

and used by Jehovah for His honour, “For *of* him, and *through* him, and *to* him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen”!

In God’s eternal wisdom, all things are adapted to the highest end: His glory! Jesus Christ serves Jehovah’s honour. The elect church serves the Lord Jesus, the great servant of the Trinity, and so God’s glory. Reprobation serves the elect church which serves Christ and so God’s praise, as do “all things” in creation and providence, in heaven and in earth. All of this is according to God’s wisdom in His eternal decree or counsel.

God’s first work outside Himself is that of creation—the product of astounding wisdom! “The LORD by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens” (Prov. 3:19).

No wonder the divine wisdom confesses, “When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men” (8:27-31).

Genesis 1 describes the all-wise God’s preparation of the world for man. He created the sky on day two for man needs air to breathe. The dry land and vegetation of day three provided terra firma and food for humanity. The sun, moon and stars of day four give us light. The fish, birds and animals made on days five and six serve mankind in many ways. All these things are perfectly adapted as means to serve man as the subordinate end, so that man may serve God his Creator (*Belgic Confession* 12).

Yet foolish man claims that the universe is not the product of the wisdom of God. Instead, it is a random occurrence involving trillions of accidents merely according to lucky chance and going all the way back to a gigantic explosion. “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good” (Ps. 14:1; 53:1).

Let us also consider Jehovah’s great work of providence: His upholding, governing and directing of all things, according to His eternal purpose. Think of all the stars in the heavens, the myriad fish in the depths of the sea and the many nations of the earth. What infinite and omnipotent divine wisdom is required to sustain and rule over 7 billion people every second of every day! We sing with the psalmist, “O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches” (104:24).

Of all the figures in the Old Testament, it is perhaps Joseph’s life that most displays God’s wisdom. Delivering the family of Israel from the famine in Canaan was the end for which Jehovah employed him: “God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive” (Gen. 50:20; cf. 45:5, 7-8). The strange means to achieve that wise end included the sin of Joseph’s ten brothers in selling him into slavery; his imprisonment for a crime that he did not commit; his interpretation of the dreams of the butler, the baker and Pharaoh; etc.

*Rev. Stewart*

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# Covenant Reformed News

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## God’s Wisdom (2)

In the previous instalment, we saw from Romans 11:33-36 that God’s wisdom is both infinite and self-sufficient, just as He is both infinite and self-sufficient. Now we shall turn to Proverbs 8 to make four additional points regarding this divine perfection.

First, God’s wisdom is *eternal*. Wisdom declares, “The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world” (22-26). This is a poetic description of God’s only begotten Son, the eternal wisdom of God (*Belgic Confession* 8). God never was without His wisdom!

Second, God’s wisdom is *omnipotent*. Thus He proclaims, “Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have *strength*” (Prov. 8:14). God’s wisdom never fails, nor is it ever impotent or weak. The divine wisdom never desires an end without obtaining that end by using the most appropriate means.

Third, God’s wisdom is *true*. He professes, “For my mouth shall speak *truth*; and wickedness is an abomination to my lips” (7). Jehovah never lies as a means to attain His end. The all-wise God never adapts Himself to uttering falsehood.

Fourth, God’s wisdom is *righteous*. The divine wisdom states, “All the words of my mouth are in *righteousness*; there is nothing froward or perverse in them” (8), for “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate” (13). God’s wisdom is always virtuous and perfectly good; it never resorts to wickedness.

In keeping with this, we read in Proverbs 6, “These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren” (16-19). Here we learn that the Most High hates and abominates iniquity, the bodily parts employed in sin and wicked people.

The God who is wise in His Persons and perfections is also wise in His eternal decree. The purpose or goal of the whole created universe is that infinite majesty is ascribed to God through all eternity: “For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever” (Rom. 11:36). Absolutely “all things,” “yea, even the wicked,” are means to that supreme end (Prov. 16:4). Everything is decreed, created, preserved

*(continued on p. 4)*

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## Did God Pray to God? (1)

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A reader asks, “In the garden of Gethsemane, did Christ pray to the Triune God and thus to Himself, as the Second Person? Or is it wrong for us to say that He who is God prayed to God?”

The question the reader asks is a difficult one. It deals with the great mystery of the Trinity, that God is three in Person and one in essence or Being. It also deals with the doctrine of Christ, the eternal Son of God in our human nature, a nature that was like us in all things except our sin. The creeds of the church have defined this doctrine thus: The Second Person of the holy Trinity, namely the Son, united in His Person the fullness of the divine nature and a complete, though sinless, human nature. Our Lord Jesus Christ was as much a human as any of us. In fact, Paul tells us in Romans 8:3 that Christ came “in the likeness of sinful flesh:” not in *sinful* flesh but in the *likeness* of sinful flesh. He came with all the weaknesses of our flesh, the powers of which were eroded by sin and subject to death.

It feels here as if one ought to take off his shoes for he is standing on holy ground. About all we can do is bow in awe and wonder at the marvel of Immanuel: God with us. One hears the voice of the *Canons of Dordt* warning us that we ought not inquire too far into the deep things of God. Our minds are so small, our understanding so limited and our thought so under the curse of death that we, it seems, should put our hands on our mouth lest we say something foolish and thus put a blemish on our infinitely holy God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Yet the Bible tells us that our Lord prayed. He prayed often and He sometimes prayed all night. He prayed to God and addressed God as His Father. How are we to explain this?

The explanation that Christ prayed only to the First Person of the Trinity will not do, for that position makes a division between God the Father (and the Holy Spirit) and God the Son. Israel must learn to say, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD” (Deut. 6:4). The Scriptures teach us everywhere that the Triune God is one God. Not the First Person of the Trinity to the exclusion of the Second and Third; not the Second Person of the Trinity to the exclusion of the First and Third. God is eternally three Persons in one divine nature—always and in all He does.

He, as the Triune God, is Father. He is the Father of all His elect family. The Triune God begets them through regeneration. He loves them eternally. Not one of the three Persons love the church; not two of the three Persons loves the church. All three Persons in the union of one nature or essence unchangeably and eternally love the church.

On the other hand, the Triune God did not become man. The First Person, the Father, did not become flesh. There was an old heresy condemned by the church as Patripassianism, the notion that the Father suffered on the cross. The ancient church father, Tertullian, explained that to mean that those heretics put to flight the Holy Spirit and crucified the Father (*Against Praxeas* 1).

Because the Lord our God is one Lord, it is impossible that one Person of the holy

Trinity does some work to the exclusion of the other two Persons. Yet there is a certain priority of Person in each work. The *Heidelberg Catechism* in Lord’s Day 8 speaks of God the Father especially in connection with our creation, God the Son and our redemption, and God the Holy Spirit and our sanctification. Thus the revelation of God includes the truth of three Persons in God united in their essence and work.

The key is the word “revealed.” God reveals Himself through these works as the God who is three in Person and one in essence.

That Christ is divine need not be proved here. Every creed of the Christian church, beginning with Nicea in AD 325, teaches this biblical doctrine emphatically. Nicea even says of Christ that He is “true God of true God.” Not to be overlooked is our Lord’s emphatic statement to the Jews: “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30). Our Saviour cannot possibly mean that the First Person of the Trinity and Christ, *to the exclusion of the Holy Spirit*, are one.

John 1:1-3 speaks of the *logos*, another name for Christ, as the One through whom God, the Triune God, created all things. The same is true of Colossians 1:16 and Hebrews 1:2. Even in the Old Testament, Christ, called by the name “wisdom,” is spoken of the One through whom the world was made (Prov. 8).

Nor is the Holy Spirit neglected in the work of creation (Gen. 1:2).

The Second Person of the Trinity was not the author of redemption alone. “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself” (II Cor. 5:19). Nor is God spoken of here as the First Person of the holy Trinity. The Triune God reconciled the world to Himself through Christ.

Did Christ, in His human nature, pray to the Triune God, addressing Him as His Father? Of course, He did. Moreover, when He prayed to the Triune God, calling Him “my Father,” Christ said, “not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matt. 26:39). The first will here is Christ’s human will and the second will is that of the Triune God.

It is at this point that the miracle of the incarnation becomes very deep and Scripture has very little to say about it, for our understanding is very limited. Most probably the Bible is silent because we are too lacking in understanding to grasp the mystery of God become flesh (I Tim. 3:16).

When our Lord asked who touched Him, after a woman was healed by making contact with the hem of His robe unbeknownst to Him, Christ’s human nature was reflected in this consciousness, according to which He, in fact, did not know who touched Him. The same is true of Jesus when He said that He did not know the time of His second coming (Matt. 24:36), where Christ refers to the Triune God as “my Father.” However, according to His divine nature, He knew all things!

*Prof. Hanko*

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