

## Chapter 11

# The Wisdom of God

*Thou, O Christ, who wert tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin, make us strong to overcome the desire to be wise and to be reputed wise by others as ignorant as ourselves. We turn from our wisdom as well as from our folly and flee to Thee, the wisdom of God and the power of God. Amen.*

In this brief study of the divine wisdom we begin with faith in God. Following our usual pattern, we shall not seek to understand in order that we may believe, but to believe in order that we may understand. Hence, we shall not seek for proof that God is wise. The unbelieving mind would not be convinced by any proof, and the worshiping heart needs none.

“Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever,” cried Daniel the prophet, “for wisdom and might are his: ... he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: he revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him” (Dan. 2:20–22). The believing man responds to this, arid to the angelic chant, “Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever” (Rev. 7:12). It never occurs to such a man that God should furnish proof of His wisdom or His power. Is it not enough that He is God?

When Christian theology declares that God is wise, it means vastly more than it says or can say, for it tries to make a comparatively weak word bear an incomprehensible plenitude of meaning that threatens to tear it apart and crush it under the sheer weight of the idea. “His understanding is infinite,” says the psalmist (Ps. 147:5). It is nothing less than infinitude that theology is here labouring to express.

Since the word *infinite* describes what is unique, it can have no modifiers. We do not say “more unique” or “very’ infinite.” Before infinitude we stand silent.

There is indeed a secondary, created wisdom which God has given in measure to His creatures as their highest good may require; but the wisdom of any creature or of all creatures, when set against the boundless wisdom of God, is pathetically small. For this reason the apostle is accurate when he refers to God as “only wise” (1 Tim. 1:17). That is, God is wise in Himself, and all the shining wisdom of men or angels is but a reflection of that uncreated effulgence which streams from the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.

The idea of God as infinitely wise is at the root of all truth. It is a datum of belief necessary to the soundness of all other beliefs about God. Being what He is without regard to creatures, God is of course unaffected by our opinions of Him, but our moral sanity requires that we attribute to the maker and sustainer of the universe a wisdom entirely perfect. To refuse to do this is to betray the very thing in us that distinguishes us from the beasts.

In the Holy Scriptures wisdom, when used of God and good men, always carries a strong moral connotation. It is conceived as being pure, loving, and good. Wisdom that is mere shrewdness is often attributed to evil men, but such wisdom is treacherous and false. These two kinds of wisdom are in perpetual conflict. Indeed, when seen from the lofty peak of Sinai or Calvary, the whole history of the world is discovered to be but a contest between the wisdom of God and the cunning of Satan and fallen men. The outcome of the contest is not in doubt. The imperfect must fall before the perfect at last. God has warned that He will take the wise in their own craftiness and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.

Wisdom, among other things, is the ability to devise perfect ends and to achieve those ends by the most perfect means. It sees the end from the beginning, so there can be no need to guess or conjecture. Wisdom sees everything in focus, each in proper relation to all, and is thus able to work toward predestined goals with flawless precision.

All God’s acts are done in perfect wisdom, first for His own glory, and then for the highest good of the greatest number for the longest time. And all His acts are as pure as they are wise, and as good as they are wise and pure. Not only could His acts not be better done: a better way to do them could not be imagined. An infinitely wise God must work in a manner not to be improved upon by finite creatures. O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! In wisdom hast Thou made them all. The earth is full of Thy riches!

Without the creation, the wisdom of God would have remained forever locked in the boundless abyss of the divine nature. God brought His creatures into being that He might enjoy them and they rejoice in Him. "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1:31).

Many through the centuries have declared themselves unable to believe in the basic wisdom of a world wherein so much appears to be so wrong. Voltaire in his *Candide* introduces a determined optimist, whom he calls Dr. Pangloss, and into his mouth puts all the arguments for the "best-of-all-possible-worlds" philosophy. Of course the French cynic took keen delight in placing the old professor in situations that made his philosophy look ridiculous.

But the Christian view of life is altogether more realistic than that of Dr. Pangloss with his "sufficient reason." It is that this is *not* at the moment the best of all possible worlds, but one lying under the shadow of a huge calamity, the Fall of man. The inspired writers insist that the whole creation now groans and travails under the mighty shock of the Fall. They do not attempt to supply "sufficient reasons"; they assert that the "creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope" (Rom. 8:20). No effort here to justify the ways of God with men; just a simple declaration of fact. The being of God is its own defense.

But there is hope in all our tears. When the hour of Christ's triumph arrives, the suffering world will be brought out into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. For men of the new creation the golden age is not past but future, and when it is ushered in, a wondering universe will see that God has indeed abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence. In the meantime we rest our hope in the only wise God, our Saviour, and wait with patience the slow development of His benign purposes.

In spite of tears and pain and death we believe that the God who made us all is infinitely wise and good. As Abraham staggered not at the promises of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and was fully persuaded that what He had promised He was able to perform, so do we base our hope in God alone and hope against hope till the day breaks. We rest in *what God is*. I believe that this alone is true faith. Any faith that must be supported by the evidence of the senses is not real faith. "Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29).

The testimony of faith is that, no matter how things look in this fallen world, all God's acts are wrought in perfect wisdom. The incarnation of the Eternal Son in human flesh was one of God's mighty deeds, and

we may be sure that this awesome deed was done with a perfection possible only to the Infinite. “Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16).

Atonement too was accomplished with the same flawless skill that marks all of God’s acts. However little we understand it all, we know that Christ’s expiatory work perfectly reconciled God and men and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. Our concern is not to explain but to proclaim. Indeed I wonder whether God could make us understand all that happened there at the cross. According to the apostle Peter not even angels know, however eagerly they may desire to look into these things.

The operation of the gospel, the new birth, the coming of the divine Spirit into human nature, the ultimate overthrow of evil, and the final establishment of Christ’s righteous kingdom – all these have flowed and do flow out of God’s infinite fullness of wisdom. The sharpest eyes of the holiest watcher in the blest company above cannot discover a flaw in the ways of God in bringing all this to fruition, nor can the pooled wisdom of seraphim and cherubim suggest how an improvement might be made in the divine procedure. “I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him” (Eccles. 3:14).

It is vitally important that we hold the truth of God’s infinite wisdom as a tenet of our creed; but this is not enough. We must by the exercise of faith and by prayer bring it into the practical world of our day by day experience.

To believe actively that our Heavenly Father constantly spreads around us providential circumstances that work for our present good and our everlasting well-being brings to the soul a veritable benediction. Most of us go through life praying a little, planning a little, jockeying for position, hoping but never being quite certain of anything, and always secretly afraid that we will miss the way. This is a tragic waste of truth and never gives rest to the heart.

There is a better way. It is to repudiate our own wisdom and take instead the infinite wisdom of God. Our insistence upon seeing ahead is natural enough, but it is a real hindrance to our spiritual progress. God has charged Himself with full responsibility for our eternal happiness and stands ready to take over the management of our lives the moment we turn in faith to Him. Here is His promise: “And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them” (Isa. 42:16).

*Let Him lead thee blindfold onwards,  
 Love needs not to know;  
 Children whom the Father leadeth  
 Ask not where they go  
 Though the path be all unknown,  
 Over moors and mountains lone.*

Gerhard Tersteegen

God constantly encourages us to trust Him in the dark. “I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the Lord, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel” (Isa. 45:2–3).

It is heartening to learn how many of God’s mighty deeds were done in secret, away from the prying eyes of men or angels. When God created the heavens and the earth, darkness was upon the face of the deep. When the Eternal Son became flesh, He was carried for a time in the darkness of the sweet virgin’s womb. When He died for the life of the world, it was in the darkness, seen by no one at the last. When He arose from the dead, it was “very early in the morning” (Luke 24:1). No one saw Him rise. It is as if God were saying, “What I am is all that need matter to you, for there lie your hope and your peace. I will do what I will do, and it will all come to light at last, but how I do it is My secret. Trust Me, and be not afraid.”

With the goodness of God to desire our highest welfare, the wisdom of God to plan it, and the power of God to achieve it, what do we lack? Surely we are the most favoured of all creatures.

*In all our Maker’s grand designs,  
 Omnipotence, with wisdom, shines;  
 His works, through all this wondrous frame,  
 Declare the glory of His Name.*

Thomas Blacklock