

THE WORD *SOPHIA*, "wisdom," is encountered in the sacred books both the Old Testament (in the Greek translation) and of the New Testament. In the New Testament Sacred Scripture it is used in three meanings:

1. In the usual broad meaning of wisdom, understanding: *"Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and grace"* (Luke 2:52); *"But wisdom is justified of all her children"* (Luke 7:35).
2. In the meaning of the wise economy of God expressed in the creation of the world, in His Providence over the world, and in the salvation of the world from sin: *"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been His counselor?"* (Romans 11:33-34). *"We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory"* (1 Cor. 2:7).
3. In relation to the Son of God as the Hypostatical Wisdom of God: *"But we preach Christ crucified ... Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God"* (1 Cor. 1:23-24); *"Who of God is made unto us wisdom"* (1 Cor. 1:30).

In the Old Testament Sacred Scripture we find in many places statements concerning wisdom. Here also there are the same three meanings for this term. In particular, wisdom is spoken of in the book of Proverbs and in two of the Apocryphal books: the Wisdom of Solomon and the Wisdom of Joshua, Son of Sirach.

In the majority of cases, human wisdom is presented here as a gift of God which one must hold exceptionally dear. The very titles of the books, the "Wisdom" of Solomon and the "Wisdom" of Joshua, Son of Sirach, indicate in what sense—namely, in the sense of human wisdom— one must understand this word here. In other Old Testament books separate episodes are cited which specially depict human wisdom— for example, the famous judgment of Solomon,

The above-named books introduce us to the direction of thought of the God-inspired teachers of the Jewish people. These teachers inspire the people to be guided by reason, not to give way to blind inclinations and passions, and to hold firmly in their actions to the commands of prudence, correct judgment, the moral law, and the firm foundations of duty in personal, family, and public life.

A large part of the ideas in the book of Proverbs is devoted to this subject. The title of this book, "Proverbs," forewarns the reader that he will find in it a figurative, metaphorical, and allegorical means of exposition. In the introduction to the book, after indicating the neglect of it, which is "understanding, wisdom, and instruction," the author expresses the assurance that *"a wise man... will understand a parable, and a dark speech, the sayings of the wise also, and riddles"* (Prov. 1:6, Septuagint) — that is, he will understand its figurativeness, its allegoricalness, its "hard saying" (Prov. 1:3), without taking all the images in a literal sense.

And indeed, in the further reasoning of the book, there is revealed an abundance of images and personifications in the application of the wisdom that man can possess. *"Acquire wisdom, acquire understanding... Say unto wisdom, thou art my sister, and call understanding thy kinswoman"* (Prov. 7:4). *"Forsake it not, and it shall cleave to thee; love it, and it shall keep thee ... Secure it, and it shall exalt thee; honor it, that it may embrace thee; that it may give unto thy head a crown of graces, and*

*may cover thee with a crown of delight"* (Prov. 4:6-9, Septuagint). *"For she sits by the gates of princes, and sings in the entrances"* (Prov. 8:3, Septuagint). The same kind of thinking about human wisdom is contained in the Wisdom of Solomon.

It is clear that all these sayings about wisdom in no way can be understood as a teaching of a personal Wisdom, the soul of the world, in the sophiological sense. A man possesses it, obtains it, loses it; it serves him; its beginning is called "the fear of the Lord"; and side by side with wisdom there are also named "understanding" and "instruction" and "knowledge."

And where does wisdom come from? Like everything else in the world, it has a single source: God. *"For the Lord gives wisdom, and from His presence come knowledge and understanding"* (Prov. 2:6)." God is *"the guide even of wisdom and the corrector of the wise"* (Wisdom of Solomon 7:15).

A second group of utterances in Holy Scripture refer to this wisdom of God, which is the *wisdom in God Himself*. Ideas of the wisdom in God are interspersed with ideas of the wisdom in man.

If the dignity of understanding and wisdom in man are so exalted, then how majestic they are in God Himself! The writer uses the most majestic expressions possible in order to present the power and grandeur of the *Divine wisdom*. Here also he makes broad use of personification. He speaks of the grandeur of the Divine plans which, according to our human conceptions, seem to have preceded the creation; because the wisdom of God lies at the foundation of all that exists, therefore it is before everything, earlier than everything that exists. *"The Lord made me the beginning of His ways for His works. He established me before time was in the beginning, before He made the earth, even before He made the depths ... Before all hills, He begets me... When He prepared the heaven, I was present with Him"* (Prov. 8:22-25, 27, Septuagint). The author speaks of the beauty of the world, expressing in images what was said of the creation in the book of Genesis (it was very good). He says on behalf of wisdom: *"I was by Him, I was that wherein He took delight; and daily I rejoiced in His presence continually"* (Prov. 8:30).

In all the above-cited images of wisdom, and other similar ones, there are no grounds for seeing in a direct sense any personal spiritual being, distinct from God Himself, a soul of the world or idea of the world. This does not correspond to the images given here: an ideal "essence of the world" could not be called "present" at the creation of the world (see the Wisdom of Solomon 9:9); only something outside both the Creator and the creation could be "present." Likewise, it could not be an "implement" of the creation itself if it itself is the soul of the created world. Therefore, in the above-cited expressions it is natural to see personifications (a literary device), even though they are so expressive as to be near being made into *hypostases* or actual persons.

Finally, the writer of the book of Proverbs is prophetically exalted in thought to the prefiguration of the *New Testament economy* of God which is to be revealed in the preaching of the Savior of the world, in the salvation of the world and of mankind, and in the creation of the New Testament Church. This prefiguration is to be found in the first verses of the ninth chapter of Proverbs: *"Wisdom has built a house for herself, and set up seven pillars. She has killed her beasts; she has mingled her wine in a bowl..."* (Prov. 9:1-6, Septuagint). This magnificent image is equal in power to the prophecies of the Savior in the Old Testament prophets.

Since the economy of salvation was performed by the Son of God, the Holy Fathers of the Church, and following them the Orthodox interpreters of the book of Proverbs in general, refer the name "wisdom of God," which essentially belongs to the Holy Trinity as a whole, to the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Son of God, as the Fulfiller of the Counsel of the Holy Trinity.

By analogy with this prophetic passage, the images in the book of Proverbs which were indicated above as referring to the wisdom in God (in chapter 8) are also interpreted as applying to the Son of God. When the Old Testament writers, to whom the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity was not entirely revealed, say "*In wisdom hath He made them all*" — for a New Testament believer, a Christian, in the name "Word" and in the name "Wisdom" is revealed the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Son of God.

The Son of God, as a Hypostasis of the Holy Trinity, contains in Himself all the Divine attributes in the same fullness as do the Father and the Holy Spirit. However, as having manifested these attributes to the world in its creation and its salvation, He is called the Hypostatic Wisdom of God. On the same grounds, the Son of God can also be called the Hypostatic Love (see St. Symeon the New Theologian, Homily 53); the Hypostatic Light ("*walk [in the light] while ye have the light,*" John 12:35); the Hypostatic Life ("*Thou hast given birth to the Hypostatic Life*"-Canon of the Annunciation, Canticle 8); and the Hypostatic Power of God ("*We preach... Christ the power of God*" 1 Cor. 1:24).

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**466 Foothill Blvd, Box 397, La Canada, Ca 91011**

**Editor: Bishop Alexander (Mileant)**