances or extrinsic conditions).

11 This is not to say that the *metaphysical grounds* in virtue of which God is repletively present, viz. God’s immensity (a corollary of divine infinity), does not differ qualitatively from the grounds in virtue of which created spirits are definitively present. My point here is that repletive presence *per se* differs from definitive presence only in degree, not kind.
they are located, “just as the soul is whole in each part of the body, so God is whole in all things and in each thing” (2012: Ia. q.8, a.2, ad. 3).\textsuperscript{12}

2. Divine Omnipresence: Contemporary Landscape

With the above historical framework in place, I now want to present a brief taxonomy of contemporary models of divine omnipresence as found in recent analytic philosophical and theological literature. At the very least, extant theological and philosophical models of divine omnipresence agree on the following: to say that God is omnipresent is to say that God is present or located at each and every place. The individual models differ in how they characterize the precise nature of ubiquitous divine presence.

In a previous work (2017), I characterized two distinct notions of location or presence—derivative and fundamental—and defined two general models of divine omnipresence accordingly.\textsuperscript{13} Taking “is present at” as primitive, we can explicate these two varieties of presence as follows (where ‘$p$’ stands for some place):

\textit{Fundamental Presence:} $x$ is present at $p$ fundamentally = $\text{df} x$ is present at $p$ in its own right, i.e., not in virtue of standing in a relation(s), R(s), to some distinct entity, $y$, that is present at $p$ in its own right.

\textit{Derivative Presence:} $x$ is present at $p$ derivatively = $\text{df} x$ is present at $p$ in virtue of standing in some relation(s), R(s), to some distinct entity, $y$, where $y$ is present at $p$ fundamentally.

Material objects, for example, are plausibly construed as being present at their respective places in the fundamental sense. Trees, tables, and tigers are present at a place in their own right, i.e., not simply in virtue of being related to something that is itself present at a place in its own right. However, something may be present to a place by way of standing in some causal or epistemic relation to something that is itself present at a place in its own right, e.g., my being cognitively aware of or in causal contact with things and events at a place that are present in their own right.

\textsuperscript{12}See also William T. Shedd (2003: 278), “The omnipresence of God is not by extension, multiplication, or division of essence. He is all in every place, similarly as the soul is all in every part of the body. The whole essence of God is here, is there, and everywhere.”

\textsuperscript{13}My (2017) paper on divine omnipresence was completed in 2014 but was widely circulated as “forthcoming” for several years until its 2017 publication in the eighth volume of Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion.
It is important to note that a thing’s being derivatively present at a particular place is nothing more than its standing in some relation to a distinct thing that is itself present at a place in the fundamental sense. By contrast, a thing’s being present at a place in the fundamental sense amounts to the claim that its being present somewhere in its own right (intrinsically) cannot be reduced to its standing in a relation $R$ to a distinct thing $y$ that is present at a place in its own right.

With the above definitions of fundamental and derivative presence in hand, we can define two general models of divine omnipresence as follows. Let “$P_d$” stand for derivative presence, “$P_f$” for fundamental presence, and read “$P(God, p)$” as “God is present at $p$” (Inman 2017):

**(DO) Derivative Omnipresence:** $(\forall p)(p \text{ is a place } \rightarrow P_d(God, p))$

For every place, $p$, God is derivatively present at $p$.

**(FO) Fundamental Omnipresence:** $(\forall p)(p \text{ is a place } \rightarrow P_f(God, p))$

For every place $p$, God is fundamentally present at $p$.

On a DO model, God is omnipresent by being derivatively present at each and every place. An FO model, by contrast, maintains that God is omnipresent by being fundamentally present at each and every place; the divine nature is everywhere present in its own right. A rough and informal test for distinguishing a DO from an FO model would be if the model entails that God, considered apart from his bearing relations to things that are themselves present at $p$ fundamentally, could nevertheless be present at $p$. If so, then you have an FO model; if not, then a DO model.

It is an oft-repeated claim in the contemporary literature that DO is arguably the classical model of divine omnipresence in the Christian tradition (Jedwab 2016). Individual DO models differ with respect to how they construe the particular relation or relations ($R$ or $R_s$) in which God stands to entities that are present at a place in the fundamental sense. A widespread interpretation of Anselm of Canterbury (albeit incomplete, by my lights), characterizes $R$ exclusively in epistemic or cognitive terms, namely, God’s immediate knowledge or cognitive awareness of the goings on at every place.\(^{14}\) Likewise, many interpret Thomas Aquinas as explicating divine omnipresence

---

principally in terms of God’s directly causally sustaining in existence each and every creature at a place (Cross 2003; Swinburne 1993; Wierenga 2010; Wainwright 2010). It is difficult to see how, on a DO model, omnipresence is a distinct divine attribute over and above divine omniscience, omnipotence, or God’s providential and causal activity in creation. Consequently, the proponent of a DO model might think that divine omnipresence is ultimately reducible to or simply “nothing over and above” a range of distinct divine attributes or divine actions in relation to creatures.


Be that as it may, there are a handful of contemporary philosophers and theologians who favor a variant of an FO model of omnipresence, including Hud Hudson (2009, 2014), Alexander Pruss (2013), Richard Cross (2016), Ross Inman (2017), Robert Oakes (2006), James Gordon (2018), and Luco J. Van Den Brom (1993). Some have even argued that FO models have greater historical prominence than is standardly acknowledged. What unifies various FO models is that each affirm that God is present at every place in his own right, and not simply in virtue of his standing in immediate causal and/or epistemic relations to objects that are present at a place in their own right. On an FO model, while God does indeed stand in causal and epistemic relations to spatial creatures that are present in the fundamental sense, these relations are not exhaustible of nor most

---

15 Although JP Moreland has expressed in personal conversation that he is inclined to adopt an FO model of omnipresence where God is wholly present at each region of space, akin to the way in which the immaterial human soul is wholly present at each part of the human body.

16 The recent work of Eleonore Stump (2010, 2013, 2018) on divine omnipresence is a bit harder to classify. On the one hand, Stump appeals to the notion of shared or joint attention as a more fine-grained epistemic condition on divine presence, in addition to God’s immediate causal activity and cognitive awareness. Yet Stump regularly speaks as if there are independent conditions that must obtain in order for God to stand in these epistemic relations to creatures. For example, Stump (2010: 117) says “In order for God to be omnipresent, that is, in order for God to be always and everywhere present, it also needs to be the case that God is always and everywhere in a position to share attention with any creature able and willing to share attention with God.” The notion of being in a position to share attention with God suggests that omnipresence is not to be analyzed, at bottom, in terms of a DO model.

17 See Pasnau (2011b), Inman (2017), and Cross (2016), in particular.
fundamental to the nature of divine omnipresence. Consequently, for those who defend a
variant of FO, omnipresence is a distinct divine attribute and thus irreducible to
omnipotence, omniscience, or God’s providential and causal activity in creation. It is also
important to note that the primary issue distinguishing FO and DO models is not whether
God’s ubiquitous presence is best understood in spatial or non-spatial terms. Indeed, one
could adopt a DO model and maintain that the immediate causal relations in virtue of
which God is everywhere present constitutes a genuine mode of spatial presence.\textsuperscript{18}
Likewise, one could in principle adopt an FO model and hold that God is strictly aspatial,
yet affirm that the way in which God is everywhere present is not exclusively constituted by
causal or epistemic considerations.\textsuperscript{19}

3. \textit{Towards a Retrieval of Divine Immensity and Omnipresence}

In this next, more constructive section I want to gesture towards the retrieval of
several classical tenets of divine immensity and omnipresence in the Christian tradition.
Though strictly distinct attributes, divine immensity and omnipresence have been
traditionally thought to be closely connected in the following sense: it is precisely \textit{because}
the divine essence is infinite and immense \textit{ad intra}, that the divine essence is repletively
present to each and every place, as per tenet (i) of the above three-fold schema. On this
classical picture, then, divine immensity is \textit{explanatorily prior} to divine omnipresence. Divine
immensity is the principal \textit{metaphysical ground} of God’s repletive presence in creation.
Along these lines, Francis Turretin (1992: 197) states that repletive presence “is ascribed to
God because his immense essence is present with all and, as it were, completely fills all
places.” Similarly, in his \textit{Public Disputations}, Jacob Arminius (1986: IV, XV-XVI)
summarizes this classical insight as follows, “Immensity is a pre-eminent mode of the
Essence of God, by which it is void of place according to space and limits...After creatures,
and places in which creatures are contained, have been granted to have an existence, from
this Immensity follows the Omnipresence or Ubiquity of the Essence of God...”

\textsuperscript{18} Harm Goris (2009: 42), who interprets Aquinas’s along the lines of what I am calling a DO
model, states “The only way spiritual beings can be in a place is by way of causality: by bringing
about an effect in a body, they become located in space.” Jeffrey Brower (personal correspondence)
has also suggested a reading of Aquinas on omnipresence along the lines of DO yet one where
God’s ubiquitous presence is strictly spatial.

\textsuperscript{19} One option here, taken by Francis Turretin (1992: 198) and other Reformed Scholastics, is by
way of \textit{via negativa}, that the precise manner in which the divine essence is everywhere present is
ultimately not “in the multiplication of the divine essence...in the extension and diffusion of any
corporeal mass...or in physical contact...”
Moreover, it is interesting to note that Aquinas treats omnipresence immediately after he discusses divine perfection and infinity in his *Summa Theologiae*. In his preliminary remarks to question 7 on “Divine Infinity,” which immediately precedes the question “God’s existence in things,” Aquinas notes the explanatory ordering between divine infinity and omnipresence: “After considering divine perfection, the next topic that ought to be considered is God’s infinity and God’s existence in things, for it is said that God is everywhere and in all things in so far as God is unbounded and infinite” (2012: Ia.q7). Perhaps the clearest articulation of the classical relationship between immensity and omnipresence is Turretin (1992: 201), echoing the medieval scholastics:

Although the immensity and the omnipresence of God are always connected together, yet they admit of distinction. The former indicates an absolute property belonging to him from eternity; the latter, based upon it, denotes a habitue to place existing in time. They are related to each other as a first and second act or a principle (*principia*) and a principiate (*principiati*). For out of immensity arises omnipresence, which supposes immensity as its foundation. God is therefore omnipresent because he is immense.

Consequently, failing to note the explanatory ordering of God’s ubiquitous presence to the full and immense life of the triune God *in se* yields a theologically truncated model of divine omnipresence.  

Second, despite its widespread acceptance among contemporary philosophers and theologians, there is significant historical precedent for rejecting the view that divine omnipresence is “nothing over and above” God’s ubiquitous (direct) causal activity and/or knowledge. That is, there is strong representation in the Christian tradition for the view that divine omnipresence is not exhausted by tenets (ii) and (iii) of the classical three-fold schema, i.e., divine power and presence (i.e., knowledge). So much so that Francisco Suarez can summarize the preceding consensual Christian tradition regarding divine omnipresence (including immensity as the principal metaphysical ground of omnipresence) in the following manner, “God is intimately present to this corporeal universe, not just by

---

20 See John Webster (2016a:87-107) and (2016b: 115-126) for a fuller treatment of this line of thinking concerning immensity and omnipresence in particular, as well as “well-ordered thought about the divine perfections” (2016a: 97) in general.

presence (that is, cognitively) and by power or action, but also by his essence or substance, just as all the theologians teach, as certain to the faith, on account of divine immensity”.

This fuller account of divine omnipresence within the Christian tradition stands in sharp contrast to the near universal bent in the contemporary literature to characterize omnipresence as “nothing over and above” God’s immediate causal activity or knowledge. Consequently, in explicating divine omnipresence in this reductive manner, the majority of contemporary models have contracted divine omnipresence to (ii) and/or (iii) of the classical, three-fold schema. But this is to neglect an integral part of a much fuller, historically entrenched account of divine omnipresence, viz., that the divine essence itself is repletively present at each place in its own right. As Turretin (1992: 198) notes, “The orthodox believe and confess the immensity and omnipresence of God, not only as to virtue and operation, but principally as to essence.”

There have, moreover, been a host of theologically motivated epistemic grounds cited in favor of divine omnipresence in the Christian tradition—theological reasons for thinking that God is omnipresent—that remain largely overlooked or unexplored in the contemporary literature. Historically, there have been three theological reasons cited in favor the ubiquity of the divine essence (in addition to Scripture as a source of warrant): divine simplicity, immediate divine causal action at every place, and divine immensity. First, regarding divine simplicity, since the divine essence is devoid of metaphysical complexity, and if the divine power is universally operative at each place (a tenet of classical theism), then the divine essence itself is therefore wholly present at each place. Second, since God is immediately causally active at each place, sustaining created beings in existence, and since immediate causal action at a distance is thought to be impossible, the divine essence is therefore said to be present at each place where God is immediately causally active. Indeed, it is often claimed in the tradition that God’s immediate causal action at a place presupposes (and thus cannot be solely constitutive of) God’s presence at that place.

Third, and what is perhaps the most commonly cited theological reason for divine omnipresence, is that divine immensity precludes the divine essence from being limited or

---

22 I owe this citation to Robert Pasnau (2011b: 303).
23 For a clear example of this line of thinking in the tradition see Anselm (2007: 225-226).
24 See Anselm (2007: 225-226). Aquinas argues that the principle of no immediate action at a distance applies to all agents, spiritual or corporeal, no matter how powerful (2012: 1a, q.8, a.1, ad.3). See also Aquinas (1975: bk.II, 68.3.).
bound to a particular locale in space. The immensity of the divine essence in se yields the ubiquity of the divine essence in relation to creatures.

It is vitally important to distinguish the above historically prominent epistemic grounds for divine omnipresence—the theological reasons in support of God’s ubiquitous presence—from that which is metaphysically constitutive of divine omnipresence, i.e., the nature of divine omnipresence itself. Many contemporary analytic philosophers and theologians who adopt a DO model and endorse the view that causal or epistemic considerations alone are constitutive of divine omnipresence do so on the grounds that these considerations have played an integral role in historical dogmatic reflection on omnipresence. While it is certainly the case that causal and epistemic relations have played an integral role in providing epistemic grounds for divine omnipresence, this does not warrant the more substantive claim that these relations suffice metaphysically to constitute the nature of divine omnipresence. This very point was underscored by Turretin (1992: 201) within the polemical context of Socinianism (whose adherents denied divine immensity as well as God’s ubiquitous presence by essence, tenet (i) in favor tenets (ii) and (iii)):

> It is one thing to declare and demonstrate a posteriori the presence of God through the external operation; another thing to define a priori the presence of God by that operation or to maintain that God is not present except by power and operation. The former we acknowledge can rightly be done, but the latter we deny because the operation of God supposes his presence, and he must first be conceived to be and to exist before he can be conceived of as acting. Certain more modern thinkers (who limit the omnipresence of God by his operation), may be allowed their opinion if they understand it in the former sense for its manifestation a posteriori; but if they refer it to its constitution a priori, it is deservedly rejected as contrary to Scripture and approaching too near the error of the Socinians.”

Consequently, for Turretin, while it is reasonable to infer divine omnipresence from God’s immediate and universal causal operation in creation, it is problematic to define omnipresence solely in causal terms as this would be to omit an essential aspect of the doctrine (presumably a more fundamental aspect that explains immediate and universal causal operation). While it remains to be seen whether the fuller account of divine

---

26 See also Truman (2007: 39-42) for an explication of John Owen’s defense God’s ubiquitous presence by essence within the same polemical context against Socinianism.
omnipresence in terms of the classical three-fold schema is defensible, contemporary analytic theologians do well to consider its historical and theological merits.

Bibliography


