

ultimate book of the Bible concludes with this paean of praise: “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen” (Jude 24-25).

What about God’s wisdom in sacred Scripture? No other book can compare to it! We have the inspired, inerrant and infallible Bible, which has been preserved faithfully to all generations. It is complete, all-sufficient and supremely authoritative. These “holy scriptures,” Paul states, “are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (II Tim. 3:15).

Whether they like it or not, all the world will be utterly convinced of God’s wisdom at the final judgment. The last day will be the great theodicy, when Jehovah’s wisdom will be displayed publicly to all men and angels, elect or reprobate, holy or wicked. In all His works and ways, the Triune God will be seen as just and wise and good—undeniably! On that glorious day, “at the name of Jesus every knee [shall] bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And ... every tongue [shall] confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:10-11). Be wise and bow now in repentance and faith in Christ crucified and risen!

Rev. Stewart

Covenant Reformed News Mailings

Are there any details of your postal address that need correction? Would you like more than one copy of the *News* (up to twelve can sent on an ordinary second-class stamp)? Do you have any friends who would like the *News* sent to their house address in the British Isles or by e-mail? Have you any questions that you would like answered in the *News*? Please let us know!

Upcoming Speeches

S. Wales Lecture: Rev. Martyn McGeown, “The Development of God’s Covenant (3): Abraham” at Margam Community Centre, Port Talbot, SA13 2AP on Thursday, 27 September at 7:15 PM (www.cprf.co.uk/swales.htm).

N. Ireland Lecture: Rev. Angus Stewart, “Two Men From Trier: Karl Marx (and Communism) and Caspar Olevianus (and the *Heidelberg Catechism*)” at the CPRC in Ballymena, BT43 5DR on Friday, 26 October at 7:30 PM. Unable to attend? Join us via the live stream.

Live Video Streaming

The CPRC broadcasts both its Lord’s day services at 11 AM and 6 PM (UK time) free on-line (www.cprf.co.uk/live.html). Why not watch and worship with us? This is especially helpful for those who have no faithful churches in their area or those who are on holiday or those who are at home on a Sunday because they are sick or caring for those who are ill.

Covenant Protestant Reformed Church

83 Clarence Street, Ballymena, BT43 5DR • Website: www.cprc.co.uk

Lord’s Day services (11 AM & 6 PM) with live video streaming (www.cprf.co.uk/live.html)

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Covenant Reformed News

September 2018 • Volume XVII, Issue 5

God’s Wisdom (4)

The wisdom of God was personally manifested in our Lord Jesus. According to His human nature, Christ grew in wisdom as He developed as a boy: “the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him” (Luke 2:40). As a teenager, “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (52).

He is the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah 11:2: “the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.” He was wiser than Solomon (Matt. 12:42; Luke 11:31), for in Him “are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3). Yea, He is the very “wisdom of God” (I Cor. 1:24)!

The wisdom of God in Christ is declared in the gospel. The last verse in the most systematic presentation of the good news of salvation closes with this fitting doxology: “To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen” (Rom. 16:27). This is entirely appropriate, since Romans sets forth man’s terrible sin and God’s justifying righteousness (ch. 1-5); the marvel of sanctification and assurance (ch. 6-8); double predestination, and the salvation of believing Jews and Gentiles (ch. 9-11); and rich ethical teaching on godly living, including in church and state (ch. 12-16).

I Corinthians 1:17-31 explains that the gospel proclaims salvation through the crucified Messiah, which is foolishness and weakness to the world, but the wisdom and power of God. Jehovah has chosen the foolishness of preaching to save His people and to confound those who think themselves to be wise. The Triune God hides these things from “the wise and prudent,” but reveals them to “babes” (Matt. 11:25; Luke 10:21).

Saul of Tarsus is a prime biblical example of God’s wisdom in conversion. Remember what he used to be: he “was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious” (I Tim. 1:13), yet the Most High transformed him into the apostle Paul (1, 11-12)! No wonder he exclaimed, “Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen” (17)! In Jehovah’s wisdom, He made Paul a model to display His longsuffering: “Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting” (16).

Consider the wonder of God’s wisdom in preserving all whom He saves—billions of us, in all ages and all around the world; each with his or her own particular sins and weaknesses; and all under attack from the world, the flesh and the devil! Thus the pe-

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Does the Bible Merely Contain Men's Opinions?

Question: "In I Corinthians 7:6, where Paul speaks of the due benevolence that spouses owe each other sexually, he explicitly says that it is not a direct commandment from the Lord, but rather something he states 'by permission': 'But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment.' What do we make of this?"

There has been, over the years, a great deal of discussion over such a text as this. The problem includes verse 12 of this same chapter, as well as II Corinthians 8:8. These texts have been used by the enemies of divine inspiration to attempt to prove that the Bible frequently contains merely men's personal opinions.

However, we believe in the Bible's verbal inspiration. Every word in Scripture is directly inspired by God and is not to be considered merely as an opinion or word which the writer inserted in addition to what the Holy Spirit breathed forth.

The battle with the critics is not to be construed as an argument or debate in which each party attempts to come up with superior proof that is totally convincing. We believe without any question at all that Scripture is verbally inspired by God by means of the Holy Spirit: every word is His word. The basis for our firm belief is the testimony of Scripture itself; it is not merely our private conviction. While I dare say that the proof for the infallible inspiration of the Bible is to be found in every page of Holy Writ, the two main texts are II Timothy 3:16 and II Peter 1:20-21.

This means that we are to explain the text to which the questioner refers (as well as similar texts) as part of the infallibly inspired Word. Let me be clear on this point. When I say that this text is part of the infallibly inspired Scripture, I do not mean that God infallibly inspired Paul to tell those to whom he wrote that God inspired Paul to say that these words were Paul's words and not God's words, that is, that these words were formally inspired but not materially, i.e., inspired in what they say. I mean that they were inspired materially as well as formally. What Paul writes is also the truth of God.

Prof. Engelsma states, "Single life is good inasmuch as marriage is not an absolute requirement for Christians. This is the apostle's point in verse 6: 'But I speak this by permission, and not by commandment.' He has just exhorted men and women in the church to marry and to live together sexually (vv. 2-5). Someone might suppose that this was a command to all without exception. Not so, says Paul in verse 6. To marry is permitted, not commanded. Therefore, single life is an option for the Christian. Singleness is an earthly way of life in which the believer may serve the Lord as much as is marriage" (*Better to Marry*, pp. 43-44; available from the CPRC Bookstore for £8.80, inc. P&P).

With this question, I am prompted to mention an element of inspiration that requires further explanation. Often the appeal is made, as I said, to this and similar passages to prove that there is a "human side" to inspiration in which the "secondary authors" were permitted to express their own opinions. They claim that the opinions of men that are not inspired by God are to be found throughout Scripture. God is said to be the primary Author and men the "secondary authors."

Dutch theologian, Herman Bavinck (1854-1921), made this distinction between "secondary authors" and a primary Author. But let it be underscored: Bavinck did not mean that the so-called "secondary authors" were permitted to express their own opinions. He believed firmly in the infallible inspiration of the whole of Scripture. He believed that God was the Author of the Bible but that He used men to write the Scripture, men with their own personalities, abilities, places in history and knowledge of God's creation. Their personalities give the Bible a human flavour, for the identity of the penmen God used to write different parts is impressed on their writings. But God breathed forth every word by His Spirit (II Tim. 3:16). That was Bavinck's position.

While I do not disagree with what Bavinck said, I prefer not to use the distinction he used. God is the Author of Scripture, the sole Author. There were no "secondary authors." God used men but they did not function as mere secretaries who were taking down dictation. Gordon Clark, in his book *God's Hammer*, calls attention to the fact that Jehovah is in sovereign control of all things as He works out His eternal plan (Eph. 1:11). God eternally ordained that He would prepare a book, inspired by Himself, in which He would tell His beloved church of all His mighty works, especially salvation by grace alone through the cross of Christ.

God ordained all the men He would use over some 1,500 years: Moses, David, Isaiah, Paul, etc. He eternally determined their gifts and abilities so that they were perfectly qualified to write the parts of Scripture He assigned to them. In God's mighty providence, all that He determined was carried out: the times of the births of the Bible's penmen; the circumstances of their upbringing; and their roles in their homes, their societies and their nations (e.g., Paul was born a Roman according to God's decree).

Thus God is the Author. The writing of Scripture was a miracle so that all the qualities and experiences of those whom He used to write the Bible lie on the surface of their writings, but they were "moved the Holy Ghost" (II Pet. 1:21). The word "moved" in this verse is the same word as is used to describe how a ship at sea is borne along by the wind, as it goes from its point of departure to its point of arrival.

Fallen man finds God's Word distasteful for it proclaims that he is a hell-worthy sinner. Scripture declares the glorious "good news" that God saves His elect through the wonder of the cross of Jesus Christ and His resurrection from the dead.

It tells of what God requires of His regenerate children. These demands are contrary to the sinful nature that we carry with us to the grave. We are comforted by our victory in Christ, the forgiveness of our sins in His blood and the hope of glory when we join the church of all ages in heaven.

To mess around with the Word in order to justify one's own desires and longings is to slap God in the face, deny the infallible Scriptures and continue to revel in sin. This is what much of the church does today with its approval of homosexuality, women in church office, transgenderism, feminism, abortion and other abominable practices.

Thank God for the gospel found in the pages of His infallible Word that is our strength and guide through all of life.

Prof. Hanko