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'WISDOM' AND 'KNOWLEDGE' IN
1 CORINTHIANS

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To explain the concepts of wisdom (*σοφία*) and knowledge (*γνώσις*) in 1 Corinthians two general approaches have received considerable scholarly support. One derives St Paul's usage from a nonmythological understanding of the concepts in the Old Testament and later Judaism. The other discerns the influence of mythological origins that may or may not have been mediated through Judaism. The latter view owes its importance in the present century to the 'comparative religions' studies of W. Bousset (1907)¹ and R. Reitzenstein (1910).² It was applied most influentially to New Testament studies by Professor R. Bultmann³ who, with reference to Corinthians,⁴ argued that Paul opposed a movement of Gnostic pneumatics and in the process was himself influenced by Gnostic mythological ideas. This orientation supplied the framework for the interpretation of other early Christian literature by Bultmann's pupils⁵ and, in the present generation, again for the interpretation of 1 Corinthians by Professors Schmithals and Wilckens.⁶

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¹ W. Bousset, *Hauptprobleme der Gnosis*, Göttingen (1907); cf. *Kyrios Christos*, Nashville (1970, 1913) 164-172, 181-187; J. Doresse, *The Secret Books of the Egyptian Gnostics*, London (1960) 2ff.

² R. Reitzenstein, *Die hellenistische Mysterienreligionen*, Stuttgart (1966, 1927).

³ Cf. R. Bultmann, 'Hintergrund des Prologs zum Johannesevangelium', *EYXAPIETHPION H. Gunkel zum 60. Geburtstage*, Göttingen (1923) II, 3-26; 'Die Bedeutung der . . . mandäischen und manichäischen Quellen für Verständnis des Johannesevangeliums', *ZNTW* 24 (1925) 100-146 = *Exegetica*, Tübingen (1967) 10-35, 55-104. But see E. M. Yamauchi, *Gnostic Ethics and Mandaeon Origins*, Cambridge, Mass. (1970) 80-89.

⁴ R. Bultmann, 'γνώσις', *TDNT* I (1966/1933) 708ff.; cf. *Exegetische Probleme des Zweiten Korintherbriefes*, Uppsala (1947) 4f., 23-30 = *Exegetica* (see note 3) 298ff., 315-321. Bultmann offers the following criteria to justify identifying the Corinthian attitudes as Gnostic: the struggle for speculative wisdom (1 Cor. 1:17ff.), an insistence on *gnosis* and on the *exousia* that it gave the possessor (1 Cor. 6:12-18; 8:1-9), pneumatic manifestations, tendencies toward asceticism, a denial of the resurrection. None of these are specifically Gnostic characteristics, and whether they are to be so interpreted in 1 Corinthians depends on other considerations.

⁵ E.g. G. Bornkamm, *Mythos und Legende in den apokryphen Thomasakten*, Göttingen (1933); E. Käsemann, *Das wandernde Gottesvolk*, Göttingen (1939); H. Schlier, *Christus und die Kirche im Epheserbrief*, Tübingen (1930).

⁶ W. Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth*, Nashville (1971, 1956); U. Wilckens,

While these two writers make useful and significant contributions,⁷ their basic thesis represents an elaboration of Bultmann's ideas. The thesis has encountered two critical questions. (1) Is there sufficient evidence in 1 Corinthians to classify the recipients or their mentors as 'opponents' and, thereby, to interpret Paul's teachings in terms of an adversary theology, i.e. a theology incorporating ideas of his opponents that are modified and redirected against them? From 2 Corinthians 10-13, Philippians 1 and 3; Galatians 1-2; 5; Romans 16:17f.; Titus 1:10-16 one may observe Paul's response to opponents. In 1 Corinthians, quite in contrast, Paul speaks as a father (4:15). When he differs, he does so by concession and qualification (7:1f.; 8:1-13) or by a reasoned or apostolic appeal (1 Cor. 1-4; 11:13-16; 14:37; 15). There is no invective. Apollos and Cephas are his co-workers (3:6; 3:22-4:1; 9:5). The Corinthians who wish to 'examine' or 'judge' (4:3f.; 9:3, *ἀνακρίνειν*) Paul do not represent an opposition but, as the context in 1 Corinthians 2:6-16 shows, only wish to subject Paul to the testing usually given to a fellow pneumatic. If at a future time some Corinthians emerge as Paul's opponents, in this letter they appear to be only somewhat confused children.⁸

Weisheit und Torheit, Tübingen (1959); 'σοφία,' *TDNT* 7 (1971) 519-523. The books of Schmithals and Wilckens were dissertations written, respectively, under Professors R. Bultmann and G. Bornkamm.

⁷ Notably, Schmithals (*Gnosticism*, 36-86) conjectures and seeks to establish a pre-Christian Jewish 'Christ gnosticism'; Wilckens ('σοφία,' 508f.) sharply distinguishes *sophia* from *gnosis* and postulates a 'sophia myth' with roots in Jewish wisdom and apocalyptic literature. Both give more attention to interpreting the mythology in terms of Jewish backgrounds; both give more weight to interpreting 1 Corinthians in terms of an adversary theology.

⁸ Cf. J. C. Hurd, Jr., *The Origin of 1 Corinthians*, London (1965) 108-113; J. Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*, Richmond (1959) 161-167. In 1 Corinthians the pneumatics are said to 'discern' or 'judge' all things purporting to be inspired or revelatory knowledge (2:15). This includes, apparently, discerning (*ἀνακρίνειν*) a person's true state before God (14:24) or discerning (*διακρίνειν*) the measure of divine truth in another prophet's message (14:29; cf. Rom. 12:6). Paul rejects the Corinthians' testing him in this way, apparently (1) because he regards them not as truly pneumatic (3:1, 4) but only as a 'human court' (4:3) and (2) because he has an apostolic exemption from such judgments (9:3; cf. 14:37f.). That is, as an apostle Paul will not allow his message to be treated as simply that of another pneumatic. On this reading of the situation 1 Cor. 9:3 is the conclusion of the preceding section.

In identifying the 'parties' of 1 Cor. 1:12 with 'opponents' of Paul at the time of 1 Corinthians F. C. Baur appears to have given a faulty landmark to subsequent scholars ('Die Christuspartei' [1831], *Ausgewählte Werke*, Stuttgart (1963) I, 1-76). 1 Corinthians does not speak of parties, but rather of individual preferences or tendencies: *ἐκαστος* (1:12), *μηδείς* (3:21). Only in 2 Corinthians does a group of opponents appear, and they are outsiders. Cf. E. E. Ellis, 'Paul and his Opponents: Trends in the Research', *Christianity, Judaism and other Greco-Roman Cults. Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty*, ed. J. Neusner, Leiden (1975) 1, 264-298.

(2) Is there sufficient evidence from the total context of Paul's letter to warrant the supposition that he is interacting with or influenced by a mythological *gnosis*? For those affirming this, a major difficulty is the absence of first century evidence for such a developed myth.⁹ Even if first century parallels were available, of course, they might not be the parallels most relevant to explain Paul's thought or situation. Alternative influences and reconstructions, such as the one offered below, still would have to be considered and compared. The lack of first century evidence, however, gives to the 'Gnostic' hypothesis the flavour of uncertainty from the start. It is compounded by the lack of independent second or third century evidence, i.e. relevant Gnostic texts that are clearly independent of the influence of Pauline or other early Christian writings.¹⁰ At this point the reconstruction of Bultmann and of those building upon it fully warrants the criticism made by A. D. Nock: 'It is an unsound proceeding to take Manichaeism and other texts,

⁹ Schmithals (*Gnosticism*, 79) admits the absence of extant literary evidence from the first century for his *Christusgnosis* but believes, nevertheless, that the presence of the phenomenon can be inferred. Wilckens ('*σοφία*', 498-503, 507-509) finds a *sophia* myth in first century Judaism and earlier. But he appears to take the second and third century Gnostic expression of the myth as the norm by which he interprets the earlier passages. For example, he gives no adequate reason why the earlier material should be defined in terms of myth rather than of poetic personification and/or a hypostasis of a divine attribute. Cf. R. N. Whybray, *Wisdom in Proverbs*, London (1965) 83: 'wisdom in Proverbs is fundamentally a divine attribute which in the process of personification has been endowed with secondary mythological characteristics.' H. Ringgren, *Word and Wisdom*, Lund (1947) 131f.: 'mythological assumptions do not explain how personal Wisdom originated [or] how a great goddess has become a relatively unimportant divine being with an abstract name.' H. Windisch, 'Die göttliche Weisheit der Juden und die paulinische Christologie,' *Neutestamentliche Studien für G. Heinrici*, ed. A. Deissman, Leipzig (1914) 220-234, 222: Paul's idea of wisdom must originate in the hypostasis teaching that finds literary expression in Sirach (1:4, 9, 24:9). Against this interpretation of such texts Wilckens (508) suggests only that they 'can be better understood as the adaption of alien myths . . .' Similarly H. Conzelmann, with qualifications and more extensive argument, in *The Future of our Religious Past*, ed. J. M. Robinson, New York (1971) 234-243. Like Bultmann (see above, note 3), Wilckens (*Weisheit*, 160-190) gives a number of 'Gnostic' traits of *sophia* in later Judaism, e.g. it is sent from heaven as revealer. But they become Gnostic only when Wilckens reads them through the glasses of the later Gnostic systems. Schmithals seems to exhibit a similar weakness in method. For a perceptive critique of Wilckens cf. R. Scroggs, 'Paul: *ΣΟΦΟΕ* and *ΙΝΕΥΜΑΤΙΚΟΕ*,' *NTS* 14 (1967-68) 33-35. *Contra* Schmithals cf. J. Munck in *Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation*, ed. W. Klassen, New York (1962) 224-238.

¹⁰ If such texts should appear, Pauline dependence could not thereby be assumed as R. Mc.L. Wilson has rightly observed (see below, note 13). It is also possible that Simon Magus (cf. Acts 8; Justin, *I Apol.* 26) constructed a 'Gnostic System' in the mid-first century. So, W. F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, Garden City (¹1957) 367-371; G. Lüdemann, *Untersuchungen zur Gnosis*, Göttingen (1975); *contra* K. Beyschlag, *Simon Magus*, Tübingen (1974). But, if so, how developed was it?

full of echoes of the New Testament, and reconstruct from them something supposedly lying back of the New Testament.'¹¹

Outside the Bultmannian school scholars generally have been less attracted to a mythological interpretation¹² of wisdom and knowledge in I Corinthians.¹³ With reference to 'wisdom' earlier writers, e.g. H. Windisch and J. R. Harris, sought to understand Paul's Christology in terms of the role of divine wisdom in the Old Testament and later Judaism.¹⁴ Windisch associated wisdom also with Pauline 'mysticism' in which Christians correspond to the wise in whom Wisdom enters and speaks.¹⁵ Professor W. D. Davies, taking a less direct route,

¹¹ A. D. Nock, *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World*, Oxford (1972) II, 958 = *HTR* 57 (1964) 278, who adds that 'with the rarest exceptions, it was the emergence of Jesus and of the belief that he was a supernatural being who had appeared on earth which precipitated elements previously suspended in solution'. Unlike R. M. Grant, Nock does not think that the 'waning of the eschatological expectation was a principle factor in the emergence of Gnosticism, for the raw materials were all there before AD 70 . . .' (953). Cf. R. M. Grant, *Gnosticism and Early Christianity*, New York (1966) 27-38. The Church Fathers also represent Gnosticism to be derivative from early Christianity even though it would have been in their interest to identify it with pagan origins.

¹² In German theology the attraction to myth as a hermeneutical key has, no doubt, a complex background. But it is not unrelated to developments in post-Kantian Idealism in which the locus of truth is the idea (cf. D. F. Strauss) or the existential decision (cf. R. Bultmann), i.e. in either case the non-historical and/or mythical realm. On the existential dimension of Platonic Idealism cf. P. Friedlander, *Plato: an Introduction*, London (1958) 229, 230-235; W. F. Albright, *History Archaeology and Christian Humanism*, London (1965) 279. Alternatively, cf. N. Thulstrup, *Kierkegaards Verh ltnis zu Hegel*, Stuttgart (1969) 201: although Kierkegaard was not Hegelian he must be understood within the tradition of German Idealism—against which he protested in various respects but with which he had essential elements in common.

¹³ E.g. N. A. Dahl, 'Paul and the Church at Corinth . . .', *Christian History and Interpretation*, ed. W. R. Farmer, Cambridge (1967) 313-335; Hurd, *Origin* 105, 147, 277; J. Munck, *Paul* 135-167; Grant, *Gnosticism* 157-159; R. M. Wilson *Gnosis and the New Testament*, Philadelphia (1968) 52-55; in *Judeo-Christianisme*, ed. J. Moingt (= *RSR* 60), Paris (1972) 267: it may well be that 'it was not a case of the Gnostics borrowing from the "orthodox", or the New Testament from a vaguely defined "gnosis", but that both orthodox and Gnostics (in the narrower sense) were drawing upon the same older tradition. . . . Otherwise: E. R. Goodenough, *By Light, Light*, New Haven (1935) 282: with Aristobulus (c. 160 BC), an Alexandrian Jew, the Jewish doctrine of Wisdom had begun to be transformed into a Sophia mystery.

¹⁴ C. F. Burney, 'Christ as the APXH of Creation,' *JTS* 27 (1926) 160-177 (on Col. 1:15-18); Windisch, 'Weisheit,' 220-225, 226-229: from his use of Proverbs and his knowledge of ideas of a hypostatic Wisdom (cf. Sir. 1:4, 9; 24:7; Wis. 7:27) Paul, following Jewish antecedents associating Messiah with Wisdom, may have been stimulated to read Ps. 109 (110): 3 LXX in the light of Pr. 8 and to clothe Jesus with the *Gestalt* of divine wisdom. The wisdom with which Paul in I Cor. 1:24, 30 identifies Christ, however, is not a wisdom 'myth' (I Enoch 42) 'but rather the divine knowledge and plan (e.g. Job 28) . . . the embodiment of all apocalyptic mysteries' (226; cf. Eph. 1:8, 17-21). But see W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, London (1955) 158-162.

¹⁵ Windisch, 'Weisheit,' 226n.; I Cor. 2:6-16; cf. Pr. 8:6f.; Sir 39:1, 6; Wis. 7:27f.; 8:2ff.

found the background of Paul's thought in later Judaism's identification of wisdom with God's Law or Torah:¹⁶ since Paul saw in Jesus' (preresurrection) teachings a new Torah, he was able to identify Jesus as the wisdom of God.¹⁷ While Davies established an important connecting link in Paul's thought, one must ask whether he defined Torah too much in terms of a past revelation and, consequently, gave insufficient attention to Paul's association of wisdom with the teaching of the exalted Jesus through his apostles and prophets.¹⁸

With reference to 'knowledge' Dom J. Dupont has provided the most thorough and one of the most perceptive studies of *gnosis* in the Pauline literature. In contrast to the studies of Norden and Bultmann he concludes that the Corinthian *gnosis* is not indebted in any significant way to Hellenism.¹⁹ It is basically a charismatic phenomenon with roots in the experiences of the primitive Christian community, a Christian appropriation and transposition into apocalyptic catagories of a privilege claimed by the Jewish teachers of the law. The conclusions of Davies and Dupont set the stage for further research into the use of wisdom and knowledge in 1 Corinthians.

I

In the Pauline letters, and especially in 1 Corinthians (2: 12-14), certain believers have gifts in inspired speech and discernment. They are called pneumatics and, broadly speaking, they exercise the role of prophets. Among other manifestations they are said to speak 'wisdom of God' (2:7, 13) or to be 'wise' (3:18; 6:5; cf. 14:29 *διακρίνειν*) or to have 'a word of wisdom' (12:8) and to speak 'in knowledge' or to 'have knowledge' or

¹⁶ E.g. Sir. 24:8, 23; 1 Baruch 3:36f.; 4:1; 4 Macc. 1:16f.

¹⁷ Davies, *Paul*, 144f., 147, 150-175. But see further M. E. Thrall, 'The Origin of Pauline Christology', *Apostolic History and the Gospel*, ed. W. W. Gasque, Grand Rapids (1970) 310-312. On wisdom Christology in Pauline thought cf. A. Feuillet, *Le Christ Sagesse de Dieu*, Paris (1966).

¹⁸ Cf. E. E. Ellis, 'Christ and Spirit in 1 Corinthians', *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament*, ed. B. Lindars and S. S. Smalley, Cambridge (1973) 271f.; '“Spiritual” Gifts in the Pauline Community', *NTS* 20 (1973-74) 136f.

¹⁹ J. Dupont, *Gnosis. La Connaissance Religieuse dans les Epîtres de Saint Paul*, Paris (1949, 1960) 531-534, 537ff., *passim*. Cf. E. Norden, *Agnostos Theos*, Darmstadt (1956, 1912) 287; Bultmann, 'γνώσκω' 708ff. Writing before the publication of the Dead Sea Scrolls, Dupont found no use of the term *gnosis* in Jewish apocalyptic comparable to that in Corinth. In this matter, therefore, he postulated the influence of Hellenistic usage, perhaps via Alexandrian Judaism (524, 534).

'a word of knowledge' (8:10; 12:8; 14:6).²⁰ The terms, wisdom and knowledge, are used of pneumatic gifts in other parts of the Pauline literature²¹ and occasionally they appear in tandem, both in Paul²² and elsewhere.²³ With some justification, then, they may be examined together even though in previous research the concepts have generally been treated independently. The present paper will (1) attempt to define more clearly the employment of the two terms and their relation to one another, (2) suggest the origin of Paul's usage and (3) specify its context within the Pauline theology and mission praxis.

The term wisdom (*σοφία*) appears in 1 Corinthians almost exclusively in 1:18–4:21, a section that has the literary form of an elaborate commentary or midrash contrasting 'the wisdom of this age' (3:19; cf. 1:20; 2:6) or 'of men' (2:5) with the wisdom of God (2:7; cf. 1:24, 30).²⁴ In 1 Corinthians 2:6–16, a pre-formed and probably non-Pauline midrash,²⁵ Paul sets forth his teaching on the character of God's wisdom. It is a wisdom hidden 'in a mystery' (2:7), revealed through the Spirit (2:10) and shared only among mature Christians (*τέλειοι*, 2:6). It is imparted by *pneumatikoi* 'who interpret (or *peshet*: *συγκρίνοντες*) the spirit-manifestations (*πνευματικά*) to spiritual men',²⁶ 'in order that we may know (*εἰδῶμεν*) the things given to us by God' (2:13, 12). It has to do with God's plan of salvation, 'a wisdom foreordained for our glorification' and 'things God has prepared for those who love him' (2:7, 9). The wisdom of God is contrasted to human wisdom in two ways. (1) Since it is 'hidden', it is comprehended neither by natural man and his wisdom (2:13f.; cf. 1:21) nor by the demonic 'rulers of this age' (2:8) under whose sway natural man and his wisdom ultimately stand.²⁷ (2) Since it is 'wisdom among the mature',

²⁰ Cf. Ellis, 'Gifts', 128–144, 131f.; 1 Cor. 14:37; Rom. 1:11f.; Gal. 6:1.

²¹ Of some 50 New Testament occurrences of *sophia* 28 are Pauline and 17 are in 1 Corinthians; of some 30 occurrences of *gnosis* 23 are Pauline and 10 are in 1 Corinthians.

²² 1 Cor. 12:8; Rom. 11:33; Col. 2:3; cf. 1:17.

²³ Lk. 11:49, 52; cf. 7:30, 35; Barn. 2:3–6; 21:4f.; Is. 11:2f.

²⁴ Cf. W. Wuellner, 'Haggadic Homily Genre in 1 Corinthians 1–3,' *JBL* 89 (1970) 199–204.

²⁵ Cf. Ellis, 'Gifts,' 130; 'Exegetical Patterns in 1 Corinthians and Romans', *Essays in honour of Professor L. J. Kuyper*, ed. J. I. Cook, Grand Rapids (1975).

²⁶ On *συγκρίνειν* as 'interpret' cf. Gn. 40:8; Dn. 5:11f. (Th.): 'astuteness and understanding (*γρηγόρησις καὶ σύνεσις*/חכמה/שכל) like the wisdom (חכמה) of the gods were found in him . . . , an excellent spirit and knowledge (*מנרע*) and understanding (*שכל*) to interpret (*פשר*) . . . '

²⁷ One need not here decide whether 'the rulers (*ἀρχόντες*) of this age' refers only to demonic powers (Kümmel) or (also) to political leaders as 'the effective

it presupposes, as 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 makes clear, not only understanding but also the ethical fruit of the Spirit, a mind that is being renewed to do the will of God (cf. Rom. 12:2).²⁹ 'Jealousy and strife', then, signal the presence of human, 'fleshly' wisdom (2:13f.; 3:3; 2 Cor. 1:12) and the absence of the wisdom of God.

In 1 Corinthians 13:2 Paul speaks somewhat differently:

If I have prophecy, that is, know (*εἰδῶ*) all mysteries and all knowledge, . . . but do not have love I am nothing.³⁰

Here the Apostle apparently equates knowing 'all mysteries' with knowing 'the wisdom of God in a mystery' (2:6, 12: *εἰδῶμεν*).³⁰ He recognizes the reality of the Spirit's gift and asserts only that without the fruit of love the gift does not profit the recipient. By this, however, he does not essentially alter his understanding of the wisdom of God that he has set forth in 1 Corinthians 1-2.³¹

II

In the Old Testament and especially in the apocalyptic literature of later Judaism wisdom and knowledge appear with connotations similar to those noted above in Paul.³² In the later strata

tools of the invisible powers' (Cullmann). H. Lietzmann-W. G. Kümmel, *Korinther 1-II*, Tübingen (1949) 12, 170. O. Cullmann, *The State in the New Testament*, London (1957) 63.

²⁹ The *psuchikos* man, who is limited to 'human wisdom (2:13f.), is none other than the *sarkikos* man (3:1, 3) or the *palaios* man (Rom. 6:6, 11f.; Col. 3:9; Eph. 4:21-24) that continues to dominate the ethic of immature believers and, thus, to prevent or to distort their perception of God's wisdom. Cf. Ellis, 'Christ and Spirit', 275.

³⁰ 'To have prophecy' is something more than 'to prophesy' (cf. 14:24; H. B. Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament*, London (1910) 377) and here includes the perception of mysteries, i.e. the wisdom of God revealed to pneumatics. Cf. J. Weiss, *Der erste Korintherbrief*, Göttingen (1970, 1910) 313f.; H. Conzelmann, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, Göttingen (1969) 262f. Probably 'mysteries' and 'knowledge' are appositional to 'having prophecy'.

³¹ So, J. Calvin, *Corinthians*, Grand Rapids (1968, 1546) 275: knowledge of mysteries may be used here (1 Cor. 13:2) instead of wisdom and may be 'added to prophecy by way of explanation'. Similarly, Weiss, Conzelmann (see above, note 29).

³² 1 Cor. 1:17; 2:4; 4:19, 10 (*φρόνημοι*). Cf. E. E. Ellis, 'Christ Crucified', *Reconciliation and Hope* [Festschrift for] Principal L. L. Morris, ed. R. Banks, Exeter, and Grand Rapids (1974). Paul does recognize among the Corinthians the charism of *gnosis* (1:5) and reckons with the possibility that it may be misused so as to have a detrimental effect not only on the recipient but also on the Christian community (8:1, 10f.). See below, pp. 96f.

³³ *Hokmah*, usually translated by *sophia*, occurs about one hundred times, mostly in Job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. The close synonyms, *חֵכֶם* and *בִּינָה* occur 37

of the Old Testament they are clearly viewed as God's gifts, and in Israel they probably always were so viewed.³³ David is said to be wise 'according to the wisdom of an angel of God to know (לדעת) all things,' and 'to discern (שמוע) good and evil (2 Sa. 14:20, 17). Likewise, his adviser Ahithophel is said to give counsel (עצה) 'as though one inquired concerning the word (דבר) of God', i.e. from a prophet (2 Sa. 16:23). After Solomon's prayer for a heart 'to discern and judge (שפט/διακρίνειν) your people', to 'discern (בין/συνεῖν) between good and evil', he is said to have the wisdom of God 'so as to render justice (משפט; 1 Ki. 3:9; 12, 28).³⁴

In these and similar passages God mediates his truth to his people in two ways, the word of the prophet (or of the angel through the prophet)³⁵ and the counsel or discernment of the wise man. With some exceptions the 'word' was thought to be a relatively clearer revelation than 'discernment'. But both were equally God's gifts to a privileged few for the instruction and benefit of the many. Likewise, for God to take away either the word from the prophet or wisdom from the wise was to bring judgement on the nation (e.g. Is. 29:10, 14; cf. 3:2).

The affinity of wisdom with prophecy appears in other ways as well. A few passages speak of wisdom as a charismatic experience. Thus, Joseph is 'understanding and wise' to interpret dreams because 'the Spirit of God is in him' (Gn. 41:38f.). Joshua is said to be 'full of the spirit of wisdom' because Moses had laid his hands on him (Dt. 34:9). Even the makers of priestly garments are 'filled with the spirit of wisdom'³⁶ by God for their seemingly mundane task. David is said to have the Spirit of the Lord mightily upon him from the time of his anointing by Samuel (1 Sa. 16:13). This probably is to be

and 16 times, respectively, and are variously translated by the Septuagint. The Hebrew word *hokmah* 'has no precedence among the various terms; it is only one amongst others' (G. von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, London (1972) 53).

³³ So, von Rad, *Wisdom*, 55, 68. Otherwise: W. McKane, *Prophets and Wise Men*, London (1965) 48-54, who supposes that the older wisdom represented a 'disciplined empiricism' without religious presuppositions. But can one assume such a dichotomy between the 'real' world and religion among ancient peoples? Cf. von Rad, *Wisdom* 68n., 61: . . . 'for Israel there was only one world of experience . . . in which rational perceptions and religious perceptions were not differentiated.' It was the same for the older 'wisdom' and for the prophets.

³⁴ Compare the parallel in 2 Ch. 1:10ff.: wisdom and knowledge (מַדָּע/σύνεσις) to judge.

³⁵ E.g. 1 Ki. 13:18. Cf. Ellis, 'Gifts,' 140f.

³⁶ Perhaps to 'discern' the significance of the symbols (Exod. 28:3)? But see Ex. 35:26.

associated with his wisdom (2 Sa. 14:20) as much as with his prophecies (2 Sa. 23:2). This association of the Spirit with wisdom is not unlike the association of the Spirit with prophecy.³⁷

Alternatively the prophets sometimes manifest characteristics that are usually associated with the 'wise'. Samuel the prophet judges Israel in a manner that, in Solomon, is credited to the wisdom of God (1 Sa. 7:15-17; 1 Ki. 3:9, 28.). Nathan the prophet gives counsel (נָצַח) to Bathsheba about the succession of Solomon (1 Ki. 1:12). Both Isaiah and Amos show, in the opinion of a number of scholars,³⁸ both literary³⁹ and theological⁴⁰ traits usually associated with the wisdom literature.

Admittedly, the prophets criticize those who are 'wise in their own eyes' (Is. 5:21). But they mean not the wise men as such but those who reject the voice of Yahweh through the prophet.⁴¹ They make the same criticism of other (pseudo-) prophets (Je. 23:32; Ezk. 13:9). As late as Jeremiah (18:18) the prophets and the wise may be distinguished as separate classes within Israel:

The law shall not perish from the priest
nor counsel from the wise
nor the word from the prophet.

But, as J. Lindblom has noted,⁴² the two groups have certain common features in teaching and style. Probably they have been distinguished too rigidly in the past.⁴³

³⁷ Cf. von Rad, *Wisdom*, 296: in later Israel wisdom was 'basically something like a charismatic gift which was not available to everyone. (Thus the late wisdom teachers were not so wrong when they interpreted wisdom as a charisma . . .)' Cf. Dn. 5:11f.

³⁸ Cf. J. Lindblom, 'Wisdom in the Old Testament Prophets', *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East* [for] H. H. Rowley, ed. M. Noth, Leiden (1955) 193-204; S. Terrien, 'Amos and Wisdom', *Israel's Prophetic Heritage*, ed. B. W. Anderson, New York (1962) 108-115; J. Fichtner, 'Jesaja unter den Weisen', *TLZ* 74 (1949) 75-80; J. W. Whedbee, *Isaiah and Wisdom*, Nashville (1971) 151: 'our study confirms Fichtner's original thesis of a vital connection between Isaiah and wisdom, though we demur with respect to Fichtner's explanation of Isaiah as a former wise man become prophet.'

³⁹ Literary forms such as parable, proverb (Lindblom, Whedbee), numerals (Terrien), and woe-oracles (Whedbee).

⁴⁰ Yahweh's presence in Sheol (Amos 9:2); the ascription of wisdom to Yahweh (Is. 28:25-29; 31:2) and to Messiah (Is. 11:2); the reference to God's wisdom in creation and to the problem of individual judgment (Lindblom, Terrien).

⁴¹ E.g. Is. 8:9; cf. Lindblom, 'Wisdom' 195f., 204. This kind of wisdom, independent of God and disregarding the word of God, is condemned by Paul as 'the wisdom of men' (1 Cor. 2:5).

⁴² Lindblom, 'Wisdom' 202ff.

⁴³ O. S. Rankin, *Israel's Wisdom Literature*, Edinburgh (1936) 14, 70-34; cf. J. L. Crenshaw in *JBL* 88 (1969) 142n. On the presence of wisdom themes in Pauline references to prophetic literature cf. Feuillet, *Sagesse* 53-55.

In the later Old Testament writings and in wisdom and apocalyptic literature wisdom and prophecy manifest an increasing affinity. For example, wisdom is said to reside in the 'holy prophet' Moses and to make men 'friends' of prophets (Wis. 7:27; 11:1); Daniel the wise man is regarded as a prophet (4 Qflor 2:3). One important reason for this trend is the growing association, and even identification, of both wisdom and prophecy with Israel's Scriptures.⁴⁴ Because wisdom is derived from God (cf. Is. 33:6), it is to be found especially in doing God's law: 'that will be your wisdom and your understanding (Dt. 4:6). In the later wisdom literature, in which the principles of Torah are applied to the life of the people, wisdom is explicitly so described:

Your testimonies are my delight
They are the men of my counsel (עצב).

Ps. 119:24

Teach me good judgement and knowledge (תבונה/γνώσις)
For I have believed your commandments

Ps. 119:66

All these [expressions of wisdom] are the
book of the covenant of the most high God.

Sirach 24:23

Wisdom is divine knowledge (γνώσις) and human practice . . .
She is instruction (παιδεία) in the law . . .

4 Macc. 1:16f.

The prophetic literature witnesses to a similar development. From the earliest time the prophets are represented as having a privileged knowledge of God that is associated with their prophetic word.⁴⁵

The oracle of Balaam . . . who *hears* the words (אמר/λογία) of God and *knows* the knowledge (תבונה/ἐπιστήμη) of the Most High, who *sees* the vision of the Almighty, falling and having his eyes opened (גלה/ἀποκαλύπτειν).

Nu. 24:15f.

⁴⁴ This attitude does not preclude the recognition of contemporary prophecy, however, even in the first century. Cf. R. Meyer, 'προφητης,' TDNT 6 (1969) 812-828, 821: in Alexandrian theology 'basically everyone who possesses true wisdom is a prophet'.

⁴⁵ Cf. Dupont, *Gnosis* 220-225. As a synonym of wisdom (חכמה), knowledge (דעת) is also the possession of the wise. Cf. Pr. 22:17, 20f.; 30:13.

Similarly, God says to Moses:

[There] I shall *meet* (יִפְגַּע/γινώσκεισθαι) you so as to *speak* to you.

Ex. 29:42; cf. 25:22.

Samuel did not yet *know* (יָדַע) the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed (הִגִּיל/ἀποκαλύπτειν).

1 Sa. 3:7

This prophetic 'word of knowledge' is later understood to reside in the Scriptures, *i.e.* the Law

Because you (Israel) have rejected *knowledge*, I reject you . . .
Because you have forgotten the *law* of your God, I also will forget your children.

Ho. 4:6

The lips of the priest should guard *knowledge*
And men should seek *Torah* from his mouth.

Mal 2:7

I will put my *law* within them . . .
For they shall all *know* me.

Jc. 31 (38):33f.

God found out the way of *knowledge* (ἐπιστήμη) and gave it to Israel his servant . . . It is the book of the *commandments* of God and the *law* that abides forever.

1 Bar. 3:36f.; 4:1

The same conclusion is to be inferred from the later prophets' practice of giving prophecies in terms of the revelations in earlier Scriptures and from their probable role as expositors of Scripture.⁴⁶

In both wisdom and prophetic literature, then, an increasing emphasis appears to be placed upon the *discernment* of God's wisdom or knowledge in the law of God. Among the rabbis this emphasis has its own unique development.⁴⁷ In the apocalyptic writers (and in their experiences) it is given a

⁴⁶ Cf. E. E. Ellis, 'The Role of the Christian Prophet in Acts', *Apostolic History and the Gospel*, ed. W. W. Gasque, Grand Rapids (1970) 58–61. Cf. the Creation and Exodus motifs in Isa. 40–66. Specifically, cf. Is. 2:2–4; 26:21; 58:1 with Mi. 4:1–4; 1:3; 3:8; Is. 19:16; 24:1; 47:1–3, 9; 52:7 with Na. 3:13; 2:11 (10); 3:4f.; 2:1 (1:15); Is. 41:7; 44:12–15; 46:7 with Jc. 10:1–16; Is. 66:20 with Zp. 3:10.

⁴⁷ Cf. L. Blau, 'Bat Kol', *JE* 2, 589ff.; Meyer (see above, note 44), 816–819.

perspective and definition that provide a most important antecedent for the apostle Paul's understanding of wisdom and knowledge.

III

The apocalyptic seers combine the prophetic *vision and word of knowledge* and the *wise discernment* of its meaning within the context of a revelation of final and cosmic dimension. While they reflect features of the (earlier) prophet and wisdom teacher, they cannot be identified exclusively with either. If wisdom is the mother of apocalyptic (von Rad), prophecy has an equal claim to be the father (*cf.* von der Osten-Sacken).⁴⁸

As forerunners of Pauline thought, the apocalyptic writers are best represented in the book of Daniel and in the Qumran scrolls. In Daniel the divine gifts of wisdom (שכל, חכמה) and knowledge (מדע, 1:4, 17; 2:21f.) enable the seer to understand (בין) visions, dreams and sacred writings and to interpret or *pesh* them (1:17; 2:27–30; 5:12: מִשְׁתַּחֲוִיִּים/מִשְׁתַּחֲוִיִּים), that is, 'to make known the mystery' (למלא רזא 2:47).⁴⁹ Moreover, they enable him to understand (בין) Scripture, *viz.* Jeremiah's prophecy (9:2, 22f.). By implication these divine gifts will, in the future, enable the ('wise' משכילים) to understand Daniel's prophecy as well (12:9f.).

As Professor F. F. Bruce has shown, the wise teachers (משכילים) at Qumran⁵⁰ understand their own role from the

⁴⁸ The precise relationship remains unclear. *Cf.* Meyer (see above, note 44), p. 819; G. von Rad, *Wisdom* 278n.; *Theology of the Old Testament*, Edinburgh (1962; 1965) II, 306ff.; P. von der Osten-Sacken, *Die Apokalypitik in ihrem Verhältnis zu Prophetie und Weisheit*, München (1969) 63: 'apocalyptic is a legitimate, if late and peculiar child of prophecy.' For von Rad the wisdom element is primary; for P. Vielhauer, the eschatological (*cf.* Hennecke's *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. W. Schneemelcher, London (1964) II, 597f.). But these factors should not be placed in separate cubbyholes as though they were isolated developments.

⁴⁹ *Cf.* Amos 3:7: 'Surely the Lord God does nothing without revealing (גלה) his secret (סוד) to his servants the prophets.' Je. 23:18: 'Who among them has stood in the council (סוד) of the Lord to perceive (ירא) and to hear his word . . . ? Sir. 4:18; 14:21: 'The man who mediates on the ways [of wisdom] . . . shall have knowledge (סוד) in her secrets' (ἀποκρύφους/חֲבֵרֹת). *Cf.* Dn. 5:16.

⁵⁰ This seems to be the best translation of *maskilim* (*cf.* Ellis, 'Gifts', 196f.) although it has been taken to be an honorific title for every full member of the sect (*cf.* P. von der Osten-Sacken, *Gott und Belial*, Göttingen (1969) 163–165). In Ne. 8:8 the 'wisdom' (שכל) is the interpretation of the Scripture: 'The Levites read from the book of the law of God clearly and gave the interpretation (שכל) and caused the people to understand (בין) in the reading. *Cf.* Rev. 13:18; 17:9. Similarly, 1 Ch. 22:12: 'The Lord grant you discretion and understanding (שכל) (ובינה) . . . that you may keep the law of the Lord . . . ' 2 Ch. 30:22: 'The Levites

perspective of the book of Daniel.⁵¹ The Teacher of Righteousness, as an interpreter of Scripture, is described as one 'to whom God has revealed all the mysteries (רז) of his servants the prophets.'⁵² Similarly, the author of the Thanksgiving Hymns writes,

As one of the wise (משכיל) I have knowledge of you, my God, by the spirit that you gave to me. I have faithfully heard your wonderful counsel (סדר). By your Holy Spirit you opened to me knowledge (דעת) in the mystery of your wisdom (שכל).

1 QH 12:11ff.

You made me a sign (נס) for the chosen of righteousness and an interpreter of knowledge (מליץ דעת) in wonderful mysteries in order to test (לבחן = LXX διακρίνειν, δοκιμάζειν) the men of truth and to try (נסה = LXX πειράζειν) those who love love [correction]. To the interpreters (למליצי) of error I have become a man of controversy.

1 QH 2:13-14

According to the *Manual of Discipline* the *maskilim* are 'to guide [the members] with knowledge (דעת) and wisdom (שכל) in the mysteries (רזן) . . . so that they may walk maturely (תמים = LXX τέλειοι, 9:12, 19). They are to distinguish (להבדיל, cf. διακρίνειν) and to discern (לשקול) the sons of righteousness 'each according to his spirit' (1 QS 9:14, 17; cf. CD 20:24; 1 Cor. 4:7; 12:10; 14:29). Or the process may be described thus:

[God will] purge a part of mankind . . . so that the upright ones may achieve insight (להבין) in the knowledge of the Most High and in the wisdom of the sons of heaven and that the mature (תמים) in the way may become wise (להשכיל).

1 QS 4:20, 22

Those in the sect who are to be given leadership, i.e. in the council (עצה) of the community, are the wise (חכמה), the

taught the good wisdom (שכל) of the Lord.' Ezr. 8:16, 18: 'Then I sent for . . . men of insight (בין), . . . [and] they brought us a man of wisdom' (שכל). In this literature *skl* and *binh* are paired as *hkmh* and *binh* are elsewhere.

⁵¹ F. F. Bruce, 'The Book of Daniel and the Qumran Community', *Neotestamentica et Semitica* [for] Principal M. Black, ed. E. E. Ellis and M. Wilcox, Edinburgh (1969) 221-235.

⁵² 1 QpHab 7:4f.

understanding (בִּינָה) and the mature in the way (תְּמִימֵי הַדֶּרֶךְ; 1 QSa. 1:27ff.).

In sum, the *maskilim* at Qumran are recipients and transmitters of divine mysteries, possessors of wisdom, interpreters of knowledge, guides to a mature life, and discerners of spirits. As such, they not only reflect their kinship with the earlier prophets but also bear a striking resemblance to the pneumatics in the Pauline community.

IV

In 1 Corinthians 'wisdom' is used almost exclusively in the exposition of 1 Corinthians 1-4.⁵³ There it is Christ who is identified with the wisdom of God (1:24, 30). In the light of the background sketched above it appears that Christ is portrayed as God's wisdom in two ways. (1) The work of Christ, *i.e.* his crucifixion, is the content and meaning of God's secret plan of redemption, and (2) the exalted Christ presently mediates God's hidden wisdom to his people. Both ideas are present in the midrash at 1 Corinthians 2:6-16. The opening verses (2:7f.) declare that the demonic 'rulers of this age' crucified the Lord of glory because they did not know that 'wisdom hidden in a mystery'. That is, they were privy neither to God's secret counsel (סֹדֶר) nor to the wise understanding (בִּינָה) of God's plan that was 'revealed' to the pneumatics 'through the Spirit' (2:10). The closing verse of the passage more clearly specifies the source of the revelation: 'we have the mind of Christ' (2:16). As the connection with 2:10 indicates, it is here a question not so much of Christ being identified with Torah (Davies) as of Christ being identified with the Spirit that gave both the Torah and its inspired, prophetic interpretations and that continues to mediate God's revelation through the oracles and inspired exposition of the pneumatics.⁵⁴

This understanding of wisdom is confirmed elsewhere in the Pauline letters. In Romans 11:33-36 Paul concludes his exposition on the election and destiny of Israel with the words,

O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of

⁵³ See above, p. 87.

⁵⁴ See above, notes 17, 18; cf. E. E. Ellis, 'Paul and his Co-workers', *NTS* 17 (1970-71) 448-452; E. Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, Philadelphia (1971) 24-27.

God. How unsearchable his judgments and inscrutable his ways. For who has known the mind of the Lord. . . .

Unlike 1 Corinthians 2:6–16 the passage in Romans does not give an explicit answer. But the reference clearly points to the preceding exposition, the ‘mystery’ of God’s plan for Israel that Paul has discerned and has disclosed from the Scriptures (Rom. 11:25ff.). The relationship of this conception to 1 Corinthians 2 is unmistakable.

Colossians 2:3 and Ephesians 1:8f.; 3:9f. only restate exegetical conclusions that are found in their more original commentary forms in 1 Corinthians 1–4 and Romans 11. Elsewhere in Colossians and Ephesians wisdom is presented, as it is in 1 Corinthians 2, as the prerogative of the pneumatics (including Paul) and as the product of their teaching.⁵⁵

The use of ‘knowledge’ in 1 Corinthians is more ambiguous, an ambiguity that appears to be rooted in the Jewish background. On the one hand the term occurs, at least in its verb form, simply as a synonym of wisdom: ‘no one knows (ἐγνώκειν) the things of God,’ i.e. ‘the wisdom of God in a mystery,’ because they are discerned (ἀνακρίνειν) spiritually (πνευματικῶς)⁵⁶; but we pneumatics have ‘received the spirit that is from God in order that we might know’ (εἰδῶμεν) these things.⁵⁷ To know is to have wisdom.

On the other hand knowledge is (1) a pneumatic gift that has affinities with the knowledge of a prophet, and (2) it is also the accurate perception of Christian truth. The Corinthian pneumatics, who lack wisdom, are said to have been enriched ‘in every word and all knowledge’ (1:5; cf. 2 Cor. 8:7). Apparently they are gifted to speak, as Paul puts it in 1 Corinthians 14:6, ‘in revelation or in knowledge or in prophecy or teaching.’ The precise relationship of these forms of inspired speech is not altogether clear. But in 1 Corinthians 13 know-

⁵⁵ There are similarities in the mission of Jesus. In Mark 6 the synagogue exposition of Jesus is characterized as ‘wisdom’, and his teaching elsewhere is perceived and received by those who are called ‘children of wisdom’ (Lk. 7:35). Jesus’ promise to give his persecuted and arraigned followers ‘a mouth and wisdom’ is regarded by Luke (21:15) to be fulfilled *inter alia* in the inspired (?synagogue) exposition of Stephen whose ‘wisdom’ could not be withstood (Acts 6:10; cf. 7:1–53). In Revelation (e.g. 17:9) ‘the mind that has wisdom’ is one that can rightly interpret the prophet’s revelation.

⁵⁶ I.e. via the prophetic spirit. Cf. Rev. 11:8; E. Schweizer, *πνεῦμα*, TDNT 6 (1968) = 449.

⁵⁷ 1 Cor. 2:11, 7f., 14, 12.

ledge 'in part' is related to 'seeing' in a faulty mirror. Dupont⁵⁸ may be right in understanding this to be knowledge received by visions, visions that have an uncertain meaning.

In 1 Corinthians 8 knowledge (*γνῶσις*) denotes an accurate perception of a particular Christian truth, *i.e.* regarding the nature of idols and of food offered to them. Yet such knowledge tends to puff one up. Thus, if knowledge produces a 'knowing' attitude, that is itself evidence that the knowledge is partial (8:1f.). The gift of knowledge, apparently, has to do with particulars. Only when it is accompanied by a broad understanding and by the fruit of love does it witness to a yet more significant knowledge: 'if one loves God, one is known by him' (8:3).

Among the Corinthian pneumatics 'knowledge', a charism of the Spirit (1:8), has been manifested apart from the fruit of the Spirit (13:2) and, thus, has become distorted. It has not issued in divine wisdom, a true perception and manifestation of the mind of Christ (2:16). Rather, in its distortion it has been coupled to human dialectics (*διαλογισμοί*, 3:20) and has produced only a 'fleshly wisdom,' a 'wisdom of this age' (1:20; 3:18f.; *cf.* 2 Cor. 1:12).⁵⁹ Therefore, Paul concludes his exposition in 1 Corinthians 1-4 with a warning to the Corinthians 'not to go beyond what is written' (4:6), *i.e.* in the Scriptures that he has just expounded to them. As their factiousness shows, they have 'gone beyond' and have fallen under the judgment of Scripture, *i.e.* the judgment of God upon human wisdom.⁶⁰

Nevertheless, in Paul's eyes 'knowledge' is highly esteemed, both as a pneumatic 'word' and as an accurate perception of Christian truth (*cf.* 2 Cor. 11:6). When it is exercised properly, the gift enables one to function in the community as a teacher. Thus Paul writes to the Romans (15:14):

I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you

⁵⁸ Dupont, *Gnosis*, 142-148, 252.

⁵⁹ *Cf.* Ellis, 'Christ and Spirit' 275; 'Gifts', 133. Paul probably regards human wisdom to be subjected to and/or distorted by the demonic 'rulers of this age' (1 Cor. 2:6, 10). The person who manifests it may, thereby, have come under the danger of their control (1 Cor. 12:3). *Cf.* O. Betz, 'Die Proselytentaufe in der Qumransekte und im Neuen Testament', *RQ* 1 (1958) 223 (on 1 QH 3:12-17): by 'viper creatures' the sect refers primarily to the false teachers to whom the 'wise of the world' belong.

⁶⁰ On 1 Cor. 4:6 *cf.* A. Robertson-A. Plummer, *First . . . Corinthians*, Edinburgh (1953, 1914) 81.

yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct (*νουθετεῖν*) one another.

In 1 Corinthians Paul expresses most fully his understanding of wisdom and knowledge by the way in which he associates the concepts with Christ and with his own ministry. He identifies wisdom and the source of wisdom with Christ (1:24, 30). He identifies knowledge as one of Christ's gifts (12:5), one that is to be earnestly sought (14:1). He views himself as one who 'has prophecy' (14:37; cf. 13:2) and as a steward of the mysteries of God (4:1), i.e. one who stands with the prophets and seers to discern and then to reveal God's purposes in Christ.

The roles of the prophet and of the wise man which, as we have seen above, were increasingly associated in later Judaism find their unified expression in the Pauline community in the person of the pneumatic, or more precisely, in those pneumatics who—like Paul—manifest the requisite gifts and fruit of the Spirit. The rôle of such persons is summed up most concisely, perhaps, in the words of Colossians 1:25–28:

I became a minister . . . to make the Word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now made manifest to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we proclaim warning every man and teaching (*νουθετεῖν*) every man in all wisdom that we may present every man mature (*τέλειος*) in Christ.