

## The Wisdom of God

Wisdom has been defined as “knowing the end at the beginning,” i.e., knowing the end result of a matter when it first manifests itself: manifest = *shining*, that is, *apparent*. All sorts of phrases are used to indicate a good, or bad result, i.e., “this isn’t going to end well,” or, “you can go wrong following this, or that, road.”

Anyway, a cursory observation of the religious world reveals the wisdom of God regarding the local autonomy of the church. Local autonomy identifies the independence of each local church to govern itself. The scriptures indicate that each local work is to have “elders that rule well,” (1 Tim. 5:17). The scriptures also indicate that these elders (always used in the plural, as opposed to a denominational single “pastor” system), i.e., “Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28), and limited to the tending “the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight” (1 Pet. 5:2).

So, how does this system manifest the wisdom of God? When investigating the turmoil of denominational Conferences, Councils, or Synods decisions made in these councils have a broad application regarding doctrines held or positions many local groups will adopt. Many of these local groups will claim local autonomy, but they pay into and send delegates to these councils which affirm, or re-affirm what doctrines are to be taught.

(Historically, references are made to eight councils between 49 and 787 A.D. What’s interesting is a two-hundred- and seventy-six-year span between the first two. It has been stated that “The first council of Jerusalem exempted all pagan converts from the laws of Judaism” (<http://goodnewspirit.com/churchcouncils.htm>), which is a misnomer due to the fact the apostle Paul had been preaching this message long before the “council in Jerusalem” (which was not a ‘council of churches’). Nevertheless, when the brethren in Antioch “appointed that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question” (Acts 15:2), they were not going to Jerusalem to get permission, but as the apostle Paul affirmed, “I went up by revelation; and I laid before them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles but privately before them who were of repute, lest by any means I should be running, or had run, in vain. But not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: and that because of the false brethren privily brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: to whom we gave place in the way of subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. But from those who were reputed to be somewhat (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth not man's person) - they, I say, who were of repute imparted nothing to me: but contrariwise, when they saw that I had been intrusted with

the gospel of the uncircumcision, even as Peter with the gospel of the circumcision” (Gal. 2:2-7). Thus, the apostle Paul was explicit in saying that he did not receive his doctrine from the apostles and elders in Jerusalem, “imparted nothing to me: but contrariwise.” The apostle Paul’s journey was not to determine doctrine, but rather to stop the mouths of those attempting to do injury to the gospel. Much could be said on this issue, but I stray from the focus of, as it has long been said, “the point I’m a git’n at”).

Regarding the present-day Conferences, every local work engaged in the support of these man-made organizations go into a fit of turmoil regarding the doctrinal directions of local churches. The dangers of these unscriptural practices are recognized, as the apostle Paul was wont to say, “as certain even of your own...have said,” so also did a delegate of the UMCC saying, “I can’t decide if the Lord is saying now, ‘You created the structure of polity of the United Methodist Church. I didn’t. You wrote the Book of Discipline. I didn’t. If that’s being dismantled, that’s OK” (Willimon, Christianity Today, March 5, 2019). Simple question: If you know the structure is NOT what the Lord created why continue? “And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Col. 3:17), i.e., by his authority (not just doing something and placing “in Jesus’ Name” at the end of it).

The wisdom of God is manifested, in this: The Lord’s scriptural structure is for each local church to be comprised of “saints... bishops and deacons” (Phil. 1:1). Each of these works maintain their autonomy (1 Pet. 5:2) and rise or fall according to their own merits (Seven churches of Asia: Revelation Chapters 2-3). If one falls into apostasy it goes alone. In the ecumenical and/or Denominational Councils they fall together. ret