

une God. But, as I said in the previous article, the Trinity itself is revealed to us in the fact that each work of God is performed with one Person in the foreground: God as Father in creation, God as Son in redemption and God as Holy Spirit in sanctification (*Heidelberg Catechism*, Q. & A. 8).

Christ came in a state of humiliation to be followed by His state of glorification. Even as He walked among us, in all respects like us (except that He was totally without sin), the glory of His divine nature shone through the veil of His human nature like a flash of lightning, in His words and especially in His miracles. The disciples saw it and knew He was “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16; John 2:11).

But the Scriptures teach us that the surpassing glory of our Saviour is especially in the cross. While Christ was in His state of humiliation, in His life and ministry, and while on the cross doing battle with the powers of darkness and earning our everlasting salvation, His divine nature was hidden behind His human nature—except, perhaps, when He died. Even the centurion saw His divinity flash through His human nature at the moment when He died (Mark 15:39). There were those who could see His divinity in His state of humiliation but it was by faith only, for it was hidden to the unbelieving eye.

All the work of Christ is summed up in Psalm 40:6-8, quoted and explained in Hebrews 10:5-9. God Triune came into the world in the Second Person of the Trinity who lay as a baby in the manger in Bethlehem. God Triune was a man in the Person of the Son. God Triune suffered and died in the incarnate Second Person. God Triune arose in the Person of the Son for God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.

In glory, when we shall see Christ, we shall, in fact, see the Triune God. Jesus said to Philip, “If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also” (John 14:7).

The glory and blessedness of being united by faith to Christ is that we shall not only see God in Him, but really and truly live with the holy Trinity in covenant fellowship through Christ into whom we are engrafted by faith.

In other words, Yes, Christ did always pray—in Gethsemane, as well as all the other times in His life—to His Father, the Triune God. In a sense, therefore, He prayed to Himself. Yet it is also clear that He was conscious of Himself, and prayed, as the Son in our flesh, and not as the Second Person of the Trinity only, as we saw last time in our explanation of “not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matt. 26:39).

Hebrews 5:7-9 reveals something of this: “Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son [i.e., ‘Though he were *Son*’], yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.”

For many years I did not dare to preach on this text in Hebrews 5, though I wanted to do so. Finally, I did. Afterwards, I regretted that I had tried. I felt as though I had failed. It was too profound for me. We stand before a mystery, the great mystery of our salvation!

Prof. Hanko

Covenant Reformed News

August 2018 • Volume XVII, Issue 4

God’s Wisdom (3)

The two previous instalments explained the basic idea of wisdom and showed how it is manifest in God’s Persons, perfections, decree and works of creation and providence.

Jehovah displayed His rich wisdom through the whole history of Old Testament Israel, involving Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; the exodus, the wilderness wanderings and the conquest of Canaan; the periods of the judges and the united monarchy of Saul, David and Solomon; the divided kingdoms of Israel in the north and Judah in the south; the conquests by the Assyrians and the Babylonians; the return from the captivity and the 400 silent years.

Turning to the pages of the New Testament, who can fail to be impressed by the profound wisdom of the Triune God? It begins with John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Messiah, the prophesied “Elijah” (Mal. 4:5; Matt. 11:14; Luke 1:17), who ushered in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God. Though never did a man teach as He taught, the wicked Jewish leaders conspired to have Him crucified. However, His sacrificial death is the atonement for all the sins of His elect church, and it was swiftly followed by His victorious resurrection and the outpouring of the blessed Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Much of the rest of New Testament Scripture is occupied with the gathering of the catholic or universal church of Jews and Gentiles.

Regarding this wonder, Paul exclaims, “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold *wisdom* of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph. 3:8-11).

In Romans 11, the same apostle explains how Jehovah uses believing Jews and Gentiles to provoke each other to a holy jealousy (11-15), until all of elect Israel and “the fulness of the Gentiles” are brought to salvation immediately prior to the Lord’s second coming (25-26; II Pet. 3:9). No wonder that Paul cried out, “O the depth of the riches ... of the *wisdom* ... of God!” (Rom. 11:33).

Rev. Stewart

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)

Pastor: Angus Stewart, 7 Lislunna Road, Kells, N. Ireland, BT42 3NR • (028) 25 891851

pastor@cprc.co.uk • www.youtube.com/cprcni • www.facebook.com/CovenantPRC

Did God Pray to God? (2)

In the last issue of the *News*, I answered the question of whether Christ prayed to Himself in Gethsemane (and elsewhere) in the affirmative. He, who personally was God in our flesh, prayed to His Father who was the Triune God, not the First Person of the Trinity. We also saw that this question involves the great mystery of the Trinity and the marvellous wonder of God becoming flesh in the Person of the eternal Son.

We ought to provide more detail to this answer, though we shall understand it only in a small measure. God is so infinitely great in His Being and in His works, that we shall never understand His greatness though we have eternity to contemplate His majesty. Our knowledge of Jehovah, even when we will be sinlessly perfect, will always be a smidgen, compared to His unsearchable riches because of our limited human minds.

But we must come to some knowledge of what the Scriptures teach for they instruct us in a very wonderful truth.

In short, the truth is that all the works of God are done by the holy Trinity. Never is one work solely the business of the First Person; another work, the business of the Second Person; and a third work, the business of the Third Person.

I already mentioned God's work of creation. That work was not performed by the First Person of the holy Trinity to the exclusion of the Second and Third Persons. Already in Genesis 1, creation is described as the First Person speaking His powerful and creative word. That personal Creator Word is identified in other parts of Scripture as God's Son (John 1:1-3, 18). Also, in Genesis 1:2, the Holy Spirit is specifically mentioned as brooding upon the face of the deep.

Scripture says more than this. It designates God's Word as Christ, that is, Immanuel, God with us in the flesh (Matt. 1:23; John 1:14). John 1:1 declares that the Word "was with God" and "was God." Both are true. He was Himself God but also "with" God, that is, distinct from God (the Father) yet with Him. Colossians 1 speaks of the One "in whom we have redemption through his blood" (14), who is also "the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth ... all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist" (15-17).

Hebrews 1:2, in an equally marvellous passage that proclaims the excellency of Christ far above all the Old Testament types and shadows, extols Him as the One "by whom also he [i.e., God] made the worlds."

In Proverbs 8, in what is one of my favourite passages in the Bible, where Christ is given the name "wisdom," Scripture puts in the mouth of wisdom these words: "The LORD [i.e., the Triune God] possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old ... 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 ... Then I was by him, as one brought up before him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him" (22, 27-28, 30).

These passages of Holy Writ are so profound that they will not be fully understood by the church until the Lord Himself returns. But they do teach that even eternally, as well as in God's work of creation, Christ had a significance distinct from that of the Triune God.

The same is true of our Lord's birth. We use the active voice when we confess such truths as Christ entered our flesh, the Son came into the world to take on Himself our human nature and the guilt of our sins, etc. The Scriptures make clear that the incarnation was not the work of the Second Person alone but is also the work of the other divine Persons. Gabriel told Mary how it was that she would be the mother of the Lord: "The *Holy Ghost* shall come upon thee, and the power of the *Highest* shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the *Son of God*" (Luke 1:35). The incarnation of our Saviour was the work of the Triune God!

God is the Father of Christ. Thus Christ (according to His divine nature) is His own Father (with respect to His human nature).

So it is with Christ's resurrection. Scripture uses both expressions to describe it: Christ "rose" (active) and He "was raised" (passive) from the grave (e.g., I Cor. 15:4; Rom. 4:25). When the angels at His sepulchre announced to the women the glad tidings of the resurrection, they said, "He is not here: for he is risen" (Matt. 28:6). The text does not say He "was raised" (passive) but it states He "is risen" (active).

In Psalm 2:7, we read, "I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." Paul, in his sermon at Antioch in Pisidia, quotes this verse as proof that Jehovah raised Christ from the grave: "God ... hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee" (Acts 13:33). The Triune God raised Christ and He arose by His own divine power.

One truth of Scripture that we ought never to forget is that the Bible is the infallibly inspired record of the revelation of God. Jehovah reveals Himself in all His works and purposes. Primary in this revelation is God's purpose to glorify Himself in all He does, for He alone is worthy of all praise and honour, now and forever. His revelation is not a revelation in which bits and pieces of His glory are revealed, here a little and there a little, so that we have to sift through the works of God that we may know Him. God is one, so also is His revelation one. Nor does the First Person of the holy Trinity reveal Himself here, the Second Person there and the Third Person in yet a third place.

The Triune God reveals Himself in all His glory and infinite blessedness in Jesus Christ. One revelation; one mighty work. As far as the present issue is concerned, the Triune God reveals Himself in the incarnation, the ministry, the suffering and death, the burial and resurrection, the ascension and glorification, and the second coming of Christ, when He will make all things new and execute God's fierce judgments against the ungodly. It is not one Person of the Trinity but the Triune God who says, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11).

I do not hesitate to say that the name "Father" refers always in Scripture to the Tri-