

# *Praise to God is the End of Wisdom—What is the Beginning?*

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Wisdom culminates in praise! Wisdom of course is not the acquiring of knowledge nor the accumulation of data. It is long-term, patient, discerning attentiveness to the character and quality of life, to the sustaining inter-relations that appear, to the peculiar ways in which life comes to fruition, in which promises are kept, in which pathologies cost, in which healings happen.<sup>1</sup> Such attentiveness may be discerned in the largeness of creation, in the delicacy of a birth, in the mystery of self. Such attentiveness is not blind to evil, brutality, and death; in the midst of such powerful realities, nonetheless, wise attentiveness is pressed beyond life observed, finally to say, "Thou."<sup>2</sup> Regard for creation urges us to the creator whom we address in wonder, awe, amazement, and gratitude.<sup>3</sup> The ultimate expression of our attentiveness, the conclusion drawn, does not lead to a scientific formulation, to an intellectual conclusion, or to technical certainty, but to lyrical self-abandonment. Such attentiveness leads finally to doxology, to the ceding of life in its wonder and gratitude over to the one who is its progenitor, sponsor, and sovereign.

## I

Praise is where wisdom ends.<sup>4</sup> Wisdom, however, does not automatically and in every case end there. Wisdom ends in doxology, only if long-term, patient, discerning attentiveness begins in the right way at the right place. In order to end in praise, wisdom must begin in obedience. A biblical way of speaking of this point of embarkation is this: "Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 9:10, cf. 1:7, Ps. 111:10).<sup>5</sup> The purpose of this paper is to explore the intention of that biblical formula, and to consider its importance for our situation of life and ministry.

The testimony of the Bible is unambiguous. Believing persons are to learn to "fear God."<sup>6</sup> The phrase "fear God" is elusive, and for that reason misleading. It seems to include the notion of dread and terror before God. Because dread and terror are too heavy, however, our propensity is to speak instead of awe, wonder, and reverence. I suspect that the phrase intends to include in its scope a great range of nuances that run from terror to wonder. If we try to articulate all of these nuances in a single affirmation, we may suggest that "fear of God" means to take God *with utmost seriousness* as the premise and perspective from which life is to be discerned and lived. That "utmost seriousness" requires attentiveness to some things rather than others, to spend one's energies in response to this God who has initiated our life. While a variety of

texts might be cited which illuminate this phrase, I will mention four texts that give some flavor to the phrase.

1. Do not fear, for God has come to prove you, and that the fear of him may be before your eyes, that you may not sin (Ex. 20:20).

This text is placed immediately after the ten commandments at Mt. Sinai. Thus the sentence surely is a summons to obedience, that is, obedience to the commandments just given. It is through obedience to the commandments that Israel fears God and does not sin. Notice though that the summons to fear in the mouth of Moses begins with the invitation, "Do not fear." The fear as obedience to which Israel is summoned is not terror and dread, but responsiveness to God's will. Israel's life is to be lived in responsiveness to God's will, and that will is given in the commandments.

2. For the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear him, and keep his commandments and obey his voice, and you shall serve him and cleave to him (Deut. 13:3-4).

The teaching of Deuteronomy is an exposition of the Sinai text. Deuteronomy loves to pile up words so that "fear" is treated as a parallel to "love, walk after, keep, listen (obey), serve, and cleave." Clearly the emphasis is upon attending to God's will and not upon dread and terror.

Deuteronomy, moreover, knows in remarkable detail about the will of Yahweh and what constitutes fear and obedience. Deuteronomy is the great biblical statement on *covenanting* as a way of ordering all social relations. In the vision of society offered in this text, in every aspect of life, political, economic, military, judicial, and familial, members of the community are bound in care to each other. They are bound not only to God but to the neighbor, the strong to the weak, the powerful to the vulnerable and needy. "Fear of God" then is not a cognitive operation but it is a premise from which to shape social relations in a certain way. This way of social relations is diametrically opposed to Canaanite ways which this tradition views as idolatrous, destructive, and deathly. "Fear of God" is a summons to disengage from modes of social relationships which not only alienate from Yahweh, but also from neighbor.

3. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight (Prov. 9:10).

At first glance, the instruction in Proverbs is very different from the imperative of Deuteronomy. If, however, one reads more closely, it becomes apparent that Proverbs, like Deuteronomy, is interested in the resilient way in which the several parts of society are related to each other, indeed, the way in which parts of creation are related to each other. The wisdom teacher has observed that certain deeds yield certain consequences.<sup>8</sup> Certain choices inevitably produce certain results. The rule of Yahweh has ordered creation so that those connections persist and cannot be circumvented.<sup>9</sup> There are reliable patterns of relationship which cannot be mocked or voided. Attention to those reliable patterns finally leads one to marvel at the God who has so ordered life. Wisdom is the habit of observing these interrelations, honoring them, and accepting them as the terms of one's life. Wisdom thus is the awareness that the

world is not endlessly pliable, but that God has ordered in the very fabric of creation a system of gifts and costs that must be treated seriously. In sum, wisdom is the acknowledgement that God's terms for living will prevail, and that when honored, they yield well-being, and when mocked, they bring trouble.<sup>10</sup>

4. Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in his commandments (Ps. 112:1).

Notice that Ps. 112:1 places in parallel "fear of God" and "commandments," respectively the categories of Proverbs (fear) and Deuteronomy (commandments). The two modes of articulation (wisdom and covenant) are brought together.<sup>11</sup> The remainder of this Psalm explicates the conduct of the God-fearer as one who practices righteousness and justice, who is generous, stable, liberal, and caring. His life is attuned to the generous, caring righteousness of God's own practice, which is explicated in Ps. 111.

From these several texts there emerges a model of human life which lives out in daily practice the caring for all parts of creation that belong to God's will for the world. The seriousness of the mandate embraced by this human agent has not eliminated the terror and dread of the requirement, but has transposed terror and dread into positive acts of life-enhancement. Wisdom is the lived conviction that life lived in certain terms and ways (terms and ways I would term "covenantal") leads to well-being. Wisdom is the awareness that these ways are nonnegotiable, and that the embrace of these ways is right, proper, good, appropriate, and joyous. A life that begins in such awareness and embrace surely will end in doxology. Conversely, a life that rejects this awareness and refuses this embrace will end without praise. There will be no one to praise and no will to sing.

## II

From this brief sketch we may articulate four affirmations that belong to a practice of the fear of God:

1. "Fear of God" is not cowering, frightened intimidation. Those who fear God are not wimps and are not preoccupied with excessive need to please God. They are rather those who have arrived at a *fundamental vision of reality about life with God*, who have enormous power, freedom, and energy to live out that vision. "Fear of God" is liberating and not restrictive, because it gives confidence about the true shape of the world.

2. Fear of God *concerns ethical praxis*, the actual doing of a certain kind of life. The obedience that the phrase enjoins, however, is not the endless pursuit of rules, so that obedience is reduced to excessive scrupulosity. Rather this obedience is the embrace and enactment of a vision of reality, a vision that shapes every social relationship and transaction. Wisdom is the capacity to see how this vision of reality is present in and operative through every moment of *praxis*.

3. "Fear of God" is not a collection of little commandments and of detailed insights about this and that. Rather, it is the courageous capacity to insist that all of *life has a moral coherence* and a unity of purpose and

meaning. Wisdom is the daring affirmation that all of life is better understood and more truly discerned in relation to God's governance and sovereignty. That governance maintains expectation for every social relation, and no part of life is remote from that large sovereignty. Wisdom then is the readiness to see and enter into all of life as an area where God's will is decisive.

4. The accent on *praxis*, on doing God's will, should not weaken our recognition that wisdom is *an intellectual, epistemological enterprise*. Wisdom concerns not only doing, but also knowing. Wisdom is an intellectual premise for living life, an elemental acknowledgement that life derives from and is accountable to God. Wisdom then is not a frantic effort to arrive at a proper theological conclusion, but it is the confident embrace of a theological premise and assumption. Life does not finally add up to wisdom, but wisdom is the assumption from which life is adequately and faithfully lived. Thus "fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" is a decision that *faith seeks understanding*.<sup>12</sup> This initial discernment of God's sovereign intentionality illuminates every aspect of our living. We come at life already knowing.

Clearly it is this perception of life which we crave for our children. There is no doubt that "fear of the Lord" has been variously used to intimidate, as a form of social control, and as a defense for certain preferred customs and practices. We have all too easily equated our particular way with "fear of God." Underneath all such distorted uses, however, it is clear that this pervasive premise from the Bible insists on a coherent, unified, liberating, theocentric vision of human life and of all creation. For all its problematic character, this affirmation makes a qualitative and decisive difference in our living.

### III

Without knowing exactly why, we sense in our bones that this presentation of reality holds thin authority among us. This biblical vision of human faith and conduct is now scarcely credible, and when we speak it, we tone it down in order not to be ludicrous. The reasons for this lack of credibility are complicated and far from clear. They have to do, in any case, not with some recent emergence of "permissiveness," or the "break-down of the family," or hippies, or Communism, or any of the easy targets of blame. Rather we are heirs of a long intellectual process that is in deep conflict with the biblical vision, and that continues to offer a powerful and attractive alternative vision of reality. It will be valuable for our teaching and preaching to recognize that we articulate a vision of reality that is at deep odds with the dominant intellectual assumptions of our culture.

The dominant alternative to a biblical vision (which we may term "modernity") has roots which go back to the Renaissance and Reformation, which came along with the rise of science, and became dominant with the positivism of the Enlightenment. This entire intellectual development, of which we are the inescapable heirs, has championed unfettered autonomy, and has regarded any authoritative tradition as its enemy and as the enemy of autonomous freedom. If we are to locate the intellectual underpinnings of that modernist perspective, we may attend especially to the work of Descartes and Locke, though

the development of modernity is more complex than the identification of any particular names. Descartes has introduced us to the principle of doubt as the most honest intellectual activity we can undertake. Locke has shaped us to believe that the unit of social meaning and agency is the individual person, without reference to community or tradition. It is clear that doubt and autonomy do not cohere in any with the vision of reality encoded as "fear of the Lord." Indeed the faith of Israel intended to counter doubt with its appeal to authoritative torah. Its response to any notion of individual autonomy was the prior claim of the community. *Authoritative teaching* and *priority of community* are central aspects of biblical faith that are resisted and countered by the modernity of Descartes and Locke.

In my reading I have found the following four statements helpful in understanding the alien intellectual climate in which evangelical faith must now be practiced:

1. Crawford McPherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*<sup>13</sup> has shown how Lockean individualism has reshaped and redefined our sense of self, so that our personhood is not embedded in an affirmative tradition, but depends upon aggressive, individual self-securing through getting and consuming. This discernment of human reality has made getting and having the goal of human existence. It takes no great imagination to see that such possessive individualism evokes values of satiation and self-assertiveness which show up in every area of life, including economics and sexuality.

2. Karl Polyani, *The Great Transformation*,<sup>14</sup> has traced the way in which the power of the "market" has been slowly and decisively detached from the fabric of social relations. "The economy" became an autonomous force in the modern world, without attachment to or responsibility for social relations. While Polyani's historical analysis does not score the point, the connection between autonomous economy and unbridled consumerism is not difficult to imagine. The "pay-out" of such an autonomous practice of economy is that one can hear Margaret Thatcher speaking of the market as though it were a personal agent, as in "the market knows best."

3. Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*,<sup>15</sup> has provided a shrewd critique of the theory of justice contained in "liberalism," by which he means the justice of the free market system of individual autonomy. Though it lies beyond MacIntyre's analysis, it is easy to notice that the unbridled character of the nation-state in the modern world easily coheres with such a diminishment of any sense of comprehensive relatedness of social relations. MacIntyre makes the point that every view of justice is embedded in historical experience, and that even "liberalism" which understands itself positivistically is also the product of a history and needs to be critiqued on that basis.<sup>16</sup>

4. Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks*,<sup>17</sup> has more popularly considered the disappearance of teleological purpose from social transactions in the face of technological positivism. When such purpose has been completely denied, then all relations are reduced to technical operations in which human worth and dignity are compromised, disregarded, and often destroyed. Modernity is committed to the denial of any purpose beyond the chosen, expressed purpose of those involved in the transaction.

These brief comments about the character of modernity are of course much too thin, for I have reported on areas of study beyond my expertise. It may be sufficient, however, to suggest: a) this is an important literature to which ministers must attend, b) the disappearance of “fear of God” from our lips and our lives is not accidental or incidental, but it is massive and programmatic, c) there is no ground of accommodation between a biblical vision of reality and that of modernity, d) the causes of this profound tension and enormous loss are not to be located in any of the easy “whipping boys” of religious rhetoric, and therefore e) recovery and fresh affirmation of a biblical vision of reality will not be arrived at easily or simply. My comments intend only to make the point that we are participants in an enormous cultural shift that has powerful intellectual underpinnings. It is, in my judgment, worth a great deal to understand what lies behind the behaviors and responses that on the surface seem simply indifferent and irresponsible.

Thus my thesis is in two parts:

1. While always living at the edge of authoritarianism, the theme of “fear of God” articulated a unified, coherent ordering of life and urged attentiveness to and responsibility for the quality of social transactions.

2. The dominant values of modernity (which are marked by autonomy, secularization, and individualism) aim at social relations which are reduced to technique, at a quality of life that is finally profane, and at a character of personhood which is reduced to commodity.

The life sponsored and endorsed by modernity clearly succeeds as obedience is banished from life’s beginning, and praise is precluded at its end. Without a beginning in obedience or an end in praise, human life becomes only a mid-term holding action marked by despair and anxiety, generating fear, and frequently slipping into brutality.

#### IV

I have stated these matters as clearly as I know how. Indeed, the reader may think, this is a caricature, and may conclude that there is middle ground between the two views, middle ground that I do not recognize. Obviously the trajectory of modernity seldom is acted out in such extreme form. It is more visible in mindless consumerism, in an endless pursuit of a “higher standard of living,” in a blind passion for capital punishment, in gang rapes and their various social justifications, in a military budget that lacks rationality in the name of “deterrence,” in political discourse that avoids the human issues of hurt and hope, in a redefinition of human personhood as consumer and commodity, in a yearning for religious voices that will conform the gospel to these several pathologies. For many people, the deep threat and pain of this crisis is the awareness that their children can no longer relate to the great claims of the faith, not because they are rebellious, but because they do not care, or caring, cannot understand or see the point. They no longer know where responsible social passion comes from, why caring is important, or how the disciplines of faith matter, or why. There is between parents and children, a common yearning marked partly by a helpless apathy and partly by an anguished pathos.

The yearning arises not because anyone is “bad,” but because an alien perception of reality makes engagement with the tradition of “fear the Lord” unconvincing and without credibility.

## V

Thus far I have tried to characterize the deep claims of the old tradition of “fear of God” and to state why “God” has disappeared and “fear” has become so odd and so scarce among us. I wish now to comment on our pastoral responsibility in that context.

There are several things we are tempted to do that we must not do:

1. We must not engage in too much nostalgia for how it used to be, for it used to be authoritarian. In any case, moreover, modernity has given us great gifts that should not be discounted.

2. We must not engage in too much browbeating about the losses, as in “Where did we go wrong?” Such a worry is a little like asking, “Who lost China?”, when in fact China has never been lost. Perhaps Constantinian Christianity needed to be “lost.”

3. We must not try quick fixes, to give a veneer or fraudulent replication of the good old days. This is the temptation of right wing religion with its shrill insistence on doctrinal accuracy or moral correctness. The issues are much more dense and deep, and such efforts only commit us to a cover-up of the real problems. The issues in the crisis of modernity do not concern simply morality or orthodoxy, but a promise of faith that dares to see reality as a moral unity.

4. We must not try excessive accommodation to tailor our Christianity to modernity. This is the temptation of the left under the guise of “pluralism” which most often turns out to mean simply “to each her own.”

When we are not staggered by our situation or excessively compromised, we may find energy to celebrate the urgency of the pastoral, teaching, interpreting task of the church. We have entrusted to us a vision of reality that is a formidable and healthy response to the pathology of modernity, if we can keep our faith, our sense, and our cool. The articulation and offer of this evangelical alternative will require hard intellectual work to give voice to a vision that lies outside the conventions and categories of our culture.

It is, I submit, important to recognize our true cultural situation (which pertains even if we are in the “Bible belt” and blessed with a kind of Presbyterian buoyancy). The truth is that we are committed to a vision of reality that is deeply at odds with the modernity, autonomy, individualism that is embraced by most conservatives, by most liberals, and mostly by us. This means, I suggest, that our task is subversive, sectarian, and counterculture, and that task requires different awarenesses and different expectations, both of ourselves and of others.

1. The pastoral task of the church is *subversive*. This subversive does not have to do in any first sense with social action. It has to do with the subversion of the imagination of modernity. Children of modernity do not imagine that they imagine. And when we imagine, we imagine that we are simply objective in our discernment. Even when we do not imagine that we imagine, we do

nonetheless. We imagine we are free, unfettered agents. Our subversion of such a sense of autonomy is to notice that we are embedded in a *remembered tradition*, and that we are embedded in a *structured creation* which has its own say.<sup>18</sup> Both remembered tradition and structured creation give us gifts and both hold us deeply accountable. The work of subversion is to summon people to be ill-fitted and ill-suited for the modernity around us, so that we have the freedom and grace to construe ourselves as children who receive, and not as technicians who devise, or as automatons who process.

2. The pastoral task of the church is *sectarian*.<sup>19</sup> Since Troelsch stacked the cards, the term “sect” has been a negative word, referring to religious kooks. Rightly understood and free of the sociology of European Christianity, the term refers to an intentional religious community which proposes and practices a vision of reality not respected or embraced by the dominant culture. The “sect-work” of the American church is not primarily issue-oriented (e.g., war, sexuality, economics), nor is it ideologically of the right or of the left. Rather that work has to do with the main claim of the faith that “fear of God” begins wisdom, that obedience begets a true discernment of reality. The sect offers an alternative and expects that this alternative may win adherents and gain credibility for a redefinition of public life. “Sectarian” does not mean withdrawal, but the voicing of an alternative that calls to radical repentance concerning public reality.

3. The pastoral task of the church is *countercultural*. This term of course does not mean beads, long hair, and dropouts. It means that we affirm and enact a countervision of social relations, counter to the greedy brutality now so much in vogue. The memory of the church in Scripture provides a language that means to counter the dominant language. As we seriously and imaginatively engage that “second” language, that language will begin to spill into the central human issues.

The preacher (and the church) are entrusted with a vision of reality rooted in sovereignty, enacted in concrete social transactions, sustained by old memories, and powered by long hopes. That vision of reality must be sounded in its grand scope, but mostly it is mediated in lesser ways, a day at a time, a text at a time, a sacrament at a time. In our context, I submit that this subversive, sectarian, countercultural enterprise has to do with practice of public language around the reality of *human hurt and human hope*. These are realities that are mostly lost in the shuffle with our talk of security, affluence, freedom, and power.

The biblical tradition, however, found *hurt and hope* the irreducible human factors. Moreover, it found the drama of *human hurt* enacted in the crucifixion of Jesus, and the drama of *human hope* realized in the resurrection of Jesus. When the church fixes its language on hurt and hope, the great issues of public life and of personal identity get redefined. We begin to notice that hurt and hope reshape our unbridled freedom to “do my own thing.” We sense that our passion for private property is not so innocent. It occurs to us that our indulgence and satiation in consumer goods and sexuality are not as central as we imagined. We think again about the failure of financial and military power to make secure, the inability of might to make right, and the incapacity of

greed to bring joy.

What is needed among us, I sense, is the slow, steady, sustained, conviction that this evangelical vision of reality about “the fear of God” matters and will prevail. We are indeed embedded people, and all the modernity in the world cannot undo that reality. Our worship is an affirmation of our particular embeddedness. Our ethic is the enactment of that embeddedness. Our faith is the naming of the One who gives us our long-term habitat, identity, and vocation.

## VI

As I thought about writing this piece and pastors reading it, I imagined we could all be silent observers at a summit meeting between the biblical vision and that of modernity. The summit meeting is hosted by Moses (who else?) and is attended by the doubting of Descartes and the possessing of Locke. Rene and John find the meeting odd. They do not understand the conversation and they do not want to be there. Moses, however, is a wonderful host who will not permit them to leave. Moses has too many stories to tell. He regales them with Pharaohs confronted, with double bread given for sabbath, with tablets received, and calves crushed. Then Moses takes his resistant friends to the brink of Pisgah and shows them the land where they have never been, milk and honey—all in promise. The conversation is difficult, because Descartes has no memory and Locke has no hope. Moses nonetheless insists on his version of reality, meal after meal, tale after tale, wonder after wonder.

Moses is such a free person in his present moment and one wonders why. It is because Moses knows so much. He remembers so much. He remembers that his life is rooted in obedience. That is where it all began:

His delight is in the torah of the Lord,  
on his torah he meditates day and night.  
He is like a tree planted by streams of water (Ps. 1:2-3).

Moses also recalls that he is headed to the land of praise, where he will stand unencumbered with timbrel and pipe. He will sing with Israel and with angels:

Praise the Lord  
Praise God in God’s sanctuary;  
Praise God in God’s mighty firmament  
Praise God for God’s mighty deeds (Ps. 150:1).

Moses is so very sure about the beginnings in *obedience* and the ending in *praise*. He is therefore not tense about the present, not worried about its outcome. He is utterly free, and therefore threatening to us and winsome. Moses’ exchange with Descartes and Locke is tough; we do not know if Moses will prevail because the meeting is not yet completed.

We do know this much. As the conversation goes on with the devisors of modernity, notice that “the fear of the Lord” is not a careless slogan or a dumb moralism. It is an allusion to another whole way of life, rooted in the reality of God’s purpose. Rene and John may still go their way in doubt and acquisitive-

ness. Moses, however, yields nothing and concedes nothing, for he believes his vision of reality is rooted in the character of God who will not be banished. That God has a holy and terrible name (Ps. 111:9), a name issuing commands, authorizing songs, giving life, never conceding, or yielding, or failing.<sup>20</sup> We observe the meeting, unobserved. Then it dawns on us that this is our meeting too, along with the holy terrible name, and Moses and all the saints. This company always starts again at the beginning, in obedience.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The basic and most helpful book on wisdom is Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972). The most helpful introduction is James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981). See also James L. Crenshaw, ed., *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom* (New York: KTAV, 1976).

<sup>2</sup> This culmination is evident in Ps. 150 which simply "enjoys" God, and in Job 42:1-6 in which Job finally yields to the overwhelming reality of God with whom he now communes.

<sup>3</sup> See especially Walther Zimmerli, "The Place and Limit of Wisdom in the Framework of the Old Testament Theology," *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, pp. 314-26.

<sup>4</sup> Patrick D. Miller, Jr., "In Praise and Thanksgiving," *Theology Today* 45 (1988): 188, writes "The praise of God is the last word of faith. It is our 'end' in life, the end or goal toward which all our life is set. All the songs and prayers of Israel contained in the Psalter reach their final climax in praise. In praise, therefore, God gives us the last word."

<sup>5</sup> On this theme, see von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, pp. 53-73.

<sup>6</sup> von Rad, *ibid.*, p. 68, comments "The statement that the fear of the Lord was the beginning of wisdom was Israel's most special possession."

<sup>7</sup> On the phrase "fear not," see Edgar W. Conrad, *Fear Not: Warrior* (Brown Judaic Studies 75, Chico: Scholars Press, 1985).

<sup>8</sup> Klaus Koch, "Is There a Doctrine of Retribution in the Old Testament?" *Theodicy in the Old Testament*, ed. James L. Crenshaw (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), pp. 57-87.

<sup>9</sup> See especially Zimmerli cited in n. 3, and Zimmerli, "Concerning the Structure of Old Testament Wisdom," *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom*, pp. 175-99.

<sup>10</sup> This moral "settlement" of reality, so well articulated in Ps. 37, of course will not hold in the face of recalcitrant data. It is for that reason that the poetry of Job challenges the moral "settlement" on which conventional wisdom rests.

<sup>11</sup> The linkage between commandment and wisdom has been shrewdly explored by Erhard Gerstenberger, *Wesen und Herkunft des apodiktischer Rechts* (WMANT 20, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1965), who proposes that the commandments at the center of the torah are derivative in form from the admonitions and prohibitions of wisdom instruction.

<sup>12</sup> On the programmatic significance of the practice of faith seeking understanding, see Karl Barth, *Fides Quaerens Intellectum, Anselm's Proof of the Existence of God in the Context of his Theological Scheme* (Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1985), and Robert E. Cushman, *Faith Seeking Understanding* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1981). It is impossible to overstate the significance of this posture for a right understanding of theology. In contemporary theology, this conviction is reflected in the work of Hans Frei and George Lindbeck.

<sup>13</sup> C. B. MacPherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962).

<sup>14</sup> Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (New York: Rinehart and Co., 1944).

<sup>15</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988).

<sup>16</sup> MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, pp. 326-69.

<sup>17</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986).

<sup>18</sup> MacIntyre has shown how even the imagined situation of being unfettered and autonomous is in fact a situation of being embedded in a tradition. The imagined situation is an illusion. The juxtaposition of *remembered tradition* and *structured creation* is intended to refer in the Old Testament to, respectively, the creedal recital and to the teaching of wisdom. In both modes, torah

and wisdom, the notion of autonomy is of course denied.

<sup>19</sup> On a positive reading of “sectarian,” see Stanley Hauerwas, “Will the Real Sectaria Stand Up?” *Theology Today* 44 (1987): 87-94, and Walter Brueggemann, “II Kings 18-19: The Legitimacy of a Sectarian Hermeneutic,” *Horizons In Biblical Theology* 71 (June, 1985): 1-42.

<sup>20</sup> On the God who saves and commands, see Emil L. Fackenheim, *God's Presence in History: Jewish Affirmations and Philosophical Reflections* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), pp. 14-19 and *passim*.