Proverbs - Commentaries by John Nelson Darby

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But there is another character of divine wisdom; it is straight and simple, because it is profound and perfect. It is itself—itself in the midst of confusion and complication, but always itself. Human subtlety and wisdom must take the tortuous course which seeks to avoid the evil which it belongs to and lives amongst, of which it forms a part, though it may be a cleverer part; but it must act by the motives and passions which govern man, because it has nothing else to act upon nor by. It cannot be above the sphere to which it belongs, though it may see a little farther into it than the simple and foolish; but it cannot see beyond present motives—they are its motives. Divine truth and wisdom bring in God, and what is right, with authority—is it in testimony or in fact—if we take it as embodied in Christ. Hence it is always itself, for it is what comes into the scene, not what is of it, though light in and adapted to it, and acting on conscience i.e., is light to the sense of right and wrong by bringing in God, the fear of the Lord, and hence gives a perfect path. The words are in righteousness, and in righteousness for and in the midst of the scene of will and confusion sin has brought in. I take the most commonplace outward example: “Thou shalt not steal.” In paradise there was no stealing. In heaven there will be none. In a perfect state such a thought could not exist. Yet property and rights of property have introduced confusion and oppression on one side, and violence and wrong on the other—in all ages a problem that no man can solve, and that there is no right to be found in. One form is oppression, another ruin and disorder. Wisdom is content with what it has, and covets no man's; it has the key to a perfect path of its own in the midst of the confusion, because of introducing God and His fear. It takes the heart of man out of all the motives which produce the confusion that exists, and gives it its own path in the midst of it. This is the most commonplace case, which I take on purpose. Hence the Lord declines decision (He came not then to judge) in a case of alleged wrong, and continues, “Take heed and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth;” and then exalts man's thoughts above such objects even as man, and brings in God as known goodness to those who had faith in Him; and this goes on to the highest display of the life of Christ in us. It was the law's place to mark this path, in fact, for man, not to reveal counsels or redemption or the display. of God in man, but the path of man before God. So far it was wisdom, but it could not display God in counsels or in love connected with them, or it would not have been a law for man. Now we learn not man before God, but in Christ, God before man, our rule of life, though this will surely not violate the other—against such ( ) there is no law. Thus there is nothing tortuous (froward) nor twisted winding through the evil ways and corrupt motives of men to find an advantageous path through them.1

Hence he who walks by divine wisdom is counted a fool—told he will be a prey to the world, for the world after all reckons on evil and looks to its subtlety as its resource, to knowing more evil and plans to circumvent it. But obedience to the word is divine wisdom; for divine wisdom, that knows all things, has formed the path. We have to walk according to that lovely and divine precept that grace only could give us—“Simple concerning evil, and wise unto that which is good.” Hence to him that understands—has an ear and capacity to receive what is divine—they are all plain. They are God's path, declared by Him, what leads in a straight and blessed path which is its own—that in which Christ walked. He that finds knowledge discerns that they are upright, right in themselves—the divine mind in us, we can say.

Now the new man discerns the uprightness of this path. As the Lord says, “Wisdom is justified of all her children,” though the world see not or hate it. Plain is that which is straight before us, , “Let their eyes look right on;” compare chap. iv. 25, where the word “right on” is the same as “plain” here, and “straight” the same as “right': here. It is all simple to him that takes divine light for his guidance, in thankful submission to Him who gave it. The path of Christ is the perfect expression of it—He is the wisdom of God. In value surely nothing can be compared with it—to have God's way, and that a right one, through a world of evil. But there is, in a world like this, need of not being fools but wise. And divine light sees everything in divine light, and detects at once its character. It is of the profoundest subtlety in this way. It has the discernment of God. A scene of satanic deceit is perplexing to the mind perhaps. What is it? The entrance of it is contrary to the fear of the Lord; the whole thing is judged, though I cannot account for the hundredth part of it. The soul, not guided by the fear of the Lord, plunges into a scene beyond its powers, and is the sport of Satan. The fear of the Lord and the Spirit of truth, for the simplest mind, has preserved from and judged it all. But it is really the subtlest judgment which the humanly wise are taken in. Wisdom dwells with prudence, the reflective judgment, which the fear of God calls for and produces as seeking always His will, giving a discernment which judges of the true character of everything. It is subtle, dwells with it, is found where this is. It is strange to put and together; but it is just what divine wisdom does. In the witty inventions it is the cogitations of the heart which find out these witty inventions. When fully developed in us, we read, “The spiritual man discerneth all things, and he himself is discerned of no man.” He judges all around him, and whatever he has to walk in; but his motives, principles, and aims the natural man discerns not; his path baffles the cleverness of him who has not the Spirit. See Rabshakeh's interview with the servants of Hezekiah. He is sure of his way, or motives, and principles: unknown to the unspiritual man, his way is a riddle to him. The result proves its wisdom to the world. His are beyond the ken of the natural man. This leads to the great principle and spring of it—the beginning of wisdom, the fear of the Lord—the bringing of God in so that His thoughts, not our will, have authority over us. Where that is, we hate wrong, the exercise of will, and selfishness, contrary to the relationships in which we stand. All self-will, and setting up of self, the evil way and perverse words, wisdom hates. But if the beat and pretension of will is hated of wisdom, with it is counsel—the wisdom of a staid reflective mind, subject and looking to the Lord and the resources of sound judgment in difficulty, discernment and strength. Compare Eccl. 9:13-18, where mere physical strength is contrasted, and the way wisdom affords security is spoken of.

We now come to its direct earthly aspect in connection with God's government of the earth. Government, righteous judgment, the rule of the great depends on it. Thus we read of the wisdom of Solomon. They have to represent God in the discernment of good and evil and the maintenance of right by authority on the earth; this they can do only by divine wisdom.

But then there is another point applying to all hearts loving it for its own sake, and diligence of heart in seeking it. Real delight in God's wisdom in itself, and the sense of obligation to realize it. “I love them that love me; and they that seek me early shall find me.” Wisdom is loved for its own sake, and diligence of heart seeks it as a duty incumbent on us. But in the earthly government of God it brings its reward.

This was fully the ground the law went upon. The God-fearing obedient man was to be blessed in his basket and blessed in his store. But there is more than this—riches that do not perish and righteousness that the heart delights in as its treasure. Wisdom walks in the path of righteousness, discerns by the action of the conscience and the word how men are to walk and to please God. It discerns what is right in all the complicated scene of this world, gives a sure path in it according to God. Seeking only to please Him; it gives motives above the circumstance and thus a path through them. We do what is right in them. We walk in firmness and a plain path where the circumstances would afford none. This is a great comfort. We are not careful to answer in the matter. Divine wisdom is in the fear of the Lord and uprightness. There is light, divine light, on the path, where all is dark around, for divine wisdom knows its path here by righteousness. This is its path. That is a light on the path. We cannot do otherwise, though it may seem folly and trial even accompany it. It is God's way, and that turns out right even in this world, though it may at the time seem a sacrifice of everything and bring trouble upon us. So Joseph; but it led him here below under God's overruling hand to a place which, humanly speaking, he would not otherwise have had. This was not his motive. He did what was right and would not do what was wrong, and it brought him from a captive slave to be lord of Egypt.

I know Christians have much higher objects in hope and are called by them; but here we are on the ground of God's government of the earth, and that government is carried on now though not in the direct way it once was in Israel—a people of His own. Nor does wisdom ever get out of these paths. She is found only in the paths of judgment. In all cases and circumstances in which man has to walk, a way cast up in righteousness is the only one wisdom can walk in.2 She is always found in the midst of them (that is, cannot be out of the paths so formed and marked out). These are God's, these are wisdom. And where God's government is exercised in this world and for it, as wisdom's place, such a path issues in blessing and prosperity. Suffering in a hostile world may be more specifically our portion now, though from Abel down it was there. Still there is such a government of which God has not let loose the reins. “He that will love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil and his lips that they speak no guile. Let him eschew evil and do good, let him seek peace and ensue it: for the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous,” &c. It is not only in Job's time that it was true, that “he withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous.” This is government and the path of wisdom, an interesting point. But now the Spirit of God comes to counsels and purpose.

Wisdom has brought light into this world of confusion, divine light, but existed before the world was in the thoughts and counsels of God, Christ being the center of all these counsels, and the object of God's delight. He is the wisdom of God, as the power of God when He works. His works were the scene of wisdom and the wisdom was eternal—was there before the works and power displayed in the works, but with a fuller counsel yet. There is a path which God treads, so to speak—a path unfolding what is the fruit of His thoughts; but that path is not mere power without a plan and counsel; nor is He dealing wisely with what He finds, as we have to do. Wisdom is precious in that, but then it is in subjection, and a righteousness which is true wisdom, but which is obligatory on us—we have to find wisdom's path where we are, by doing right, for we owe that to God. But God possessed it in the beginning of His way. The point is not here, that there was wisdom displayed in creation, no doubt there was; but the point is, that before the world existed, wisdom had its place with God. We have to find the path of it in creation, now ruined; but God's mind and thought was before it all. This is what is brought out from verse 22 to the end of verse 29. No doubt wisdom was displayed when He prepared the heavens and put a compass on the face of the deep; but before all wisdom was there. It was there when He did it; but itself was from eternity. The earth was an occasion for its display—a work adapted by wisdom to the divine glory and the ends of that wisdom; but it was wisdom, it was itself, before it found a sphere for its display, and creation was its fruit, but not its object. It was itself, had its place with God, and its object on which its purpose rested. The first statement as to this is, that Jehovah possessed this wisdom already when His way began the movement to produce anything outside Himself—to reveal Himself. In the beginning of His way, before His works, wisdom was inaugurated,3 established as the authority and order on which, being in the mind of God, all was to be ordered and established; but, secondly, was there in the secret time of eternity. It is in fact summed up in John 1 concerning the Word.

Jehovah possessed this wisdom (it was the outset of all things) before the earth—in which His ways have been unfolded—existed. It was produced from Jehovah, brought forth as the fruit of His being in itself before creation—what was outside Himself—existed. And not only this earth, but when He prepared the heavens, wisdom was there. All this marks this wisdom as the produce and mind of Jehovah in itself and in Himself before mere creation (which existed from His fiat and word) had begun to exist. It is divine and in Godhead, as creation exists by His word outside Himself. No doubt it is spoken of mystically here; but Christ is it, and its revealed fullness and manifestation. He who is this was in the Father before the world was, before anything existed but what was in Godhead itself. He was God, but, as thus looked at, as subsisting, He was with God, and all things by Him, as the whole scene of the wisdom of the divine mind. But there was more than this. Wisdom was, objectively, the delight of the divine mind. The thoughts it produced were perfect, necessarily as itself, and the delight of the mind that produced them. They answered to it. We do so with our petty minds, and yet ours answer often imperfectly even to our small minds, and all is partial. Divine wisdom was according to divine fullness and perfection, and expressed it as a whole, and was the divine delight. Christ was all this in His person; but here it was taken up abstractedly. It was always with God, by Him, in immediate intimacy of nature and fellowship; One brought up in love4 by Him; His delight day by day. It is a wonderful description.

But not only was divine delight in this wisdom here fully looked at as a person, but it too (or perhaps we should now say) He was ever rejoicing before God at all times. This object of God's delight was rejoicing itself before Him; so, subordinately and by grace, we are holy and without blame before Him in love. But here it was an eternal and divine object—what was in Godhead itself, yet with God objectively. Jehovah possessed wisdom as His delight before anything out of Himself was formed; and this wisdom was One rejoicing before Him. But there was a purpose that occupied wisdom before the sphere and scene in which the object of that purpose was to be developed existed. Wisdom rejoiced in the habitable parts of God's earth, and its delight was with the sons of men. How wondrously does this come in! Though surely a wise God ordered the creation, yet wisdom was set on other things—man was the object in view. That wisdom, whose joy was before God and who was the delight and joy of God, was not delighting in the earth, but in the habitable parts of it. There was purpose. A poor trivial part of creation, if merely of creation—if we look at the vastness of the scene in which he moves, but the center of all God's purposes—the object of His thought before creation—complete in purpose, in whom, according to the purpose of that wisdom, was to be set up the whole display of it. The habitable parts of God's earth wisdom delighted in, and its delight was in the sons of men. Man was first created a responsible being, but, as a being, God's delight, the center of His ways here below, made in His image, after His likeness, and the image withal of Him that was to come. But this (though God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, so that he was His offspring) yet was a responsible man as a creature, and as a creature failed. But after many exercises and preparatory dealings of wisdom, He who was the wisdom of God and His power, by whom all things were created, became Himself a man. Life was in Him, and the life was the light of men—in its very nature was such. The angels could then, in unjealous and holy strains, declare that God's good pleasure was in man.5 A wondrous and blessed thought! He who had this place with the Father was made flesh—God's delight down here, God manifest in flesh: grace to man, grace in man, man taken into union with God in one Person—the pledge of peace on earth, “Glory to God in the highest.” But as yet, as to its effect on others, it was connected with the

responsibility of those around Him— “He was despised and rejected of men.” This unspeakable favor and blessing (for the creature's mind was still in question) was rejected and cast away. But now wisdom's purpose could come out, and founded on that perfect work which He accomplished, through this very wickedness to make it more complete and éclatant on that which glorified God Himself; the purpose established before the world was is revealed in glorified man, yet righteously in obedient man, and in One who had glorified God in all that He was, in that in which He who did so was made sin for us. He met all the requirements of God—all the responsibility of those who came to God by Him, bearing their sins; He manifested the righteous ground of grace addressed to all, and glorified God so as to bring many sons—man—into glory, God's glory.

Now came out the manifold wisdom of God by the Church, displayed even to principalities and powers in heavenly places, in the union of man with the very center of glory, heirs in that of all which was to be placed under His hands as man. The proper purpose was our own place in and united to Him and with Him, but this involved the dominion which belonged to Him as man. (See Titus 1:1, 2 Tim. 1:9; Eph. 1:3-5 and following, and 1 Cor. 2:6-8.) All the responsibility of the first man met, for those who believe; and as to God's glory, absolutely and completely, and the foundation for the accomplishment of God's purpose in righteousness, according to the full glory of that purpose: grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Responsible man came in between the purpose and its accomplishment, failed as such, and then in the perfect man, the Son of God, grace finds its free display in righteousness and the purpose accomplished in glory. When we know Christ we know the meaning of that; His delights were in the sons of men. Wondrous thought! but how true, how simple to us, when we see the eternal Word and Wisdom a man! How sweet, for we are men! How wondrous, to see glory in righteousness with Him, when grace has reigned through it, when God has been glorified and glorified our Head with Himself; and we soon to have the rest with Him according to the same righteousness! “For he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one.”

It is because God's delight is in the sons of men that wisdom now calls them to hear; and though her ways seem strange to the pride and pretension of man, boasting of righteousness because ignorant of God, yet wisdom is justified of all her children in the solemn call to repentance on responsibility, and the blessed announcement of grace in goodness, both the proofs of mercy, of God's interest in man; and, indeed, all God's nature and ways, all His being, is displayed in redemption and grace. Love, mercy, holiness, judgment, righteousness, patience, intolerance of evil, majesty, and tender condescension in grace; the coming in of evil, its extent, and the surmounting it in grace, and yet through righteousness, such as naught else could have done—all is brought out in the work of Christ and by its effect in the heart of man, so that in him it should be all displayed, yet all be sovereign grace to him; for the Son of God being a man in glory and having died tells a tale nothing else could tell—divine glory, and death as made sin, yet death overcome in resurrection, death to deliver us, death where all was perfectness for God and in man, and by which God could display all He was. Christ gave Himself up for that, and is in the glory.

Therefore wisdom calls on us to listen to her, for it is grace: it is because God delights in us. Blessed are those who keep the ways of wisdom. It is the activity of God's goodness calling to that only path which leads to rest and the peaceful favor of God; and I recall here the distinct principle of this chapter. It is not the warnings of natural authority, the ordained channel of wisdom in a relationship formed by God. It is the direct call of wisdom, the call in grace of the divine word itself to man as such, because His delight is in them, as in the ministry of John Baptist and Christ, above the natural relationship, and directly from God to the consciences and hearts of men, bringing about purpose; but in the righteous gracious summons of God. It is wonderful—this direct appeal in grace. It may rudely break in upon the natural relationships and set five in one house, three against two and two against three, because it is direct and individual from God Himself and brings about purpose in result. Hence, though peace on earth even was to be the result in purpose, yet in present operation Christ could say, “Think ye that I am come to send peace on earth?” And hence He was straitened till the baptism in which He glorified God was accomplished, because the unbelief of man drove back into the recesses of His heart the love, which, when the work of glorifying God in righteousness was accomplished, could flow freshly forth. Then the ground for the accomplishment of purpose according to glory was fully laid, and Christ enters in resurrection into the fruit of righteousness in glory; and, when all is accomplished, will raise us up at the last day, responsibility being fully met, yea God glorified, in that which did it.

When wisdom came addressing itself to responsibility, it had only to complain. “Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? when I called, was there none to answer?” But the truth was, the Son was too perfect, too glorious to be discerned by man. “God hid these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them unto babes” —blessed those who (in this gracious appeal to children, which puts God in grace, where nature stood in authority on His part—not my children indeed, but “children,” sons, interested in them in that character) keep wisdom's ways, hear instruction and refuse it not. The first we have in the sermon on the mount, keeping wisdom's ways; the second in Mary at Jesus' feet, and in principle in those who knew that the words of eternal life were to be found nowhere else. “For whose findeth her, findeth life and Jehovah's favor.” But there is more than pressing men to hear and keep the instruction of wisdom (compare Luke 11:28; Matt. 13:23); there is earnestness of heart on our part, waiting upon it, watching daily at her gates and waiting at the posts of her doors. It is not mental effort, the production of the human mind, but waiting on divine teaching as Mary did, “as new born babes desiring the sincere milk of the word.” It is not here the proclamation of wisdom, but the desires of the heart towards it thus manifested. Here life is found, for it is the word of life, and that man finds the favor of Jehovah: the double aspect of divine blessing in us, life, divine life, and divine favor resting upon us. He that sins against it injures his own soul. There is a path in which will walks to its own ruin. It is not God's path. Our own will hates the path of divine will, which is for us a subject path, but that ends in death. It is not the causes in grace which deliver which are spoken of, but the fact of what is found in result. As the apostle teaches us in Romans, he that by patient continuance in well doing seeks for glory, honor, and incorruptibility, eternal life, was to favor. “If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him.” “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.” It was no question whether Christ surely had life. He was life. But that was the path in which He walked in divine favor. It is not here grace saving sinners and giving them glory, but the path (including the state of the heart) in this world, in which life and favor are found. God bringing in testimony in grace of what He is pleased in, and wisdom showing us how we are to walk and to please God. It is for us what we have heard of the word of life. We live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

We have seen the wondrous revelation of the purpose of God in man, but we must remember that here earth is dealt with when we come to details. The principle is always true in every testimony of the Lord now or then. The immediate connection here is the earth, because there this testimony came, there it found responsible man. Its most direct and evident application is in the person of the Lord Jesus on earth. Only like the parable of the sower, or John the Baptist even, it is always true when the cry of wisdom or wisdom itself is gone forth. John was transitional and pointed to another; that other was wisdom's self, and John (Matt. 11) had to come in on His cry. Still the children of wisdom justified God's wisdom in him. The law and the prophets were till John. He led into wisdom's paths, going before the face of the Lord.

Wisdom is not in this world simplicity, but leads us into it. Simplicity is the blessed result in the highest way, when God is all to the new nature. But God is wise in His ways in ordering all things, and we are now in a scene of evil and a complication of received good and actual evil in will and fact which needs for him who would go aright a path which the vulture's eye hath not seen. In truth there is none in the world in itself. Where all is morally wrong and departed from God, there can be no right path. Adam did not want a path. As to him he had only to stay where he was. When we have gone wrong and are driven out by God and so need a path, none can be found. There is none. But God deals with this scene—now with man in it, hereafter with the scene itself, and has a path and result which was before the worlds and which wisdom points out to us, calling men into it. Where shall wisdom be found, and where is the path of understanding? It is not to be found in the land of the living. Destruction and death say we have heard the fame thereof with our ears. So they have. They tell us the vanity of all the scene we are in, and above all, of man at the head of it, the sorest place of all. But it is only negative. This is an immense truth, that there is no way for living man, fallen from God. This is what is described in the Book of Ecclesiastes. Man under the sun, his will works. What can his will, multiplied in the contentions of many, do? But God understandeth the way thereof and He knoweth the place thereof. He ordered creation, but to man He said, The fear of Jehovah, that is wisdom; to depart from evil, that is understanding. This, as Ecclesiastes says, is the whole of man. That book does not go farther, and it is a deep and immense instruction to get this by itself, the position and condition of man as such ascertained, bringing God and responsibility to him, without reaching Him, but looking at man as he is here, and without revelation, but knowing good and evil, accompanied by the declaration of judgment.

Proverbs takes a wider sphere, because it is occupied with wisdom, not with man simply as he is. Hence we have always God in Ecclesiastes (save the fear of Jehovah at the end), Jehovah in Proverbs. The sphere we live in is one of a perverse will in man, who will not have God, but a knowledge of right and wrong in himself, of the difference of right and wrong. In a scene where nature retains abundant marks of a wise and good Creator, of almighty power, yet in this its lower part in a state of ruin and corruption, away from God and in what man knows to be corruption about Him too; so that when he has not revelation, i.e., the word, he is false, in hopeless subjection to what is false, to rear his altar to an unknown God. Such instinctive knowledge there must be as makes him feel that he knows nothing of Him—a sad condition for a responsible soul. Wisdom, the word of God, comes into this scene, shows what it is, reveals God in it, the way of truth, but that word shows it existing in God before the world was. It looks back to creative wisdom, but to a purpose then set up which will be fulfilled; but it deals with what it meets with and shows with divine light what is the scene and state of things of which I have spoken. Its utterances are the truth and reveal withal the counsels of God. Christ was, and of course is, this wisdom, but He is more, for He reveals God Himself; and then comes in necessarily another thing—grace and truth come by Jesus Christ. This last we have not here. It was foretold and prophesied of, but could not be till the Lord Himself came, and effectually for us only when redemption was accomplished and He had glorified God. (Comp. Titus 1:1-3 2Tim. 1:9, 10.) But we have the general truth of the activity of God's testimony, which, after all, is grace, His dealing with the consciences of men, and wisdom in the creation, and in a general way that His thoughts and purposes of divine delight rested in the sons of men, accomplished so perfectly in Christ's incarnation, proclaimed so blessedly in the angels' song, “Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good pleasure in men;” but here too wondrously set forth, sheaving the dealing in truth by wisdom with men, and the unspeakable testimony of where His delight was before the world was—wisdom having its delight where God's delight in eternity was. Its delight was in the sons of men. Now we say, “Christ the wisdom of God and the power of God.”

But the revelation of wisdom and its exercise is in the midst of an evil world. What wisdom has to say she would not have to say, if the world were not evil; yet it is a strange thing and must be wisdom to speak God's truth in such a world. And such it is. We read in Ephesians “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.” “Redeeming the time,” means seizing opportunities, as Dan. 2, which I note because it shows the world to be evil and, though under God's hand, still evil to be in power. And then wisdom has to cry. It reveals surely too all the counsels of God in Christ, blessing beyond the evil. We speak wisdom among them that are perfect, wisdom ordained before the world to our glory; but even this is brought about as to the wisdom of the way by the coming of evil and redemption. It is divine wisdom bringing good out of the evil in accomplishing His counsels towards us. Sin, weakness, guilt was our state, but through redemption issuing in glory according to the display of God in that redemption, whose love, mercy, righteousness, supremacy over evil have been glorified in the work of Christ, and we in righteousness brought into that glory; that as sin appeared sin working unto death by that which was good, the perfect law of right for man, so God might appear God by the display of all that He is in bringing us to glory through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Here we have it in its elements. We have seen it hitherto as the order of subordinate authority and parental care, the maintenance of paternal order. Here we have something more. The world is evil and wisdom cries aloud in testimony in the midst of the world as it is, though revealing the grace that accompanies wisdom.

“Wisdom crieth and understanding putteth forth her voice.” Wisdom I take to be the gathering up all that experience can give, so as to judge of all things by it, only that in God it is intrinsic knowledge of all things and all their relations and state. This He furnishes to us as far as we are capable of it as creatures in His word. Every word of wisdom is perfect as to that to which it applies. It comes from a perfect divine knowledge of all and our path in it as God sees it. It applies to what we are in, but it comes from God who knows His own mind, in what we are in, and about it, and that He gives—only we know in part. As baying received it now, we have it all ours. “Ye have an unction from the Holy One and ye know all things.” We cannot instruct the Lord, we are told, but we “have the mind of Christ.” As addressed to us, it is the perfect light of God on that of which it speaks to us. The world is in confusion and evil. Grace makes God cry to us in that day. It was present in Christ. (Compare Isa. 1)

Understanding puts forth her voice as wisdom comprehended all and brought divine light to bear on it. Understanding discovered all. Verses 2 and 3 show remarkably the character of this testimony. She meets man where he is, lifts up her voice above the roar and confusion of man's restless activities in this world, meets him in the throng and puts herself forward in the highway of passage to bring in the light of God, and His claim on man for his good. He summons man's ear to hear and think of something besides the urging of his own will and the turbid stream of his passions and earthly hopes. “To you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of man.” So Christ, the life, was the light of man. Christ, though He did not lift up His voice in the streets, but only to be so much the more heard of all that had ears to hear, yet sent it on the housetops by His apostles, Himself the perfect subject and wisdom's self rather than the proclaimer of it, yet sowed the word—Christ, I say,

was this wisdom displayed in subjective perfection in this world. Every word He uttered was a part of it, and the right part when He uttered it. How He discovered all I need not say. He did not learn wisdom partially by experience, as that which He had not (though as true man He grew in it); but was that which experience is to learn. Sorrows He learned for us, difficulties opposition; but He was wisdom in the midst of it. However, God in active grace brings this to bear on the conscience and hearts of men—says, “He that hath ears to hear let him hear.” The word was proclaimed, on the top of the high pines, in the view of men, in the thronged resorts of men, and where every one must enter that belonged to a human dwelling-place or home. And her address was to men. God's word and wisdom are formed for and expressed to them. When it was there in life, “the life was the light of men;” theirs in divine counsels and adapted to their conditions.

It came to bring the truth, not to find it. It came to the simple and fools; it brought light and understanding to the simple. The hearing ear, through grace, brought to the simplest and most foolish divine wisdom for themselves—a light and guide in all the circumstances they were in. They were excellent things, for they came from God and revealed Him, and they were right things—put everything in its true moral place with God, and with God's authority. For wisdom's month speaks according to the real nature and state of things, and that as to their relationship with God—tells the truth of everything, and is equally abhorrent from all evil itself. This is the great controversy with man's pretensions. He has his own mind the center of all the confusion, leaving out God, and pretending to judge by it the scene of confusion he is in—yea, even to judge God Himself and what He ought to be. Wisdom is bringing, in applicable detail, the light of God and His authority in it into the scene of confusion which is so as departed from Him. The will of man will not have it; his passions and lusts are dearer to him.

The Christian Shepherd: 2001, Communion and Confidence

“The Lord shall be thy confidence” (Prov. 3:26).

Communion with God always gives confidence in His power. Do we know God’s presence as the practical home of our hearts? Oh what joy is there in this! Of one thing be sure: Coming to Him in the name of Jesus, you will find it to be the real, blessed, secure home of your hearts. We are not to be weary in well doing, for in due time we shall reap if we faint not. The principle of Matthew 20 is, “Whatsoever is right I will give you,” so he went and worked and trusted. Trusting Christ is a great matter. I should have very little to show for my work. I feel it sometimes—but if I only have His approval, how content I should be!

J. N. Darby

Miscellaneous 4, Eternal Sonship of Christ - 1 John 5:7, The

THOUGH I have ever held this verse, to say the least, to be very doubtful from the course of the meaning, it is not to discuss this at present I write, but another point of importance -the use of the term Son.

There are those who, objecting to the term Son as applied to the divinity of our Lord, stand on the verge, if not slipping into, confusion of the Persons.

It is the name of the Person, not the nature; and the Person is personally known to us, fully in the revelation of God in Jesus.

But while no man knowing the Son but the Father, the manifestation of God in the Son-in Jesus-makes the language of man scarce preservable from error, if we wish to affirm things separately, of the natures when affirmed about the Son, yet is that which is revealed very distinct, but it is spoken about the Person into which the man was brought. and therefore is rightly spoken of Jesus, and the connecting point of faith, not to know there is a Son, but that Jesus is the Son of God.

Nevertheless the works of God as such are directly attributed to the Son before the incarnation of, or rather in, Jesus, and therefore we are justified (much more than justified) in speaking of the Son as we do in the Trinity.

Thus Heb. 1 has "spoken to us by the Son,... by Whom also He made the worlds." We are therefore justified in speaking of the Son as before the worlds.

Again in Col. 1 where His whole personal glory is brought out-"In Whom we have redemption" (His dear Son) "... the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: for by Him were all things created which are in heaven and upon earth... all things were created by Him" (i.e., the Son) "and for Him; and He is before all things," (the present state) "and by Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body" (His official glory), "the church,... the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased"-not the Father, this much misleads, but-"the Godhead that in Him" (the Son) "should all fullness dwell" (to wit, in Jesus)-for in Him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

The Father dwelt in Him, and the Holy Ghost was upon, in all its fullness of indwelling presence.

Could there, I need scarce say, be separation, but He was not the Father, nor the Holy Ghost, but the Son.

Though He did His works by the Spirit, and the Father that dwelt in Him did the works, all fullness dwelt in Him.

He was the Son, and by Him all things reconciled, His actual efficient work.

In a word, God was in Christ, but there again we have the warrant for the speaking the name of His Person as revealed to us of the Son as before the worlds, "In Whom..."

Again that our Lord was addressed as the Son in His Godhead is further manifest as it is said and written, "... unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Thy kingdom."

They therefore seem to err who do not give the title of Son to our Lord as connected with His Godhead, if they say this name is known to us only through His manifestation in the flesh.

I believe so surely, both of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost alike unknown to us before we knew them by the indwelling and revelation of Jesus, God manifest (in the flesh), illustrating His character and opening out the fullness more revealingly.

I feel it would be opening a gap for evil to acquiesce any further in this, for the Scripture does not acquiesce in it, though as stated below it is not only sound but blessed and glorious truth, but it is better to acquiesce in nothing but Scripture, for one does not know where it would carry one.

The Word was personally known to us as the Son revealing the Father by the Spirit, and we beheld that the glory of the Word was the glory even in Jesus of the only begotten with a Father, His nature, inheritance and dignity the same, though while humbled He gave the glory all to Him in all that is revealed in this.

I fear using the fountain of blessing and glory in men's cavils, distortion, and pride.

But I say we are scripturally justified, and bound to silence these cavils, in speaking of the Son as acting in His creative capacity in the Godhead before the worlds, although we know that Person, or any Person, by His incarnation in which centered the unfolding of the mystery.

But we are bound to hold to this most important and essential (strictly speaking essential) truth as connected with the revelation of anything and subjection to any truth at all, for all blessing flows from believing and receiving from the Father, by the Son and through the Holy Ghost-thus the revealed, known and worshipped source of all blessing, the sum of the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh.

Nor is it less important that we should understand Son to be be the name of the Person, not of the nature, for as we see that by Him He made the worlds, God over all blessed for evermore, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day and forever," competent to sit in the glory of His Father's throne, and sitting there in the glory which He had with Him before the world was.

So also we know that "God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law," than which indeed as magnifying the law nothing can be more wonderful; and "then shall the Son also Himself be subject to Him that did put all things under Him."

If we ask how can this be, we have the evidence of that 'in the fact of His having been so before; and thus the Lord secures and settles our faith, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit bringing us into blessing by giving us the facts of faith realized when they might be difficult of intelligence as to their internal possibility from our narrow nature and might be said to be contrary to natural possibility.

So it is written, "the Father sent the Son to be the Savior."

If we say He were not the Son till the incarnation, then do I utterly lose the link of connection of His being sent from above, for then were it only after He was a Man in the world that He was sent about as a Man, but no, He was sent into the world-not to multiply passages, which are innumerable, for our connection with God hangs upon it.

If therefore the name Word be applied to our Lord previously so as to deny the relationship of Son instead of, as I have said, further illustrating what He is, Whom none knoweth but the Father, then I say that is using the testimony of "the brightness of His glory" to destroy a distinct glory and the first glory and blessing of Christianity, i.e. in relation to us.

Moreover the full glory of our Lord's headship hangs upon the recognition of this truth, for as Firstborn of every creature it is by Him all things were created. So that the headship of creation in the Son rests upon this "for by Him...."

Hence we strike at the sphere of our Lord's glory if we strike at the creative Sonship.

It is most important therefore as regards our relationship to God-that first link in the chain that brings us to God, gives us fellowship with the Father, and is the spring therefore of all this very point.

The Father sent the Son... it is what each were, the Sender and the Sent. I know nothing previous to this.

It is the Son that is the "brightness," only I did not know this nor Him till the incarnation, nor did a Gentile till the resurrection, nor indeed any till it pleased God to reveal it in Him, though there are full glimpses of it and statements in the Old Testament.

Nor did I know the Father a bit more, nor the Holy Spirit in His indwelling, though holy men spake by Him.

No more than I know the Son till taught of Him (though He made the worlds), nor the Father till the Son reveal Him.

But the office of Christianity is to reveal the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, to make known this relationship in the Godhead (in our enjoyment of the results) into which creature is brought in blessing in the intelligent, Spirit-taught and quickened church the personal fullness of Him Who being such filleth all in all because the fullness dwelt in Him.

Most important as regards His glory because the creative power is thus associated with redemptive power-is associated with, as the basis of the headship glory.

Prov. 30:1-6 is a most important passage, humbling us to profit, and yet opening to faith what man cannot enter into-a very important passage.

I have made this memorandum not to prove (it is known by communion in my own soul, i.e., to myself, communion with the Father by Him), but to show its importance because of the destructiveness of breaking the blessed link. The Word is our most important revelation of what He the Lord is-most important.

The Son is another most important revelation of what He, Jesus, is-the revelation, the name, the truth of His relationship in person in God, or in the Godhead.

If we do not see Him in this with the Father, we lose all the value of it in Him as incarnate.

It is another revelation about Him....

No one can give me the partakings of the divine nature. No one can call me into this relationship in integral blessing unless he be in it vitally, unless he be in it in His union with the Father....

Therefore the holy thing born of the virgin Is called the Son of God, and in Him the fullness is manifested ever of God, and yet we are adopted into it further.

Officially the Word, might I not say, constitutes the apostleship, the Son the priesthood of Christ, both exercised as a Man, but in both competent for it from their respective characters. In a word, He is the Son.

As to any question arising from the term "begotten," it is only weakness itself, for if we argue from the Word, He was a Son before He was begotten, for the resurrection was the day He was begotten, yet was He not a Son while walking on the earth?

When He made the worlds He was a Son. I know Him as a Son in all that He is, and His acts, through some of them here. "Though He were a Son"-I see it as clearly as God's own truth, and it is in this I have to be receptive of truth by God in grace, not judging by my poor incapable intellect.

The love of the truth is a great matter in subjection of spirit, not to lay down the imaginations of man, but to be thankful for the communion of God, and not to depart, or bear departure from the Scriptures.

When we have to speak, God's Spirit will teach us what to say. As for me, I feel I may err in every word. I resist utterly when the truth of God is set aside, yea I trust ever will, by His grace.

As for me myself, I am but as the beasts that perish incapable of these things to know them. As revealed they are all my blessing, for God is revealed (reveals Himself) in them to me. So that one is taught of God's Spirit. I could not depart from them. I hold them fast with life. They are between me and my God in thought. I defend them and I do not discuss them with men as questions. I speak of matters of faith which have been made known by faith to me, as God gives me utterance, and I recur to His word to guard as it teaches them where His Spirit is. I hold it vital to hold the Sonship before the worlds. It is the truth.

This article was found by one who came into possession of many of J.N.D.'s Mss. letters and papers in 1938.

The original Mss. can be seen by appointment by any of the Lord's people at Bank House, Redruth, Cornwall.

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