

A Patristic Commentary



THE BOOK OF Proverbs

Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty

Proverbs

*A COMMENTARY AND CONTEMPLATIONS
OF THE
EARLY FATHERS*

**The Book
of
PROVERBS**

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In the name of the Father, the Son and
the Holy Spirit - one God.
Amen

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THE BOOK OF PROVERBS AND THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

One can consider the Book of Proverbs to have had significant value in the Early Church. However, one might have been misled into thinking that the Book of Proverbs did not bring about the unification of church faith and life. Though the Book of Proverbs does not concentrate primarily on the church dogmas, it does focus on the pious behavior which in turn, relates to the faith. It is this pious behavior, in the Early Church's view, that is a practical translation of the living faith and the fellowship with God.

St. Clement of Alexandria, who was a philosopher didn't separate philosophy, knowledge, faith and daily life. Thus, he was interested in the Book of Proverbs. With the same spirit **St. Athanasius of Alexandria** assures the close relation between faith and godliness, saying: "*For faith and godliness are allied to each other, and are sister. He who believes in Him is godly, and he also who is godly, believes the more*¹."

A contemporary believer finds in this book a divine guide to translate his faith into life.

Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty

¹ Paschal Epist. 11: 9.

Introduction to the book of PROVERBS

THE SAPIENTIAL OR WISDOM BOOKS²

There are two types of wisdom writings in the Old Testament. **The first type** is comprised of practical, effective sayings on how a believer lives a spiritual and social life that grants him a satisfaction, and a kind of rewarding. It is this kind of wisdom that makes up much of the Book of Proverbs. **The second type** of wisdom writings deals with wrestling with the ambiguities of life. It explores such questions as:

- Does life as we know it make any sense?
- Can we arrive at any rational conclusions as to the meaning of life?
- How are we to respond to the contradictions of life in a real world?

It is this type of wisdom writings that we find in the Book of Ecclesiastes, as well as in the Book of Job.

Among the books of the *wisdom group* are the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs, which are attributed to the King Solomon. The three books are rich in the use of metaphors.

Proverbs presents simple assurances and firm warnings. Moral questions are answered in clearness and firmness. It never accepts the half way, but often distinguishes between black and white, shade so far away. *Ecclesiastes* acknowledges that things are not often as they seem. Learning, riches, fame, and satisfaction are not always signs of God's blessings, they can be empty and meaningless. Ecclesiastes incites us with its questions, making us probe deeper. The *Song of Songs* sanctifies love, and matrimony courtship as a shadow of the supernatural unity between Christ and His Church, or between Him and the human soul..

The focus of each of these books is different. Proverbs aims at the holy will, Ecclesiastes is directed at the holy mind, and the Song of Songs is written to the holy heart.

According to the Jewish tradition, King Solomon wrote these books at different ages of life. The Song of Songs was composed in his youth, Proverbs was a product of his middle years, and Ecclesiastes was written in the disillusionment of his old age.

However, there are some important features that each of these have in common. Proverbs and Ecclesiastes are both classic examples of a class of literature that probably appeared on the scene during Solomon's reign and continued to flourish after the return of the Jews from the Babylonian exile. Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs share distinction of being known as festal scrolls. According to the Jewish tradition they are two of five scrolls that were read at the annual feasts. The other three scrolls were Ruth, Esther, and Lamentations.

Solomon as a "sage" and had a great experience of life, an important message for all of us. It is simply this: Life, if we look at it long and hard, is not without meaning and accurate plan. There is a deep satisfaction in a life that we receive from God and is committed to His divine hands. He is a God of justice (*Proverbs*) and love (*Song of Songs*), and it is He alone that makes sense of life (*Ecclesiastes*). Because this is true, we can follow

² Cf. *The Guideposts Bible Study Program, Discovering Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs, 1989, Publisher's Introduction, and Preface.*

with confidence the advice of the wisdom writer, “*Trust in the Lord with all your heart; and lean not unto your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths*” (Prov. 3:5-6)³.

THE LANGUAGE OF EXPERIENCES

Some scholars see that Book of Proverbs as a book that contains a collection of human experiences presented in a form of proverbs, to be a guide for a believer in his present life, to practice piety, and to be successful in all aspects of life. This we can't ignore, but we should know that it is a practical book that touches our faith, inspired by the Holy Spirit, using the language of human experiences.

In other words, God in His love, wants to speak with us, and instruct us by many means, so that we may meet Him, and share His life, in order to grow up, and be successful in this world, and be glorified in the world to come.

We can say that *God used the following means of speech to teach us:*

1. **The divine commandments**, as God did with Adam and Eve. Truly God loved us at first, but we are in need to find the chance to express his love towards God practically by obeying Him. Through the commandments, man tastes the mutual love between him and God. As the first parents broke the divine commandment, God grants man natural law or commandments, then He gave the commandments to Moses, the first leader of His people, written on stone tablets by the fingers of God.

2. **The nature**: Man became in need to learn from irrational creatures, plants, animals, and insects, even from an ant (Prov. 6:6).

3. **The written word of God**: According to **St. John Chrysostom**, before the fall man was not in need of the written word to hear the divine voice, because He used to speak with Him face to face. Because of the fall and weakness of man, there was a need of the written word.

4. **The visions and dreams**: God spoke with the patriarchs and prophets through visions and dreams as divine revelations. The majority of them were a shadow and preparation of the incarnation of the Word Himself, as it happened when Moses beheld the burning bush (Exodus 3:2).

5. **The language of Hymns**: Through hymns mentioned in the Bible, God teaches us that the aim of His commandment is the joy of the heart, by establishing the joyful inner kingdom of God, and attaining the pledge of heaven. The book of the Song of Songs is a unique example of the divine speech to us through hymns. The Coptic Orthodox Church uses this method of speech, as she changed worship into a kind of hymns contain joyful and rejoicing divine teachings.

In the Coptic Orthodox liturgies, the readings from the Bible, are not only read, but also sung as hymns with various tunes, looking to the whole Bible as a book of hymns.

6. **The divine parables**: The Old and New Testaments are full of the parables, which explain the divine mysteries in a very simple way. For example, the Church is figuratively referred to as a vine in Isaiah 5.

³ Cf. *The Guideposts Bible Study Program, Discovering Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs, 1989, Publisher's Introduction, and Preface.*

7. **The allegories:** When the human languages can't express the heavenly realities God uses allegories, as in the Book of Revelation. The word "allegory," is derived from the Greek "alla," meaning "other," and "agoreuo," meaning "proclaim." It originally referred to a figure of speech that Cicero defined as a "continuous stream of metaphors⁴." According to **St. Augustine**, allegory is a mode of speech in which one thing is understood by another⁵.

Some scholars distinguish "*allegory*," defined as a method in which earthly realities are interpreted symbolically to refer to heavenly realities, from "*typology*," in which historical reality is interpreted as foreshadowing another, especially the person and work of Christ⁶.

The word "*type*," τυποι in Greek has its basic meaning, 'something struck out; a print, impression of a seal.' The seal is the New Testament event, which has struck out a prophetic impression of itself in the pages of the Old Testament⁷.

8. **The historical events:** God speaks to us not only through the past events, especially what are recorded in the Old and New Testaments, but He also speaks to us through the contemporary events. He speaks with every one personally, through what happens to him, his relatives, friends, foreigners, and among the nations.

9. **Proverbs.** The Proverbs that express men's experiences of practicing the divine commandments, or rejecting them, i.e. by examples to convince men that God's commandments are worth living by. The teachings of this book are not expressed in a "Thus says the Lord," as in the Law of Moses, where the same things are taught as a direct command of God. Rather they are given as coming out of the experience of a man who tried out and tested just about everything that men can engage in. Thus, we can say that *the Book of Proverbs is a divine speech addressed to God's beloved by the language of man's experience*.

10. At last, God speaks to us through His **Incarnate Word**, the Logos and Wisdom. St. Paul says, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke unto the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son" (Heb. 1:1,2). The Word bowed the heavens and descended to meet man, and to speak with him by the language of practical love. The Fathers of Alexandria speaks of the Incarnate Word of God as the Teacher, Instructor, or Tutor, saying:

✠ *The Word of God, became man just that you may learn from a Man how it may be that man should become god⁸.*

✠ *For this He came down,
for this He assumed human nature,
for this He willingly endured the sufferings of man,
that by being reduced to the measure of our weakness He might raise us to the measure of His power⁹.*

St. Clement of Alexandria

⁴ Orator 27.94; Everett Ferguson: *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, N.Y., 1990, p. 23.

⁵ *De Trin.*, 15:9:15.

⁶ Everett Ferguson: *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, N.Y., 1990, p. 23.

⁷ John MacQueen: *Allegory*, Methuen & Co, 1970, p. 20.

⁸ *Protrepticus* 1:8:4.

⁹ *Quis Dives Salvetur* 37.

✠ *Within the divinity of the Word is power not only to help and cure those who are sick... but to show to the pure in body and mind “the revelation of the mystery”...*

The divine Word was sent as a doctor to sinners, but as a teacher of divine mysteries to the already pure and sinless¹⁰.

✠ *With the light of the Word we banish the darkness of impious doctrines... Because the Word has opened the eyes of our soul, we see the difference between light and darkness, and choose in every way to stand in the light¹¹.*

Origen

PROVERBS AS A WAY OF TEACHING

A proverb is a short saying which stands for a whole discourse or lecture. It has its effect on the hearers, attracts the attention. It concentrates on making comparison or contrast between two things.

Using proverbs is an easy and uncomplicated and a very profitable way of teaching, and serves admirably well to realize the end. It is quickly apprehended and easily memorized.

This method of teaching was well adapted to the times when books were few and costly, as man could easily memorize proverbs. But even today, in this age of learning, proverbs are household words and exert mighty influence. They have been copied down through generations. We breathe them in like the air and whether we follow their wisdom or not, they are reminders that a life well ordered is a life well lived.

Proverbs help men to communicate because they represent the collected thoughts of a certain culture¹².

In fact, the world is governed by proverbs. We often repeat “As says the proverb of the ancients” (1 Sam. 24:13), or “As the old saying is.” These words are used by the majority, forming their notions, fixing resolves to their problems, and giving answers to their questions.

Proverbial teaching is one of the most ancient forms of instruction. From the earliest historical times every nation has had its proverbs. Therefore, proverbs are very abundant in all languages, and among all peoples. No civilization has ever existed that did not, in some way, treasure its common experience in the form of proverbs. As the character of a people gives shape to their proverbs; and the proverbs, in its turn, go to mold the character of the people who use them.

Proverbs were used among the Greeks from ancient times. Each of the seven wise men of Greece had one saying that he valued himself upon and made him famous. These proverbs were inscribed on pillars and had great veneration.

Many of them, though they seem fresh and full of sap on our lips today, have descended to us from the remote antiquity.

¹⁰ Contra Celsus 3:61,62.

¹¹ Contra Celsus 6:67.

¹² *The Guideposts Bible Study Program, Discovering Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs, 1989, p. 16-17.*

THE PROVERBS IN THE DIVINE THOUGHT AND THE HUMAN THOUGHT

1. The proverbs in God's thought differs than that in human thought, for truly many philosophers and wise men were known by their good proverbs, but they couldn't present the perfect truth. The Alexandrian fathers state that not only the proverbs, but philosophy in general, is incomplete, for although it is a divine gift, men spoiled it.

St. Clement of Alexandria says, "*The same God that furnished both Covenants that of the Law and that of Philosophy was the giver of Greek philosophy to the Greeks, by which the Almighty is glorified among the Greeks*¹³." Sometimes **Origen** praises philosophy and sciences. According to him, "*all wisdom is from God*¹⁴." He states that we can use philosophy as Moses had the advantage of the advice of Jethron, his father-in-law. In his eleventh *homily on Exodus*, **Origen** says, "*If we too ever find evidence of wisdom in a pagan writer, we should not automatically reject his ideas just because of his name. The fact that the law we follow was given us by God does not entitle us to swell with pride and refuse to listen to the wise. No; as the Apostle says (1 Thess. 5:21), we should 'scrutinize it all carefully, retaining only what is good'*¹⁵."

2. Philosophers and wise men, not only couldn't present the truth complete, but also they have their own errors, and couldn't fulfill what they have said. They also have no power to help others to fulfill their advice. Men of God use the divine proverbs which reveal the truth complete and perfect. They have the power and free grace to practice them and to help others to fulfill them.

3. While the Greek wisdom concerns itself with an abstract and speculative contemplation of unseen realities, the wisdom mentioned in the holy Bible, good or evil, refers to practical skill in the conduct of a believer's life¹⁶.

- In Exodus 28:3 The idea of wisdom refers to technical skill, "And you shall speak unto all who are wise-hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments to consecrate him, that he may minister unto Me in the priest's office." Also in Exodus 31:3-6; 35: 30-35, the artisans of the tabernacle in the desert were given wisdom by God for the execution of their work; in them manual dexterity is wisdom.
- In 1 Kings 2:6, wisdom is used to imply cleverness.
- The wisdom which King Solomon received from God is illustrated by the clever judgment he made in the case of two mothers (1 Kings 3:16-28).
- The measures which Pharaoh took against the "population explosion" among the Hebrew are styled wise measures in Exodus 1:10.
- The "wise men" of Egypt, who could not interpret Pharaoh's dream, were practitioners of magic and the occult arts (Genesis 40).
- In 2 Samuel 13:3, Jonadab is styled a very wise man, because he told Amnon how to seduce his half-sister Tamar.
- The widow of Tekoa is characterized as a wise woman for the deception she practiced before King David, thereby persuading him to bring his son Absalom home from exile (2 Samuel 14:1-24).

¹³ Stromata 6:5. (ANF, 2: 323).

¹⁴ In Num. hom 18:3.

¹⁵ Jean Daniélou: Origen, NY, 1955, p. 18.

¹⁶ Cf. J. Terence Forestell: *The Book of Proverbs with a Commentary*, Paulist Press, 1960, p.7.

- In Isaiah 10:13 wisdom is used to describe military arts.

4. The Bible states that divine and supreme wisdom which is the aim of the proverbs is a divine gift, presented to men of God. At the same time it does not ignore the natural wisdom that God grants to all men in common, but it differs from one to the other according to his gifts, circumstances, seriousness, and spirituality.

5. Wisdom, divine or natural, needs to grow up through study, communications with others and through divine grace.

In many ancient nations, like Egypt and Mesopotamia, there were especial schools, teaching wisdom. These schools were centered around the kingly courts. Only princes and the children of the courtiers, noblemen and priests were admitted to these schools. They not only gathered and preserved the wise sayings of earlier men, but also reflected and meditated themselves upon their own experience of men and affairs¹⁷. When **Moses** was adopted by Pharaoh's daughter he learned all the wisdom of Egypt (Acts 7:22). While Solomon was granted great wisdom and understanding, and a mind with broad interests as a divine gift (1 Kings 4:29). He was a great king, famous for his wisdom.

St. Clement states that all Christians who receive baptism are babies in Christ and are in need of constant growth through the teaching and the training of the *Paidagogos*. The life of the true believer has the characteristic of childhood that grows unceasingly, and flows the knowledge of the truth that never becomes old, nor old, and never has a limit.

"Therefore the name 'childhood' is for us a life-long season of spring, because the truth abiding in us is ageless and our being made to overflow with that truth, is ageless too. For wisdom is ever fruitful. Ever fixed unchangeable on the same truths, ever constant¹⁸." *"The Educator and Teacher is there naming us **little ones**, meaning that we are more ready for salvation than the worldly wise who, believing themselves wise, have blinded their own eyes¹⁹."*

St. Clement assures that no man is perfect in all things at once. *"I know no one of men perfect in all things at once, while still human, though according to the mere letter of the Law, except Him alone who for us clothed Himself with humanity... But Gnostic perfection in the case of the legal man is the acceptance of the Gospel, that he that after the Law may be perfect²⁰."*

We have to struggle to study wisdom, at the same time we have to acknowledge that God still desires to grant all His true believers His wisdom abundantly and freely, but not without their own will, for He sanctifies man's will.

THE TITLE

The word "*proverb*" comes from a Hebrew word "*mishal*," which is used of various meanings, such as the following:

1. An allegory: For example, Christ and His Church or man's soul are allegorized as the Groom and His bride (Ezek. 17:2).
2. A discourse (Num. 23:7-8).
3. A song of triumph (Isa. 14:4).

¹⁷ Cf. J. Terence Forestell: *The Book of Proverbs with a Commentary*, Paulist Press, 1960, p.6.

¹⁸ *Paidagogos* 1:5:20.

¹⁹ *Paidagogos* 1:6:32 (Frs. of Church).

²⁰ *Stromata* 4:21.

4. An argument (Job 29:1).
5. A type (Heb. 9:9).
6. A lament (Mic. 2:4).
7. A proverb (Prov. 1:1; 1 Kings 4:32; 2 Chron. 7:20; Ps. 44:14; 69: 11; Jer. 24:9), that is a short saying which expresses many meanings.
8. "To rule or to govern" (Gen. 1:18; 3:16; Exod. 21:8). Thus, proverbs are saying designed to rule or govern our conduct, and may be called "Heaven's rules for men on earth"²¹."

PURPOSE

1. The Proverbs in fact is an encyclopedia that contains the knowledge of behavior, and life. It contains educational texts, that reveals the true happiness, and how we can attain it.

One way to make sure that you are enjoying these "spiritual vitamins" is to read in the Proverbs daily. Lift up your heart to God so that He may reveal its wisdom within our depths. The aim of this book is for the believer to live faithfully so that he may glorify the teachings of God our Savior in everything (Tit. 2:10). Even the non-believer finds a type of life in the Proverbs to be successful, and to discover his need for the grace of God to help him. It is no wonder that this book contains 31 chapters so that man enjoys a chapter every day of every month.

2. *To know wisdom, and practice it* (Prov. 1:2). **St. Clement of Alexandria** explains how we must thirst after wisdom till we rested in God Himself. "*The desire for wisdom,*" as he says, "*grows when it is inspired and fed by habits of study, and it grows in proportion to the growth of the student's faith*"²²." "*He, who therefore has God resting in him, will not desire to seek elsewhere. At once leaving all hindrances, and despising all matters which distract him, he cleaves to heaven by knowledge, and passing through the spiritual essences, and all rule and authority, he touches the highest thrones, having to that alone for the sake of which he alone knows... For works follow knowledge, as the shadow follows the body*"²³."

3. *To receive instruction, and understanding in wisdom* (Prov. 1).

TO WHOM

Proverbs, more than any other, is the young people's book of the Bible. As used here, "youth" does not mean merely children and teen-agers. The ancient Greeks considered youth lasting until the age of forty.

KEY THOUGHT

The key word is "*wisdom*," mentioned 104 times. Probably the best-known verse in Proverbs is, "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*" (9:10), that we have to learn in the **school of God**. All true wisdom leads to God. Wherever it is found, the key which unlocks its secret rests with Him.

He says, "*the fear of the Lord*," and not "*the fear of God*." He uses the Hebrew title "Jehovah," and not "*Elohim*." The latter expresses God as the "Almighty," as in the creation. But the first title is used to refer to God who is present among His people, offering

²¹ Henrietta C. Mears: *What the Bible is all about*, 1983, p. 173.

²² Cf. R. Cadiou: *Origen*, Herder, 1944, p. 11.

²³ *Stromata* 7:13.

His covenant to them as His own beloved people. Thus, he connects fear with God who desires to dwell among His people and enter into a covenant with them, and not the Almighty One who gives orders. Thus, the fear of the Lord that grants us wisdom, does not mean fear that perplexes man, nor causes a kind of depression, but grants him peace and joy. The fear of the Lord means to be interested in God that we may not wound His feelings, but respond His love with our love, and His faithfulness towards us with our faithfulness towards Him.

ITS DATE

ITS CHARACTERISTICS

1. **Practical book:** When this book refers to faith, it translates it into practical behavior. And when it mentions wisdom, knowledge, understanding or discretion, it does not mean merely intellectual knowledge, but it is interested in practical life.

The Hebrew word *chokmah*, “wisdom,” is mentioned more than 40 times in the Book of Proverbs, and 27 times in Ecclesiastes, which means something like “*the skill of living*.” The wisdom is practical, not theoretical, or esoteric. It is more spiritual ethics than it is philosophy. It means that a person knows how to act wisely, and live in a responsible, productive, prosperous, and righteous way.

St. Clement of Alexandria states that the goal of Christian education is “*practical, not theoretical and its aim is to improve the soul, not to teach, and to train it up to a virtuous, not an intellectual, life*”²⁴.

2. What is implicit in this book is that God is active and concerned with all the affairs of His children: their thoughts, words, and behavior, for He is our God, Creator, and Savior²⁵.

5. The Book of Proverbs divides men into wise and foolish. Every man can transfer from one group to another and can grow in the same group. The wise are those who love knowledge and seek it, and practice it. The fools are many kinds, such as the following:

I. The **ignorant** or the **simple**: They have no discretion, therefore, they cannot acknowledge the difference between truth and falsehood, and have no serious desire to attain the true knowledge..

- They love ignorance or simplicity (1:22).
- They are void of understanding (7:7).
- They believe in every word (14:15).
- They will die from turning away from wisdom [32], and are destined for folly (14:18, 24)

II. The **scoffers**: They know the truth and falsehood, but they laugh at wisdom and toy with wickedness, because they seek at the carnal pleasures. They have the knowledge, but for the sake of evil desire they are not wise, and refuse to translate their knowledge into practice. Warned of the consequences of pursuing evil, they say: “It won’t happen to us.”

- They delight in scorning (1:22).
- They shame and hate those who try to correct them (9:7-8; 15:12).

²⁴ See Carl A. Volz: *Life and Practice in the Early Church*, Minneapolis, 1990, p. 103, 222; *Paidagogos*, 1:1.

²⁵ Cf. Robert L Alden: *Proverbs*, Baker book House, Michigan, 1995, p. 12,13..

- They refuse to listen to rebuke (13:1).
- They search for wisdom on their own, in vain (14:6).
- They are proud and haughty (21:24).
- They cause contention and strife (22:10).
- They will receive God's scorn (3:34); will inevitably face judgment (19:29); and are detested by others (24:9).

III. The **arrogant**: They willfully ignore wisdom. They have no interest in whether something is good or bad. All that matters is, "What's in it for us?"

- They hate knowledge (1:22).
- They make a sport out of doing evil (10:23).
- They proclaim foolishness to others (12:23; 13:16).
- They rage at instruction and self-confident (14:16)
- They despise their parents (15:20).
- They are more dangerous than angry bears (17:12).
- They like to give their opinions rather than learn (18:2).
- They despise wisdom (23:9).
- They are wise in their eyes (26:5).
- They will be destroyed through their self-absorption (1:23), and are destined for a beating (19:29; 26:3).

IV. The **rebel**: Those who actually hate wisdom, so that they could be said to be aggressive unbelievers.

- They despise wisdom and instruction (1:7).
- They are sure that they are right (12:5).
- They mock the idea of sin (14:9).
- They despise their parents' instruction (15:5).
- They try self-correction that is folly (16:22).
- They quarrel easily (20:3).
- They cannot be separated from their foolishness (27:22).
- They are destined to fall (10:8, 10), and will die for lack of wisdom (10:21).

PROVERBS AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

More than twenty quotations and allusions to the Book of the Proverbs is found in the New Testament. [Rom. 3:15 (Prov. 1:16); Heb. 12:5-6 (Prov. 3:11-12); Rev. 3:19 (Prov. 3:11-12); Jas. 4:8 (Prov. 3:34); 1 Pet. 5:5 (Prov. 3:34); 1 Pet. 4:18 (Prov. 11:31); Rom. 12:20 (Prov. 25:21-22); 2 Pet. 2:22 (Prov. 26:11)].

The Epistle of St. James is called "The Proverbs of the New Testament," for it concentrates on the behavior of the believers.

CHRIST IN THE PROVERBS

In this book, wisdom is personified, as a person who in her (or his) love goes about the streets and gates of the city, and ascends to the high places, calling all men to partake of her banquet table, which she has prepared, so that they may enjoy the blessed life and attain success and happiness.

When you read the book of Proverbs, if you put Christ instead of the word "wisdom," you will see a wonderful power in the book. He is a Friend who sticks closer than a brother (18:24).

The wisdom as mentioned in this book has the same characteristics and work of the Word of God, as mentioned in the **Gospel of St. John**.

- Wisdom exists before creation (Prov. 8:22-26; John 1:1).
- Wisdom rejoices always before God (Prov. 8:30; John 1:1).
- Wisdom's delight was with the sons of men (Prov. 8:31; John 1:14).
- Wisdom dwells with prudence, and seeks knowledge (Prov. 8:12-14; John 1:14).
- Wisdom fills us with treasures (Prov. 8:21; John 1:16).

The same thing happens in the **writings of St. Paul**:

- Wisdom exists before the creation (Prov. 8:22-26; Col. 1:17).
- Wisdom is the Firstborn (Prov. 8:22; Col. 1:15).
- Wisdom is the Beginning and the Head (Col. 1:18).
- Wisdom is the Creator (Prov. 8:22-30; Col. 1:16).
- Wisdom grants us her eternal treasures (Prov. 8:12-14; Col. 1:16).

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Wisdom and the Instructor:

✠ *The Word... has appeared as our Teacher, He by whom the universe was created. The Word who in the beginning gave us life when He fashioned us as Creator, has taught us the good life as our Teacher, that He may afterwards, as God, provide us with eternal life. Not that He now has for the first time pitied us for our wandering; He pitied us from old, from the beginning. But now, when we were perishing, He has appeared and has saved us²⁶.*

St. Clement of Alexandria

WISDOM IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Most cultures in the world have storehouses of collected wisdom, either in their literature or in word-of-mouth tradition. Robert Lee states, "Without doubt, the East is the original home of proverbs. Nearly all the proverbs of Europe can be traced to the East, so our men declare²⁷."

When **Moses** was adopted by Pharaoh's daughter he learned all the wisdom of Egypt (Acts 7:22). The flowering of Israel's wisdom came with **Solomon** (1 Kings 3:5-9). He became the prodigy of his world because of his intellectual attainments.²⁸

The features of Solomon's wisdom are the following:

1. A concern with nature (1 Kings 4:33), which teaches that mankind has to learn to relate to the created world around him, including animals and insects. He has to discover the nature, and to learn from it, even from the ant (Prov. 6:6).
2. The whole Bible is **the divine wisdom**.
3. **God is the Source of all truth**.

²⁶ Protrep. 1:7.

²⁷ Robert Lee: *The Outlined Bible, Analysis No. 20.*

²⁸ Henry H. Hallet: *Halley's Bible Handbook, 1965, p. 269.*

4. The book of the Proverbs clearly declares the need of the believer to unceasingly seek for knowledge and wisdom (16:16).
5. **Truth is revealed in Jesus Christ.** He claimed to be the Truth (John 14:6). To know truth is to be really **free** (John 8:32). In Christ we attain the Truth and inner freedom.
6. Wisdom goes hand in hand if we attain **God's righteousness**.
7. There is **no dualism in the believer's life**: spiritual life and secular life. It is one life in Christ, who is the Truth and Life.
8. Although we cooperate with an unbelieving society, nevertheless we recognize that we **never see things in quite the same way as unbelievers do** (compare Prov. 4 with Rom. 8:35-39).
9. Proverbs illustrates this and directs us to the way **to live responsibly in an alien world**.

THE PROVERBS, THE ECCLESIASTES, AND THE SONG OF SONGS

1.

2. According to **Origen**, Proverbs refers to the literal, historical, and grammatical method of interpreting of the Bible. Ecclesiastes refers to the moral method, and the Song of Songs refers to the allegorical or spiritual method.

PROVERBS AND PSALMS ²⁹

1. In Psalms we find the believer on his knees to enter into a dialogue with his God, asking for His grace, while the Proverbs are for him on his feet, to walk in the Royal way, practicing the divine grace.

2. The Psalms are for the believer's devotions and worship, through which he asks for acknowledging God's will, while the Proverbs are for his activities and practical ethics according to God's will. It is a textbook for practical living according to God's will.

3. We find in Proverbs that godliness is practical. Every relationship in life is mentioned. We find our duty to God and to our neighbors, the duty of parents and children, and our obligations as citizens. Through the Psalms, the believer finds the way to ask God that he may have the power to fulfill that.

THE PROVERBS AND THE HOUSE OF GOD

The Jews likened Proverbs to the outer court of the Temple, Ecclesiastes to the Holy; the Song of Songs to the Holy of Holies.

Remember that the altar of burnt-offering and the basin of cleansing were in the outer court. If we come to the book of Proverbs the believer can be cleansed and be purified. There also he finds the altar, where he can offer sacrifices of love to God.

The book of Proverbs takes us out into the court of the congregation where the people are. Here they live their daily lives and jostle each other in the highways of life. This is a book for everyday instruction. It deals with the practical affairs of life³⁰.

THE PROVERBS AND THE ASCETIC LIFE

St. John Cassian in his "Conferences" refers to the three Solomonic books as a symbol of the three degrees of the ascetic life:

²⁹ *Boyd's Bible Handbook*, 1983, p. 250.

³⁰ *Henrietta C. Mears: What the Bible is all about*, 1983, p. 173.

- The Proverbs refers to the first degree of the ascetic life, in which man leaves his land for the sake of God.
- The Ecclesiastes refers to the second degree of the ascetic life, in which man leaves his people, that is his customs and habits that he had learned from his society.
- The Song of Songs refers to the third degree of the ascetic life, in which man leaves his father's house, to accept God's love, and practice his sonship to Him.

THE AUTHORSHIP

Several names are given in Proverbs regarding its authorship:

1. **Solomon:** From the most ancient times since Solomon's day, the Book of Proverbs has been received by the Jews as work done by him. The whole work has been received as inspired by the Spirit of God, and therefore, as Scripture.

There has scarcely been any dispute concerning either the author or Divine authority of this book, either in the Jewish or Christian Church. Some scholars believe that Solomon collected a part of these proverbs from those who had preceded him, whether Hebrews or Gentiles. But this supposition has very little weight; for the holy Scriptures does not despise God's gift even to the unbelievers. What Solomon was according to the Spirit of God, so that he might embrace what is true and divine, even even these were uttered by Gentiles. Solomon did not record all what he had collected, but by a divine inspiration chose what was in accordance with the divine thought, depositing it in the hands of the believers.

Scattered proverbs were collected during Israel's history and were probably compiled by King David and used by him either directly, or indirectly through a tutor, in the education of his son.

2. Some proverbs are attributed to **the wise** (22:17; 24:13).

3. Some proverbs are collected by the Scribes of Hezekiah's time and contained in chapters 25 to 29. This part is distinguished by being a selection of Solomon's Proverbs, made by the men of Hezekiah, conjectured to be Isaiah, Hosea, and Micah, who all flourished under that reign.

4. **Agur** (30:1), who may have been among the "wise."

5. **Lemuel** (31:1): These proverbs passed on to the king by his mother; whether she was the writer or merely the repeater of them we do not know. These two last chapters may be considered a kind of Appendix to the book of Proverbs:

SOLOMON, THE WISE MAN

SOLOMON'S MARRIAGE WITH FOREIGNERS

SUBJECTS OF THE PROVERBS

1. **Anger:** 14:17,29; 15:18; 16:32; 19:11.
2. **Chastity:**
3. **Cheerfulness:**

4. **Consideration of the poor:**

5. **Correction of Children:** Many of the Proverbs were originally addressed to young men as wisdom from fathers to their sons (Prov. 1:8; 2:1; 3:1, 11, 21; 4:1). This reflects the nature of ancient Hebrew culture, in which sons were expected to inherit leadership of the family and nations. In other words these proverbs are addressed to the new generation, not to restrict their lives, but to help them to be good leaders.(Prov. 13:24; 19:18; 22:6,15; 23:13,14). These youth are warned about many of the traps that commonly ensnare young men:

- Sexual temptation (Prov. 5:15-20; 7:1-27)
- Foolishness (Prov. 12:15-16).
- Ill-gotten gain (Prov. 10:2; 13:11).
- Verbal abuse (Prov. 13:2-3; 15:1).
- Strong drink (Prov. 31:4).
- Pride or selfish ambition (Prov. 16:1-9).

6. **Cosigning for Loans** (Prov. 6:1-5): Proverbs warns would-be cosigners that the risk can sometimes be too great to accept, even for a friend

7. **Counsel** (Prov. 24:6): Proverbs stresses the need for counsel for every person who wants to honor God in life. It offers a number of helpful principles for making wise use of wise counsel.

8. **Fear of God:** 1:7; 3:7; 9:10; 10:27; 14:26,27; 15:16,33; 16:6; 19:23; 23:17; 24:21.

9. **Fools:** 10:18,21,23; 12:15,16;14:9,16; 15:2; 17:10,12,24; 20:3; 23:9; 27:22; 28:26; 29:11.

10. **Friendship:** It is one of the most troubling developments in urban life today is the rapid growth of **gang** activity among young people. Proverbs warns us that man can be lost in a gang (Prov. 1:10-19): 3:27-29; 6:1-5; 11:12; 12:26; 14:21; 16:28; 17:9, 17; 18:17, 24; 21:10; 22:24, 25; 24:17, 19; 25:8, 9, 17, 20, 21, 22; 26:18, 19; 27:6, 9, 10, 14, 17; 28:23; 29:5.

11. **Diligence:** 21:5; 22:29; 27:18, 23-27; 28:19a.

12. **Faithfulness.**

13. **Idleness and Indolence:** 6:6-11; 10:4,5 ;12:27; 13:4; 15:9; 18:9; 19:15,24; 20:4,13; 22:13; 24:30-34; 26:13-16.

14. **Justice and injustice:** 13:23; 17:15, 26; 18:5; 21:15; 22:8, 16; 24:23, 24.

15. **Kindness to enemies:**

16. **Knowledge:**

17. **Materials:** The Greeks emphasized the soul of man and saw all material things as evil. The Bible reveals the goodness of God's material creation. God does not want us to pull out of the world. He encourages us to be human, not sinfully human, but human God created us to be.

18. **Mothers:** The book repeatedly urges youth to pay attention to the instruction of their mothers ((Prov. 1:8; 6:20; 10:1; 30:7).

19. **Mortality:**

20. **The righteous man and the wicked man contrasted:** 3:32, 33; 10:3, 6, 7, 9, 11, 16, 24, 25, 28, 29-32; 11:3-11, 17-21, 23, 27, 31; 12:2, 3, 5-8, 12-14, 20, 21, 26, 28; 13:2, 5, 6, 9, 21, 25; 14:2, 9, 11, 14, 22, 32; 15:8, 9, 26; 24:15, 16; 28:1, 12.

21. **Strife and contention:** 3:30; 10:12; 12:18; 13:10; 15:1-4, 18; 16:27, 28; 17:1,14,19; 18:6-8; 21:9, 19; 28:25.

22. **Temperance:** 20:1; 21:17; 23:1-3,20; 23:29-35; 25:16; 31:4-7.

- **Temper and patience:** 14:17, 29; 15:18; 16:32; 19:11.
 - **Temperance and self-control:** 23:1-3; 25:28.
23. **Tithes:** Honoring God with our whole Paycheck (Prov. 3:9-10).
24. **Tongue and speech:** 4:24; 10:11-32; 12:6,18,22; 13:3; 20:19; 21:23; 26:28; 30:32.
25. **Wealth and richness:** 10:2,15; 11:4,28; 13:7,11; 15:6; 16:8; 18:11; 19:4; 27:24; 28:6,22.
26. **Wisdom:** Wisdom has practical benefits for everyone, even those who do not know God (Prov. 30:25-28).
27. **Women:** The woman of Proverbs 31 is a model, for both women and men, of a way of living that brings fulfillment and contentment. She exhibits a lifestyle of work and love, based on godly wisdom.

OUTLINES

1. **Counsel for young men** ch. 1-9.
2. **Counsel for all men** ch. 10-20.
3. **Counsel for kings and rulers** ch. 21-30.
4. **The virtuous woman** ch 31.

2. **The literary form:** In the Hebrew origin of the Book of Proverbs, it is written in poetry, which always more difficult to read than prose. In addition it contains a number of words which appear only once in the Bible and it is these words which usually cause problems in translation³¹.

Dr. A. C. Gaebelein has written this helpful analysis of the literary structure of Proverbs³².

The literary form of these Proverbs is mostly in the form of couplets. The two clauses of the couplet are generally related to each other by what has been termed parallelism, according to Hebrew poetry. Hebrew poetry does not have rhyme or meter as our poetry does. Hebrew poetry consists of parallelism of ideas. Three kinds of parallelism have been pointed out:

1. *Synonymous Parallelism*. Here the second clause restates what is given in the first clause. It expresses the same thought in a different way.

"Judgements are prepared for scorers, and stripes for the back of fools" (Prov. 19:29).

2. *Antithetic (Contrast) Parallelism*. Here a truth, which is stated in the first clause, is made stronger in the second clause by contrast with an opposite truth.

"The light of the righteous rejoices, but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out" (Prov. 13:9).

You can see that the second statement is stating the same truth but from the opposite point of view by way of contrast.

3. *Synthetic Parallelism*. The second clause develops the thought of the first.

"The terror of a king is as the roaring of a lion; He that provokes him to anger sins against his own life" (Prov. 20:2).

1. This book is part of the wisdom literature of the Hebrews. It is not simply a collection of witty and wise sayings, but there is in it a distinct philosophy of life that depends on the grace of God.

1. Proverbs bears no unscientific statement or inaccurate observation. For example, "Keep your heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23). This is a remarkable statement because it was about 2,700 years later that Harvey found that the blood circulates and that the heart is the pump. In contrast, so-called the Epistle of Barnabas, mention is made of the mythical phoenix, a bird that consumes itself by fire and rises in resurrection. Such a fable does not appear in the Book of Proverbs nor anywhere else in the Bible. It is strange that this is an ancient book containing hundreds of proverbs and not one of them is unscientific today. That in itself ought to alert any thinking person to the fact that the Book of Proverbs is God-inspired³³.

2. Proverbs is a book on a high moral plane. You simply will not find in its pages the immoral sayings which occur in other writings. Justin Martyr said that Socrates was a Christian before Christ - which, of course, would be an impossibility. And his admirers say that he portrays a high conception of morals. However, Socrates also gave instructions to harlots on how to conduct themselves! The best that can be said of him is that he was amoral³⁴.

3. The Proverbs do not contradict themselves, while man's proverbs are often in

³¹ Cf. Robert L Alden: *Proverbs*, Baker book House, Michigan, 1995, p. 13, 14..

³² Cf. J. Vernon McGee: *Proverbs*, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, 1991 p. x.

³³ J. Vernon McGee: *Proverbs*, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, 1991 p. viii.

³⁴ J. Vernon McGee: *Proverbs*, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, 1991 p. ix.

opposition to each other. For example: "Look before you leap" contrasted with "He who hesitates is lost." "A man gets no more than he pays for" contrasted with "the best things in life are free!" "Leave well enough alone" has over against it, "Progress never stands still!" "A rolling stone gathers no moss" versus "A setting hen does not get fat!" The proverbs of man contradict each other because men's ideas differ. But there is no contradiction in the Book of Proverbs because it is inspired by God³⁵.

1. The book contains not mere human wisdom, for its subject is the divine wisdom, as a divine grace, apart from it fallen man cannot please God or live a virtuous life. It shows that in all ages God requires men to live a righteous life and to grow into it. This is grace indeed that God grants man His wisdom at his disposition so that he may be an icon of Jesus Christ, and be pleased with the Father. Truly human wisdom are respected, but man's trust in God is humbly acknowledged throughout. Man is not the sole master of his fate.

2. As the people of the Old Testament were not interested into the life after death in which the just would be rewarded and the wicked punished, the book of Proverbs presents the full possibilities of happiness in this present life.

3. This book closes with a beautiful chapter on women's rights. It also concerned into the role of women in the family to restore the whole society. Wherever Christ goes all human beings - men, women, youth and children - are lifted up.

4. This book divides men into two classes: wise and foolish. The wise have the fear of God as the source of wisdom (9:10). They are very close to God and give heed to His commandments and obey them. The fools concentrate on their self-will, ignoring God's will.

In the book of the Proverbs the opposition between wisdom and foolishness is an opposition between piety and impiety, and between justice and iniquity.

To receive instruction in justice (Prov. 1:3).

To receive instruction in equity.

To give subtlety to simple (Prov. 1:4).

To give young men discretion (Prov. 1:4).

To attract the wise man (Prov. 1:5).

To increase learning (Prov. 1:5). **Origen** learned to see the Church as a long course in the study of religion³⁶.

To help attain to wise counsels (Prov. 1:5).

To make known the words of the wise in proverbial form (Prov. 1:6).

To express dark sayings (Prov. 1:6).

That Solomon could have borrowed little from his predecessors is evident from this consideration, that all uninspired ethic writers, who are famous in history, lived after his times. Solomon began to reign A.M. 2989, which was 239 years before the first Olympiad; 479 before Cyrus, in whose time flourished the seven wise men of Greece; 679 before Alexander the Great, under whose reign flourished Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle; and 1011 before the birth of Christ. Therefore to the Gentiles he could be but little, if at all, indebted³⁷.

³⁵ J. Vernon McGee: Proverbs, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, 1991 p. ix.

³⁶ R. Cadiou: *Origen, Herder, 1944, p. 9.*

³⁷ Adam Clark, *Proverbs.*

We can also divide the Solomon's Proverbs into two groups:

- Those which Solomon himself edited include chapters 1 through 24. Proverbs was uttered by Solomon as a direct gift from God³⁸. The witness of the book itself concerning its contents attests that it is a compilation principally, but not entirely, of Solomonic proverbs (1:1; 10:1; 25:1). He wrote 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs (1 Kings 4:31-32). Solomon was a philosopher, a scientist of no mean ability, an architect of a Temple, and then, too, he was a king. He is the first sacred writer whose name is at the head of his work.

Taking 970 B.C. as Solomon's date of ascension to the throne, he would have reigned from 440 to 400 years before Cyrus, king of Persia, reigned. It was during Cyrus' reign that the seven wise men of Greece lived. This was about 640 to 600 years before Alexander the great, during whose reign lived the three greatest early Greek philosophers-Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Since Solomon lived centuries before all uninspired ethnic writers of history began to write, it is evident that he could have borrowed nothing from them! Nor is it likely that he could have gained much from the heathen Gentile world of that day.

Although Solomon built the temple, but he was not one of the priests who were the guardians of the Law and of worship. He also was not one of the prophets, who were interested in revealing the will of God, interpreting the contemporary events, and foretelling of the coming of the Messiah. The primary interests of both priests and prophets were religious and national. But we can say that he was attributed to the group which were called the "*wise men.*" Their concern is believer's successfulness in this life, having a positive role in the society, and in the world.

Solomon was a very rich king, and his dominions were very large, and yet he was a prophet and a prophet's son.

He was one whom God endued with extraordinary measures of wisdom and knowledge, in answer to his prayers at his accession to the throne. His prayer was exemplary: "Give me a wise and an understanding heart;" the answer to it was encouraging: he had what he desired and "all over things were added to him."

None of all the prophets could have written the Proverbs for God is not wont, even in his miraculous interposition, to make a fig-tree bear olive berries, or a vine figs: every creature acts after its kind. The heights of human prosperity he had reached; the paths of human learning he had trodden further than any of his day: the pleasures of wealth, and power, and pomp he had tasted in all their variety. No spring of earthly delight could be named, of whose waters he had not deeply drunk. The man who has drained the cup of pleasure can best tell the taste of its dregs. He who made Saul an apostle did not disdain to use Solomon as a prophet. Very diverse were the two men, and very diverse their life course; yet in one thing they are perfectly alike, together in glory now, they know themselves to have been only sinners, and agree in ascribing all their salvation to the mercy of God. The errors and follies were his own; they were evil. But out of them the All-wise has brought good.

Of the three Thousand proverbs which Solomon spoke, we have only those contained in this book and in Ecclesiastes; and of the one Thousand and five songs which he made,

³⁸ Boyd's Bible Commentary, p. 251.

only the Canticles have been preserved: or, in other words, of all his numerous works in divinity, philosophy, morality, and natural history, only the three above mentioned, bearing his name, have been admitted into the sacred canon.

Part 1

**COUNSELS ADDRESSED
TO THE YOUTH
*PROVERBS 1-9***

The first section of this book is a praise of wisdom, or a contrast between wisdom and folly.

1. **Fear of the Lord and self-independence:** The grand principle is laid down at the outset, the fear of the Lord on the one side, and on the other the madness of self-will, which despises the divine wisdom and instruction that seems restrain it. For, besides the knowledge of good and evil in respect of which the fear of the Lord will operate, there is that exercise of authority in God's created order which is a check on and a sanctification of the will (the origin of all disorder), as that confided to parents and true leaders and counsellors. And these are carefully insisted on, in contrast with independence, as the basis of happiness and spiritual order in the world. It is not simply God's authority giving precepts, nor even His statements of the consequence of actions, but the order He has set up in the relationships He has established amongst men, especially of parents, subjection to them is really owning God in His order. It is the first commandment with promise.

2. **Violence and corruption:** There are two forms in which sin, or the activity of man's will, manifests itself, violence and corruption. This was seen at the time of the deluge. The earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. Satan is a liar and murderer¹.

Today, these two features, i.e. violence and corruption are growing up. Many give an excuse of violence as a kind of practicing freedom. At the same time they give an excuse of corruption, especially for sexual relationship, by saying that no harm occurred on the society.

The contemporary societies are in need of the book of the Proverb as a divine guidance, for their restoration.

¹ Cf. Darby' *Synopsis on the Bible, Proverbs.*

CHAPTER 1

THE CALL OF WISDOM

In this chapter, King Solomon states that of all things to be known, the most important thing is that the Lord, who desires to enter in a covenant with men as His own beloved, is to be revered. Those know little who do not know this. All true knowledge arises from reverence of the Lord and tends to it as its perfection and center.

Violence is pointed out as the trespass of those obligations which the will of God has laid upon us. But wisdom cries aloud that her voice may be heard, proclaiming the judgement of those who despise her ways².

It is Christ who pleads with sinners and passes sentence on them. He calls Himself Wisdom. He is the center of all divine revelation, the eternal Word by whom the Heavenly Father speaks to men.

1. **The purpose of Proverbs** 1-7.
2. **Warning against joining gangs** 8-19.
3. **The call of Wisdom** 20-33.

1. THE PURPOSE OF PROVERBS

The lessons given in verses 1-6 are plain, likely to benefit those who feel their own ignorance and their need to be taught. If young people take heed to their ways, according to Solomon's Proverbs, they will gain knowledge and discretion. Solomon speaks of the most important points of truth, and one greater than Solomon is here. Christ speaks by His word and by His Spirit. Christ is the Word and the Wisdom of God, and He has made to us wisdom for us.

"The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel" [1].

"To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding" [2].

Verses 2 and 3 contain a list of Hebrew terms which seem to be synonymous, and, of course, they are related, but they are not the same. Among them the following terms:

a. The word **wisdom** - *chochmah* - in the Scriptures means "the ability to use knowledge aright." It occurs in this book alone thirty-seven times. It is an important word in the Bible. Wisdom may mean not only that Divine science by which we are enabled to discover the best end and pursue it by the most proper means; but also the whole of that heavenly teaching that shows us both ourselves and God, directs us into all truth, and forms the whole of true religion³. It means the right use of knowledge. There are a great many brilliant people who have knowledge; yet they lack wisdom. They don't seem to use their knowledge aright.

Wisdom in the Old Testament means Jesus Christ for the believer today. "But of him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30). Christ is the wisdom for the believer today. And to know wisdom is to know Jesus Christ. St. Paul gave as his ambition: "That I may

² Cf. Darby's *Synopsis on the Bible, Proverbs*.

³ Adam Clarke's *Commentaries*.

know him" (Phil. 3:10).

To know Christ is not to play the fool; it is to be a wise man. When you receive Christ and come to know Christ, then you have wisdom⁴.

b. **Instruction** - *musar*. The word instruction appears twenty-six times in Proverbs. For example, Proverbs 13:24 says, "He that spares his rod hates his son: but he that loves him chavenes him betimes?" Here, "to chavenen" actually means "to give instruction?" Therefore, the word instruction means to teach by discipline⁵. To teach him by discipline, and not to punish him.

Criminals are admitted to jails to in order restore them, while we want to punish our children. Our purposes are all confused today. We discipline criminals and punish our children.

c. **Justice** is righteousness, and it means "right behavior."

d. **Judgment** means that we are to make judgments. It is the same as making a decision. The believer comes to crossroads in his life. He must make decisions about which way to go. We have to make decisions, and we should make them as the children of God⁶.

e. "**Equity**" - *mesharim*, rectitude. This refers to principle rather than conduct. The child of God is not put under rules, but we are given great principles which should guide us. For example, Romans 14:22 puts down the great principle: "...Happy is he that condemns not himself in that thing which he allows." The believer should have enthusiasm for what he does. There is too much Christian conduct which is like walking on eggshells⁷.

The pupil is to receive wisdom and instruction, the words of wisdom and understanding, justice and judgement, so perfectly as to excel in all⁸.

Wisdom itself, personified, is his teacher; and when God's wisdom teaches, there is no delay in learning⁹.

1:1

Now he was the wise son of a wise father; wherefore there is added the name of David, by whom Solomon was begotten. From a child he was instructed in the sacred Scriptures, and obtained his dominion not by lot, nor by force, but by the judgement of the Spirit and the decree of God.

From the Commentary of St. Hippolytus on Proverbs

1:2

On the "wisdom and instruction" of verse 2, it is said: Wisdom is the science of things both human and divine, and of their causes. he, therefore, who is an effective theologian knows wisdom. The quotation of I Corinthians 2:6, follows

St. Basil the Great: Homily 12 On the beginning of the proverbs.

1:3

⁴ J. Vernon McGee: *Proverbs*, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, 1991 p. 14-15.

⁵ J. Vernon McGee: *Proverbs*, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, 1991 p. 15.

⁶ J. Vernon McGee: *Proverbs*, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, 1991 p. 16.

⁷ J. Vernon McGee: *Proverbs*, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, 1991 p. 17.

⁸ Adam Clarke's Commentaries.

⁹ Adam Clarke's Commentaries.

“To know wisdom and instruction.” He who knows the wisdom of God, receives from Him also instruction, and learns by it the mysteries of the Word; and they who know the true heavenly wisdom will easily understand the words of these mysteries. Wherefore he says: “To understand the difficulties of words;” for things spoken in strange language by the Holy Spirit become intelligible to those who have their hearts right with God.

From the Commentary of St. Hippolytus on Proverbs

“To give subtlety to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion”[4].

Adam Clarke states that to give subtlety to **the simple** - The word simple, from simplex, compounded of “sine,” without, and “plica,” a fold, properly signifies plain and honest, one that has no by-ends in view, who is what he appears to be; and is opposed to complex, from *complico*, to fold together, to make one rope or cord out of many strands; but because honesty and plain-dealing are so rare in the world, and none but the truly religious man will practice them, farther than the fear of the law obliges him, hence *simple has sunk into a state of progressive deterioration*. At first, it signified, as above, without fold, unmixed, un-compounded: this was its radical meaning. Then, as applied to men, it signified innocent, harmless, without disguise; but, as such persons were rather an unfashionable sort of people, it sunk in its meaning to homely, homespun, mean, ordinary. And, as worldly men, who were seeking their portion in this life, and had little to do with religion, supposed that wisdom, wit, and understanding, were given to men that they might make the best of them in reference to the things of this life, the word sunk still lower in its meaning, and signified silly, foolish; and there, to the dishonour of our language and morals, it stands! Adam Clarke also states that he might have added to *silly, not wise, not cunning. Simplicity, that meant at first, openness, plain-dealing, downright honesty, is now degraded to weakness, silliness, foolishness*. And these terms will continue thus degraded, till downright honesty and plain-dealing get again into vogue. There are two Hebrew words generally supposed to come from the same root, which in our common version are rendered the simple, *pethaim*, and or *pethayim*; the former comes from *patha*, to be rash, havey; the latter, from *pathah*, to draw aside, seduce, entice. It is the first of these words which is used here, and may be applied to youth; the inconsiderate, the unwary, who, for want of knowledge and experience, act precipitately. Hence the Vulgate renders it *parvulis*, little ones, young children, or little children; or very babes. The Septuagint renders it, those that are without evil; and the versions in general understand it of those who are young, giddy, and inexperienced¹⁰.

“To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity”

“Knowledge” is information that is useful.

“Discretion.” This means “*thoughtfulness*.” This is for the young man and young people in general who are thoughtless.

“A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels” [5].

So said St. Paul: “We speak wisdom among them that are perfect.” By hearing the wise man shall come by more wisdom.

¹⁰ Adam Clarke's Commentaries.

“To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings” [6].

God has not scattered diamonds around on the ground Jewels and that which is valuable have been hidden away for man to look for and to find. The gold and the diamonds and other precious things must be mined: oil must be drilled. That is the way that God does it. It is the glory of God to conceal things.

The Word of God deserves all the study that you can possibly bring to it. The Lord Jesus said, "Search the scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life..."¹¹ I trust you will see that you cannot get the nuggets,, out of the Word of God wiYout study.

The challenge of the Book of Proverbs to us today is: Dig in! It is the challenge to do serious study. “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15)¹².

Dark sayings - *chidoth*. Some believe parables, such as those delivered by our Lord, nearly express the meaning of the original.

Fools are persons who have no true wisdom, who follow their own devices, wiYout regard to reason, or reverence for God.

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction” [7].

There is an interesting contrast here: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools *despise* wisdom and instruction.” They do not learn from it¹³.

What is the relation which subsists between the fear of the Lord and true wisdom? Have not some Atheists, or at least Infidants, reached the very highest attainments in various department of knowledge?

Fools despise —*evilim*, evil men. Men of bad hearts, bad heads, and bad ways.

1:7

But if the law produces fear, the knowledge of the law is the beginning of wisdom; and a man is not wise wiYout law. Therefore those who reject the law are unwise; and in consequence they are reckoned godless (**a]qeo**i).

St. Clement of Alexandria: Stromata 2:8.

For, the insolent man and the angry become the prey of his respective passions from lack of wisdom; on which account the prophet said, “There l is no soundness in my flesh: my wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness” (Psalm 38:3, 4): showing that all sin hath its beginning in folly: and so the virtuous man who hath the fear of God is more understanding than any; wherefore a wise man hath said, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” (Proverbs 1:7) If then to fear God is to have wisdom, and the wicked man hath not that fear, he is deprived of that which is wisdom indeed; — and deprived of that which is wisdom indeed, he is more foolish than any. And yet many admire the wicked as being able to do injustice and harm, not knowing that they ought to deem them wretched

¹¹ J. Vernon McGee: *Proverbs*, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, 1991 p. 19.

¹² J. Vernon McGee: *Proverbs*, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, 1991 p. 20.

¹³ J. Vernon McGee: *Proverbs*, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, 1991 p. 20.

above all men, who thinking to injure others thrust the sword against themselves; — an act of extremist folly, that a man should strike himself and not even know that he doth so, but should think that he is injuring another while he is killing himself.

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on St. John, 41.

1:7

Understanding is the eye of the soul; wherefore also Israel means, “he that sees God” - that is, he that understands God.

St. Clement of Alexandria: Instructor 1:9.

2. 1:7

Now, “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;” the sense of sin leads to repentance, and God bestows His compassion upon those who are penitent.

St. Irenaeus: Adv. Haer., 3:23:5.

1:7

They (the philosophers) say that God is not to be feared; therefore all things are in their view free and unchecked. Where, however is God not feared, except where He is not? Where God is not, there truth also is not... But where God is, there exists “the fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom.” Where the fear of God is, there is seriousness, an honorable and yet Youghtful diligence, as well as an anxious carefulness and a well-considered admission (to the sacred ministry) and a safely-guarded communion, and promotion after good service, and a scrupulous submission (to authority), and a devout attendance, and a modest gait, and a united church, and God in all things.

Tertullian: On Prescription Against Heretics, 43.

Warning against joining gangs 8-19.

“My son, hear the instruction of your father, and forsake not the law of your mother” [8].

It is worthy to note that the relation between the true teacher and his student is a father with his son¹⁴. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are called the "Patriarchs," or the Fathers of Israel (Gen. 1:24 LXX; Exod. 3:13, 15; Duet. 1:8; Acts 3:13; 7:2, 12; Rom. 4:12, 16; 2 Pet. 3:4). According to the Jewish tradition the official title of the scribes was "Father." In the New Testament Church, the Jewish and pagans on the martyrdom of St. Polycarp of Smyrna, were crying: "This is the Father of the Christians." When St. Athanasius referred to St. Dionysius of Alexandria, St. Dionysius of Rome and others, he used the term "Fathers."

In the first century, teaching was a bishopric work, or a "Fatherly" work. Teaching was not merely presenting some dogmas or doctrines, but presenting a living experience, which the disciples examined, together with their Fathers. Teaching and discipleship were inseparable. Through true Fatherhood, the bishops and priests, looked to "teaching" not merely as a fruit of theoretical dogmas, but of their fatherly love, through which they can

¹⁴ The Author: The Apostolic Fathers, 1993, p. 7-8.

repeat the words of St. Paul, "In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel" 1 Cor. 4:15.

✠ *When a man learns from the mouth of another, it is said that he is the son of the person who teaches him, and the latter is called his father.*

St. Irenaeus⁴

✠ *The speech is the son of the soul, therefore we call those who teach us our fathers.*

St. Clement of Alexandria⁵

It is interesting to note that both parents are included here. Mothers did play an important role from Bible times to the present, e.g. Hanna, Manoah's wife, Lemuel's mother, Lois, and Eunice.

Not only must children honor their parents, but also that both parents are responsible for teaching and training their children. It is supposed that parents have, themselves, the fear of the Lord, and that they are capable of giving the best counsel to their children, and that they set before them a strict example of all godly living. Parents' advice is in vain if their own conduct is not consistent. The father occasionally gives instruction, but he is not always in the family. The mother-she is constantly within doors, and to her the regulation of the family belongs; therefore she has and gives laws.

"For they shall be an ornament of grace unto your head, and chains about your neck" [9].

May God have mercy on the parents who are not instructing their little ones in the things of God.

Filial respect and obedience brings spiritual honor, glory and beauty to the life of a wise child.. An ornament of grace is granted unto his head as a crown, diadems, and golden chains and pearls.

Political dignity has been distinguished in many nations by a chain of gold about the neck. Solomon seems here to claim, if we follow the metaphor, that the surest way of coming to distinguished eminence, in civil matters, is to act according to the principles of true wisdom, proceeding from the fear of the Lord.

A crown too he hath of curious workmanship, that of glory, that of the tender mercies of God. For saith [the Psalmist], "Bless the Lord, O my soul, that crowneth thee with pity and tender mercies." (Psalm 103:2, 4.) Again, that of glory: "For You have crowned him with glory and honor." (Psalm 8:6.) And" with favor You have crowned us with a shield." (Psalm 5:12. LXX.) Again, that of grace: "For You shalt receive a crown of grace upon thy head." (Proverbs 1:9. LXX.) Seest You this diadem of many wreaths, and surpassing the other in grace. But let us institute anew and from the beginning a stricter inquiry into the condition of these kings. That king hath dominion over his guards, and issues orders to all, and all obey and serve him; but here I show you greater authority. For the number here is as great or even greater: it remains to inquire into their obedience. And bring me not forth those that have ruled amiss, since I too bring those that have been driven from their kingdom and murdered by their very body guards. Let us then bring forth these instances, but seek for those of

either kind who have ordered well their kingdom. And do You put forward whom You wilt.

St. John Chrysostom: Commentary on 2 Corinthians 1:20.

Vs. 10-19: Here the street-corner gang invites our young friend to participate in an armed robbery. Wicked people are zealous in seducing others into the paths of the destroyer: Sinners love company in sin, but they have so much more to answer for. How cautious young people should be! “Consent you not.” Do not say as they say, nor do as they do, or would have you to do; have no fellowship with them. Who could think that it should be a pleasure for one man to destroy another! See their idea of worldly wealth; but it is neither substance, nor precious. It is the ruinous mistake of Yousands, that they overvalue the wealth of this world. Men promise themselves in vain that sin will turn to their advantage. The way of sin is down-hill; men cannot stop themselves. Would young people shun temporal and eternal ruin? Let them refuse to take one step in these destructive paths. Men’s greediness of gain hurries them upon practices which will not suffer them or others to live out half their days. What is a man profited, Yough he gain the world, if he lose his life? much less if he lose his soul?

1:9

You are the captive and slave of your money; you are bound with the chains and bonds of covetousness; and you whom Christ had once loosed, are once more in chains. You keep your money, which, when kept, does not keep you.

St. Cyprian: Treatise Viii On Works And Alms, 13.

“My son, if sinners entice you, consent you not” [10].

If sinners entice you, consent you not. They can do you no harm unless your will join in with them. God’s eternal purpose with respect to man is that his will shall be free; or, rather, that the will, which is essentially free, shall never be forced nor be forcible by any power. Not even the devil himself can lead a man into sin till he consents. Were it not so, how could God judge the world?

“If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent wiYout cause” [11].

1:11

These things he understands of the people of the Jews, and their guilt in the blood of Christ; for they Yought that He had His conversation (citizenship) on earth only.

From the Commentary of St. Hippolytus on Proverbs

1:11-13

Yet what we read in the Proverbs of impious men saying, “Let us unrighteously hide in the earth the righteous man; yea, let us swallow him up alive as hell, and let us take away his memory from the earth: let us seize his precious possession,” is not so obscure that it may not be understood, wiYout laborious exposition, of Christ and His possession the Church. Indeed, the gospel parable about the wicked husbandmen shows that our Lord Jesus Himself said something like it: “This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours.” (Matt. 21:38).

St. Augustine: City of God, 17:20.

“Let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole, as those that go down into the pit” [12].

“*Let us swallow them up alive*” means “Give them as havey a death as if the earth were suddenly to swallow them up.” This seems to refer to the destruction of a whole city. Let us destroy man, woman, and child; and then we may seize on and carry away the whole of their property, and the spoils will be great.

“We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil: Cast in your lot among us; let us all have one purse” [13-14].

Never have they stated the negative consequences of their crime; rather they have only offered its rewards and potential benefits. That is the way it is with sin’s allure. The devil puts his best foot forward to show his better side, and leaves the darker side and its ugliness to be discovered after it is too late.

It is so easy for a young man to fall in with a group that is doing shady things.

Cast in your lot — Be a *frater conjuratus*, a sworn brother, and you shall have an equal share of all the spoil.

Common sense must teach us that the words here used are such as must be spoken when a gang of cut-throats, pickpockets, etc., are associated together.

“My son, walk not you in the way with them; refrain your foot from their path” [15].

Two kinds of paths or ways are hinted at in this verse, reminding us of Psalm 1 with its two ways of life: the way of the righteous which the Lord knows and loves, and the way of the wicked which leads to doom.

“For their feet run to evil, and make havee to shed blood” [16].

His words imply havee; both verbs here have the ring of urgency. Isaiah 59:7 uses similar terms in describing sinners as does St. Paul in Romans 3:15.

For their feet run to evil — The whole of this verse is wanting in the Septuagint, and in the Arabic.

“Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird” [17].

This is a proverb of which the wise man here makes a particular use; and the meaning does not seem as difficult as some imagine. The wicked are represented as lurking privily for the innocent. It is in this way alone that they can hope to destroy them and take their substance; for if their designs were known, proper precautions would be taken against them; for it would be vain to spread the net in the sight of those birds which men wish to ensnare. Attend therefore to my counsels, and they shall never be able to ensnare you.

“And they lay wait for their own blood; they lurk privily for their own lives” [18].

Evil people will reap what they sow. Trappers will themselves be trapped. Ambushers will be ambushed. Wicked plans will backfire; bad news for a criminal, but good news for one who has resisted such overtures.

“So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain; which takes away the life of the owners thereof” [19]

The Septuagint reading is “end” rather than “ways.”

Covetousness is the great sin of the hour.

A covetous man is in effect, in the sight of God, a murderer; for he wishes to get all the gain that he can accrue to any or all who are in the same business. He follows this

no matter how many families starve in consequence. This is the very case with him who sets up shop after shop in different parts of the same town or neighborhood, in which he carries on the same business and endeavors to undersell others in the same trade that he may get all into his own hand.

1:7

For we must not begin with contemplation and leave off with fear (for an unbridled contemplation would perhaps push us over a precipice), but we must be grounded and purified and so to say made light by fear, and thus be raised to the height. For where fear is there is keeping of commandments; and where there is keeping of commandments there is purifying of the flesh, that cloud which covers the soul and suffers it not to see the Divine Ray. And where then is purifying there is Illumination; and Illumination is the satisfying of desire to those who long for the greatest things, or the Greatest Thing, or That Which surpasses all greatness.

St. Gregory Nazianzen: Oration On the Holy Lights, 8.

1:11

Take my advice, my friend, and be slow to do evil, but swift to your salvation; for readiness to evil and tardiness to good are equally bad. If you are invited to a revel, be not swift to go; if to apostasy, leap away; if a company of evildoers say to you, "Come with us, share our bloodguiltiness, let us hide in the earth a righteous man unjustly," do not lend them even your ears. Thus you will make two very great gains; you will make known to the other his sin, and you will deliver yourself from evil company. But if David the Great say unto you, Come and let us rejoice in the Lord; or another Prophet, Come and let us ascend into the Mountain of the Lord; or our Savior Himself, Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest; or, Arise, let us go hence, shining brightly, glittering above snow, whiter than milk, shining above the sapphire stone; let us not resist or delay.

St. Gregory Nazianzen: Oration On Holy Baptism, 25.

1:32

For hence it is that under the figure of the Idumaeans, who allowed themselves to be vanquished by their own prosperity, those who rejoice in the successes of this world are rebuked, when it is said, They have given my land to themselves for an inheritance with joy, and with their whole heart and mind (Ezekiel 36:5). In which words it is to be observed, that they are smitten with severe rebuke, not merely because they rejoice, but because they rejoice with their whole heart and mind. Hence Solomon says, The turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them (Proverbs 1:32). Hence Paul admonishes, saying, They that buy, as Yough they possessed not; and they that use this world, as Yough they used it not (1 Corinthians 7:30)¹⁵.

Fr. Gregory (the Great)

1:28

For many call upon Him, but not in truth.

St. Augustine: On the Psalms, 145:13.

1:20

¹⁵ *Fr. Gregory (the Great), Pastoral Rule, 26.*

I myself also wish to be put among the number of her sons, that I may be slain by her; I wish to be slain, that I may become a son. But does she merely murder her sons, or also torture them? For I hear God also, in another passage, say, "I will burn them as gold is burned, and will try them as silver is tried." Certainly by the means of torture which fires and punishments supply, by the testing martyrdoms of faith. The apostle also knows what kind of God he has ascribed to us, when he writes: "If God spared not His own Son, but gave Him up for us, how did He not with Him also give us all things?" You see how divine Wisdom has murdered even her own proper, first-born and only Son, who is certainly about to live, nay, to bring back the others also into life. I can say with the Wisdom of God; It is Christ who gave Himself up for our offenses.

Tertullian: Scorpace, 7.

1:33

So, then, what is really good is seen to be most pleasant, and of itself produces the fruit which is desired — tranquillity of soul. "And he who hears Me," it is said, "shall rest in peace, confident, and shall be calm without fear of any evil." "Rely with all thy heart and thy mind on God."

St. Clement of Alexandria: Stromata 4:23.

1:33

And we desire that every one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope," down to "made an high priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 6:11-20). Similarly with Paul "the All-virtuous Wisdom" says, "He, that heareth me shall dwell trusting in hope." For the restoration of hope is called by the same term "hope." To the expression "will dwell" it has most beautifully added "trusting," showing that such an one has obtained rest, having received the hope for which he hoped. Wherefore also it is added, "and shall be quiet, without fear of any evil."

St. Clement of Alexandria: Stromata 2:23.

3. THE CALL OF WISDOM 20-33

Wisdom calls out in 1:20, 8:1 and 9:3. The *Wisdom* and the *Folly* are each seeking, but in general, wisdom makes her proposal public "in the streets, city squares and gates," while folly and evil tend to be hidden, and secretive. Wisdom stands and **calls aloud** in strategic places so that everyone may hear her voice.

"Wisdom cries without; she utters her voice in the streets" [20].

Here wisdom is again personified. And her voice is opposed to the seducing language of the wicked mentioned above [10 etc.]. This voice is heard everywhere, in public, in private, in the streets, and in the private room.

"She cries in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she utters her words, saying:

*How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity?
and the scorers delight in their scorning,
and fools hate knowledge?" [21-22].*

Solomon, having showed how dangerous it is to hearken to the temptations of Satan, here declares how dangerous it is not to hearken to the calls of Christ, the Wisdom of God.

The Book of the Proverbs mentions to **four kinds of fools**. Three of them are here called by our Lord:

1. The **ignorant** or the **simple** “*pethayim*”: These kind of people cannot acknowledge exactly the difference between truth and falsehood, because they lack direction. They are easily seduced and deceived, for they are naive, impressive people who are open to all kinds of influence, both good and bad.

- They love ignorance or simplicity [22].
- They are void of understanding (7:7).
- They believe in every word (14:15).
- They will die from turning away from wisdom [32],
- and are destined for folly (14:18, 24)

2. The **scoffers**: Proud, jovial people, that make a jest of every thing. They laugh at wisdom, and treat its counsels with contempt. Nothing is sacred and serious to them. Warned of the consequences of pursuing evil, they say: “It won’t happen to us.”

- They delight in scorning [22].
- They shame and hate those who try to correct them (9:7-8; 15:12).
- They refuse to listen to a word of rebuke (13:1).
- They search for wisdom according to their own desire (14:6).
- They are proud and haughty (21:24).
- They cause strife (22:10).
- They will receive God’s scorn (3:34); will inevitably face the divine judgment (19:29); and are detested by others (24:9).

3. The **arrogant**: They hate to be taught, and have a rooted dislike to godliness. They willfully ignore wisdom and live according to their own will. They have no interest in whether something is good or bad. All that matter is, “What’s in it for us?”

- They hate knowledge [22].
- They make a sport out of doing evil (10:23).
- They proclaim foolishness to others (12:23; 13:16).
- They rage at instruction and self-confident (14:16)
- They despise their parents (15:20).
- They are more dangerous than angry bears (17:12).
- They like to give their opinions rather than learn (18:2).
- They despise wisdom (23:9).
- They are wise in their eyes (26:5).
- They will be destroyed through their self-absorption (1:23), and are destined for a beating (19:29; 26:3).

4. The **rebel**: Those who actually hate wisdom, so that they could be said to be aggressive unbelievers.

- They despise wisdom and instruction [7].
- They are sure that they are always right (12:5).

- They mock the idea of sin (14:9).
- They despise their parents' instruction (15:5).
- They try self-correction that is folly (16:22).
- They quarrel easily (20:3).
- They cannot be separated from their foolishness (27:22).
- They are destined to fall (10:8, 10), and will die for lack of wisdom (10:21)

***“Turn you at my reproof: behold,
I will pour out my spirit unto you,
I will make known my words unto you”*** [23].

The verse ***“Turn you at my reproof*** *“lethochachti,”* may be understood in two ways. First, it may mean that since you won't listen to My invitation, now turn and listen to My rebuke. I will pour My Spirit on You to discover the judgment that will fall upon you. Second, it means turn and repent when I reprove you. I will pour My Spirit on You to help you in your repentance.

“Because I have called, and you refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded” [24].

“But you have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof” [25].

It is a tragedy that God wants us to be wise, but we don't want it. Man's refusal of divine wisdom makes him stubborn, and thus he acts as if he is irrational.

“I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear comes” [26].

“When your fear comes as desolation, and your destruction comes as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish comes upon you” [27].

These and the following words appear to be addressed to the people described in verses 10-19, who have refused to return from their evil ways until they are arrested by the hand of the divine justice.

Laughing here does not contain any trace of cruelty or revenge, but is a figurative language that expresses how foolish and ridiculous it is for a man to mock the Almighty God, likened to an insect should defying a blast furnace.

They are now about to suffer according to the demands of the law. They must die, for their crimes are proved against them and justice knows nothing of mercy.

Your destruction comes as a whirlwind - *kesuphah*, as the all-prostrating blast.

The love of Christ, and the divine promises mingled with his reproofs, surely should receive the attention of every one. Now sinners live at ease, and set sorrow at defiance; but their calamity will come. Now God is ready to hear their prayers, but then they shall cry in vain. Are we yet despisers of wisdom? Let us hearken diligently, and obey our Lord Jesus Christ, so that we may enjoy peace of confidence in God; be free from evil in this life, in death, and attain eternal glory.

“Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me” [28].

“For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord” [29].

“They would none of my counsel: they “ [30].

The present life is a test. It is only in eternity that the state is irreversibly fixed, where that which was guilty must be guilty still. But let none harden his heart because of this long-suffering of God, for if he die in his sin, he shall never be with God. And when

once shut up in the unquenchable fire, he will not pray for mercy, as he shall clearly see and feel that the hope of his redemption is entirely cut off.

“Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices” [31].

Every man is free to make his own choices in life, but he is not free to choose the consequences of his choices.

“For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them” [32].

This evidence came against them when they were in their prosperity, *shalvah*, and what seems to them as their security, became more easily taken and brought to justice, and lost their lives.

“But who so hears unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil” [33].

The man who hears the voice of wisdom in preference to the enticements of the wicked, shall inhabit safety, *yishcan betach*, for he shall be completely safe and secure; and shall be quiet from the fear of evil, enjoying the richness of the righteousness of Christ and their protection in Him.

CHAPTER 2

THE REWARDS OF WISDOM

Chapter one ended with the teaching that wisdom grants her rewards to those who follow her. The next three chapters are an explanation of this truth. In this chapter, King Solomon shows that they who diligently seek wisdom shall find it. He promises his disciples the highest advantages, if they will follow the wisdom,[1-9]. He also shows the advantage of it:

- * They shall be happy in its enjoyment [10, 11];
- * The believer shall be preserved from men of corrupt principles whose business it is to abuse lives [12-15];
- * and from the snares of women of corrupt practices [16-19];
- * be a companion of the upright; shall be kept them in the way of good men [20].
- * and be in safety in the land, when the wicked shall be rooted out of it [21-22].

In this chapter, Solomon asserts that the way to find out the divine wisdom is through God's Word, and praying, to know His will, to be pleased with it, and to practice it by the divine grace¹. Thus, he urges us to walk in the ways of wisdom.

The 22 verses of this chapter correspond to The 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet².

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|
| 1. Exhortation to seek wisdom. | 1-9. |
| 2. The advantages of wisdom. | 10-22. |

1. EXHORTATION TO SEEK WISDOM

In this paragraph [1-9], Solomon instruct the believer as with his spiritual son. He exhorts him to listen to the word of God which he utters, so that he may store it in his heart. He asks him to decline his ears towards it, and open his heart so that it may rest there. Thus, he attains the fear of the Lord and the divine knowledge, be protected with the spiritual armor of God, and walk in the royal way.

“My son, if you will receive my words, and hide my commandments with you...” [1].

Solomon speaks with his disciple, considering him his son, as he presents him his heart full of love together the word instruct. *St. Clement of Alexandria* says, “*And every one who is instructed, is in respect of subjection the son of his instructor*³.”

Let us present our hearts full of love and inflamed with the true eagerness to their salvation and glorification, before instructing others.

The parents ask their children to receive their instruction and hide their commandments. Perhaps this is the first lesson in the school of this life. By receiving them and responding to their instruction, the children reveal their practical love as a

¹ Robert L. Alden: *Proverbs*, Michigan 1995, p. 33.

² William MacDonald: *Believer's Bible Commentary*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995, p. 796.

³ *St. Clement of Alexandria: Stromata 1:1.*

respond of the parents' love. They not only have to receive them, but also to lay them up in their hearts with care, as men do their choicest treasures. From time to time the believer has to look his inner treasure, and to look upon what he has stored, and admire them as divine gifts.

He advises us to hide with us our parents' commandments, which are undoubtedly in full accord with the precepts of the Bible. Treasure them up in our hearts, and then act from them through the medium of our affections. He who has the word of God in his heart, works from his heart; his heart goes with him in all things, and he delights to do the will of his heavenly Father, because his law is in his heart.

Wisdom asks us to open not only our ears, but also our hearts, so that wisdom intended to be treasured within us.

*“So that you incline your ear unto wisdom,
and apply your heart to understanding;
Yea, if you cries after knowledge,
and lifts up your voice for understanding”* [2-3].

All members of the body together with the soul we do whatever is necessary to learn wisdom, knowledge and understanding. Thus we seek, receive and store the divine wisdom. We have to incline our ears, that is to keep these gates open, so that God's wisdom may enter to our heads, and find its final destination, which is the open heart.

To our God we **cries** by our tongues and inner voice, for He is the only Giver of it. And with our ears we listen, and with our hearts we store it as a precious treasure. St. Peter says, “As newborn babies, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby” (1 Pet. 3:2). When a little baby sees his mother is fixing the bottle of milk, he wiggles every thing he has: his hands, his mouth, and his feet, in anticipation. So we as children of God reveal our eager towards the milk of the word of God, by crying.

St. Augustine distinguishes between *voice* and *noise*, saying that when we pray without love, our prayers becomes a noise which God displease with it. On the contrary He is pleased with that which is a voice, and has a meaning, for it is issued from love. Therefore, the Psalmist repeatedly uses the term “**voice**” in his speech of prayer (Ps. 3:4; 5:3; 18:6; 27:7; 64:1; 66:91).

*“If you seeks her as silver,
and searches for her as for hid treasures”* [4].

The search for wisdom is comparable to the search for silver and other precious metals in deep mines. Wisdom, like these treasurers are not usually discovered by a casual observer or chance passerby. Much efforts are necessary to excavate it. We seek the salvation of our souls as earnestly as the covetous man seeks wealth; and be ashamed of ourselves, if we be less in earnest after the true riches than he is after perishing wealth. With unwearied diligence and earnest desire and patient expectation we must **seek her as silver**.

The original word of “**treasures**” here signifies property of any kind concealed in the earth, in caves or such like; and may also mean treasures, such as the precious metals or precious stones, which are presumptively known to exist in such and such mines. And

how are these sought? By mining for wisdom, or searching for her as hidden treasure. Learn from the following circumstance.

God will not have us listen to the words and sentences contained in the Scriptures carelessly, but with much attention. This is why the blessed David has prefixed in many places to his Psalms the title “for understanding,” and has said, “Open You mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Your Law.” (Psalm 32:42, etc.; 119:18) And after him his son again shows that we ought to “seek out wisdom as silver, and to make merchandise of her rather than of gold.” (Proverbs 2:4 and 3:14 [partially quoted]; John 5:39) And the Lord when He exhorts the Jews to “search the Scriptures,” the more urges us to the inquiry, for He would not thus have spoken if it were possible to comprehend them immediately at the first reading. No one would ever search for what is obvious and at hand, but for that which is wrapt in shadow, and which must be found after much inquiry; and so to arouse us to the search He calls them “hidden treasure.” (Proverbs 2:4; Matthew 13:44) These words are said to us that we may not apply ourselves to the words of the Scriptures carelessly or in a chance way, but with great exactness. For if any one listen to what is said in them without inquiring into the meaning, and receive all so as it is spoken, according to the letter, he will suppose many unseemly things of God, will admit of Him that He is a man, that He is made of brass, is wrathful, is furious, and many opinions yet worse than these⁴.

“Then shall you understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.

For the Lord gives wisdom: out of his mouth comes knowledge and understanding.

He lays up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly” [5-7].

Understanding can be found, and the finding of it is like fear of the Lord (1:7). This is another way of stating the motto of the whole Book which is that the first step in becoming wise is to know God as the Father and to hold Him in awe.

God is the fountain of all wisdom, and understanding. Wise and true intelligent people are at best, channels through which God’s wisdom flows⁵.

Wisdom comes, as it were, from God’s mouth [7] to our ears, rests in our hearts, sanctifies our will, and works in our conduct.

Divine wisdom is a **buckler** to God’s own who walk uprightly, or a helper that grants them victory. It keeps them safe as they tread the paths of judgment, preserving their way. As we hold up and preserve wisdom, wisdom holds up and preserves us.

2:3-5

For to those who have been justified by philosophy, the knowledge which leads to piety is laid up as a help⁶.

⁴ St. John Chrysostom: *Homilies on St. John*, 15.

⁵ Robert L. Alden: *Proverbs*, Michigan 1995, p. 32.

St. Clement of Alexandria

2:5

And if you wish further to learn from the sacred writings that there is a diviner sense than the senses of the body, you have only to hear what Solomon says, "Thou shalt find a divine sense"⁷.

Origen

But lest our statement that things intellectual are not cognizable by the senses should appear unbecoming, we shall employ the instance of Solomon, who says, "You will find also a divine sense; " by which he shows that those things which are intellectual are to be sought out not by means of a bodily sense, but by a certain other which he calls "divine." And with this sense must we look on each of those rational beings which we have enumerated above; and with this sense are to be understood those words which we speak, and those statements to be weighed which we commit to writing. For the divine nature knows even those thoughts which we revolve within us in silence"⁸.

Origen

For he knew that there were within us two kinds of senses: the one mortal, corruptible, human; the other immortal and intellectual, which he now termed divine. By this divine sense, therefore, not of the eyes, but of a pure heart, which is the mind, God may be seen by those who are worthy. For you will certainly find in all the Scriptures, both old and new, the term "heart" repeatedly used instead of "mind," i.e., intellectual power⁹.

Origen

2:6

The true faith, however, and sound doctrine declare that both graces are from God; the Scripture says, "From His face comes knowledge and understanding;" and another Scripture says, "Love is of God." (1 John 4:7)¹⁰.

St. Augustine

"The Lord gives wisdom: out of His mouth comes knowledge and understanding;" and it is from Him they have received their very desire for knowledge, if it is wedded to piety¹¹.

St. Augustine

"He keeps the paths of judgment, and preserves the way of his saints" [8].

"Path of judgment" means "Righteous paths," judgment being here put for righteousness. And keeping of paths may be put for keeping them in their paths.

⁶ St. Clement of Alexandria: *Stromata* 1:4.

⁷ Origen: *Against Celsus*, 7:34.

⁸ Origen: *De Principiis* 4:1:37.

⁹ Origen: *De Principiis* 1:1:9.

¹⁰ St. Augustine: *On Grace and Free Will*, 40 (19).

¹¹ St. Augustine: *On Christian Doctrine*, 3:37 (55).

“**Saints**” means covenant keepers, those who fulfill their duty to God and thence also to fellow human beings.

“Then shall you understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path” [9].

He says, “**Then**” to explain that when God in answer to your desires has given you wisdom. Equity, all the parts of your duty to man, as well as the fear of God.

“**Then shall you understand;**” he who is taught of God understands the whole law of justice, mercy, righteousness, and truth; God has written this on his heart. He who understands these things by books only is never likely to practice or profit by them.

2. THE ADVANTAGES OF WISDOM

The Book of Proverbs learns us that men of God have to be very cautious of two persons: evil man and the strange woman. If true wisdom enters into our hearts, and became pleasant to us, we shall not be deceived so easily, but we shall be careful to avoid all evil company and evil practices. We would be saved from the partnership of evil men or from the world of ungodly men who misrepresent facts and distort the truth, whose speech is utterly untrustworthy [12-15]. And would be saved from the embrace of the loose woman, or from the clutches of the immoral woman [16-19].

When wisdom has dominion over us, then it not only fills the head, but enters into the heart, and will preserve, both against corruption within and temptations without. The ways of sin are ways of darkness, uncomfortable and unsafe! They who walk in it take pleasure in sin; both in committing it, and in seeing others commit it. Every wise man will shun such company. True wisdom will also preserve from those who lead to carnally lusts, which defile the body, that living temple, and war against the soul. These are evils which excite the sorrow of every serious mind, and cause every reflecting parent to look upon his children with anxiety, lest they should be entangled in such fatal snares. Let the sufferings of others be our warnings. Our Lord Jesus deters from sinful pleasures, by the everlasting torments which follow them. It is very rare that any who are caught in this snare of the devil, recover themselves; so much is the heart hardened, and the mind blinded, by the deceitfulness of this sin.

The righteous must leave the earth as well as the wicked; but the earth is a very different thing to them. To the wicked it is all the heaven they ever shall have; to the righteous it is the place of preparation for heaven.

“When wisdom enters into your heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto your soul,

*discretion shall preserve you, understanding shall keep you,
To deliver you from the way of the evil man, from the man that speaks froward things”* [10-12].

To the true believer, God’s commands are not irksome, Christ’s yoke is easy and sweet. The Divine wisdom gives us pleasure, for receiving true wisdom in its essence is a unity with God Himself. This unity is a rewarding, fulfilling and happy experience. The chief end of man is glorify God and to enjoy Him.

When you truly love wisdom, discretion shall preserve you. Discretion, or the ability to make wise decisions, saves a person from many a “bad trip.” Sound judgment delivers us from involvement with wicked men. None of us realizes the extent to which we are daily preserved from spiritual, moral, and physical perils. The Christian enjoys a well-guarded life, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust¹².

The term “preserve” is a translation of a word which occurs only ten times in the Old Testament, nine times in Proverbs, and once in Deuteronomy 32:20. It is a word often connected with speaking (8:13; 10:31, 32, 23:33), and is probably related to the verb “overthrow” such speech has its goal the overthrow of what of orderly and right¹³..

***“Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness;
Who rejoice to do evil, and delight in the frowardness of the wicked”*** [13-14].

Throughout the Bible darkness is associated with chaos (gen. 1:2), cursing (Exodus 10:21-22; Job 3:4-6), and folly (Ecclus. 2:13-14).

The man invents purposes of good; and all his schemes, plans, and devices, have for their object God’s glory and the good of man: he devises liberal things, and by liberal things he shall stand.

While the godly find pleasure in wisdom, the cursed ones find pleasure in committing senseless crimes (10:23), but there is a difference between a pleasure and other.

***“Whose ways are crooked, and they froward in their paths:
To deliver you from the strange woman, even from the stranger which flatters
with her words”*** [15-16].

Crooked — Who swerve from the straight way of God’s law, and have windings and turnings, to escape conviction.

The adulteress or whore is called here a “strange woman,” because God had made a law that no Israelite woman was to play the prostitute; and if any woman did that, she would automatically put outside the bounds of Israel Therefore, the stranger woman here means a foreigner one who came into Israel to practice prostitution.

This is the first of several passages on the theme of avoiding the immoral woman (5; 6:20-7:27), giving us the distinct impression that things were not any different in ancient times than they are today.

The stranger which flatters with her words *hechelikhah*, she that smoothes with her words. The original intimates glib, oily speeches of a prostitute. The criminals of 1:11-19 appealed to the vice of greed; this woman uses lusts.

“Which forsakes the guide of her youth, and forgets the covenant of her God” [17].

She is unfaithful to the companion of her youth, that is her husband, and she forgets the covenant of her God, that is the marriage vows that she made before God. She

¹² William MacDonald: *Believer’s Bible Commentary*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995, p. 796.

¹³ Robert L. Alden: *Proverbs*, Michigan 1995, p. 33.

forgets that she left her father's house and instructions, and abandons herself to the public, and took her husband to be her guide, in her youth.

The covenant — The marriage covenant: so called because God is the author of that mutual obligation: and because God is called to be the witness and judge of that solemn promise and covenant. **St. Gregory Nyzianzen**, in his apology for his absence of the celebration of the marriage celebration of Olympias and Nebredius, writes, "In spite of my disease I share you your celebration, as I bind the hands of the couple together with God's hands¹⁴."

"For her house inclines unto death, and her paths unto the dead" [18].

Although both wisdom and folly are characterized as women in Proverbs, we do not get the impression in this verse that we are dealing with only with an allegory. The images are too concrete, the warnings too explicit. Fornication with this woman is to be avoided at all costs¹⁵. We may understand this woman as a literal prostitute or we may see her as a figure of false religion or of the ungodly world.

For her house inclines unto death — It is generally in by and secret places that such women establish themselves. They go out of the high road to get a residence; and every step that is taken towards their house is a step towards death. The path of sin is the path of ruin: the path of duty is the way of safety. For her paths incline unto the dead, *rephaim*, the inhabitants of the invisible world. The woman who abandons herself to prostitution soon contracts, and generally communicates, that disease, which, above all others, signs the speediest and most effectual passport to the invisible world.

Since everybody will die some day, death must be more than the common lot of all mortals, it must mean moral death leading to eternal death¹⁶.

"None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life" [19].

Adultery or fornication will put man inn the grave much faster, heading down a road with no stopping place to turn around¹⁷. Once a man is ensnared by her, it is almost impossible to escape. The verse actually seems to rule out any hope of a comeback at all. But many statements in the Bible must be under stood as general rules, to which there may be a few exceptions. That is the point here¹⁸. Once a man is initiated into her secrets, it is extremely hard to regain the right road. There are very few instances of prostitutes ever returning to the paths of sobriety and truth; perhaps not one of such as become prostitutes through a natural propensity to debauchery. Among those who have been deceived, debauched, and abandoned, many have been reclaimed; and to such alone penitentiaries may be useful; to the others they may only be incentives to farther sinning. Rakes and debauchees are sometimes converted: but most of them never lay hold on the path of life; they have had their health destroyed, and never recover it. The original,

¹⁴ Epistle 193. PG 37:316; The Author: St. John Chrysostom, 1980, p.36-7 (in Arabic).

¹⁵ Robert L. Alden: Proverbs, Michigan 1995, p. 34.

¹⁶ William MacDonald: Believer's Bible Commentary, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995, p. 797.

¹⁷ Robert L. Alden: Proverbs, Michigan 1995, p. 35.

¹⁸ William MacDonald: Believer's Bible Commentary, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995, p. 797.

chaiyim, means lives; not only the health of the body is destroyed, but the soul is ruined. Thus the unhappy man may be said to be doubly slain.

“That you may walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous” [20].

We link this verse with verse 11, and is mentioned as another happy fruit of wisdom. Wisdom preserves not only from evil man and strange woman, but, on the positive side, it encourages companionship with those who are worthwhile and upright¹⁹.

“For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it. But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it” [21-22].

Under the Law of Moses, the upright believers were rewarded with a secure place **in the land** of Canaan. When we come over to the New Testament, these material blessings in earthly places give way to spiritual blessings in the heavenleies. But the fact remains that righteousness and decency are prewarded in this life as well as in the life to come.

It is equally true that **the wicked will be cut off** from the land of blessing. There is no lasting inheritance there for the treacherous²⁰.

Transgressors *bogedim* are the garment men, the hypocrites; those who act borrowed characters, who go under a cloak; dissemblers. All such shall be rooted out of the land; they shall not be blessed with posterity. In general it is so: and were it not so, one evil offspring succeeding another, adding their own to their predecessors' vices, the earth would become so exceedingly corrupt that a second flood, or a fire, would be necessary to purge it.

The last verse of this chapter sounds like the summary verse of Psalm 1²¹.

2:20

How is it that the exceeding lightness of the Divine burden becomes heavy, but because in our obstinate presumption we despise Him by whom it was borne, especially as Scripture itself plainly testifies to this very thing saying: “For if they would walk in right paths, they would certainly have found the paths of righteousness smooth”? It is plain, I say, that it is we, who make rough with the nasty and hard stones of our desires the right and smooth paths of the Lord; who most foolishly forsake the royal road made stony with the flints of apostles and prophets, and trodden down by the footsteps of all the saints and of the Lord Himself, and seek trackless and thorny places, and, blinded by the allurements of present delights, tear our way with torn legs and our wedding garment rent, through dark paths, overrun with the briars of sins, so as not only to be pierced by the sharp thorns of the brambles but actually laid low by the bites of deadly serpents and scorpions lurking there. For “there are thorns and thistles in wrong ways, but he that feareth the Lord shall keep himself from them.” (Prov. 22:5). Of

¹⁹ William MacDonald: *Believer's Bible Commentary*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995, p. 797.

²⁰ William MacDonald: *Believer's Bible Commentary*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995, p. 797.

²¹ Robert L. Alden: *Proverbs*, Michigan 1995, p. 35.

such also the Lord says elsewhere by the prophet: “My people have forgotten, sacrificing in vain, and stumbling in their ways, in ancient paths, to walk in them in a way not trodden.” (Jer. 18:15). For according to Solomon’s saying: “The ways of those who do not work are strewn with thorns, but the ways of the lusty are trodden down.” (Prov. 15:19). And thus wandering from the king’s highway, they can never arrive at that metropolis, whither our course should ever be directed without swerving²².

St. John Cassian

2:21,22

For we shall incur no slight injury, but rather great danger, if we rashly yield ourselves to the inclinations of men who aim at exciting strife and tumults, so as to draw us away from what is good. Let us be kind one to another after the pattern of the tender mercy and benignity of our Creator. For it is written, “The kind-hearted shall inhabit the land, and the guiltless shall be left upon it, but transgressors shall be destroyed from off the face of it²³.”

St. Clement of Rome

²² *St. John Cassian: Conference 24:24.*

²³ *St. Clement of Rome: the Epistle to the Corinthians, 14.*

CHAPTER 3

THE PRACTICAL WAY OF THE WISDOM

In chapter 2 Solomon mentions o the advantages and rewards of wisdom in our life. In chapter 3 he explains the practical way of the wisdom. He states that those who have a continual regard to God’s precepts and trust in the divine guidance by acknowledging God and praying in faith to Him, shall find health of soul, good habits of body and true success in life. In all the wealth of the world is not to be found taste of that transcendent happiness which is gained in Christ, in whom are stored the treasures of wisdom, which consist in the knowledge and love of God.

The profitableness of wisdom in all the concerns of life, 13-26. No act of duty should be deferred beyond the time in which it should be done, 27, 28. We should not envy the wicked, 31, 32. The curse of God is in the house of the wicked; but the humble and wise shall prosper, 33-35.

- 1. An exhortation to obedience 1-4.**
- 2. Trust in God’s providence 5-6.**
- 3. humility 7-8.**
- 4. Charity 9-10.**
- 5. Submission to God’s chastening 11-12.**
- 6. Seeking after wisdom 13-20.**
- 7. Accepting the guidance of Wisdom 21-26.**
- 8. Brotherly love and forbearance 27-30.**
- 9. The Lord’s curse and blessing 33-35.**

1. AN EXHORTATION TO OBEDIENCE 1-4.

We must trust in the Lord with all our hearts, believing he is able and wise to do what is best. Those who know themselves, find their own understandings a broken reed, which, if they lean upon, will fail. Do not design any thing but what is lawful, and beg God to direct thee in every case, Though it may seem quite plain. In all our ways that prove pleasant, in which we gain our point, we must acknowledge God with thankfulness. In all our ways that prove uncomfortable, and that are hedged up with thorns, we must acknowledge him with submission. It is promised, He shall direct thy paths; so that thy way shall be safe and good, and happy at last.

v. 9-10

In the Old Testament, believers gave to God the “*first-fruits*,” i.e, the firstborn of the flocks and the first crops gathered at harvest time. These were dedicated to God by formally presenting them at the temple on the day of Pentecost (Num. 28:26). It means that all of their works were to be dedicated to God. Thus believers honored the Lord with their whole heart, their possessions, their works and finances.

The New Testament cautions us against expecting God to reward us with material blessings for purposing godliness (1 Tim. 6:3-6). God does not want to hire Christians; because He does not want them to be employees, but His own children, and to be Christlike, in love, obedience and purity. God wants us to seek Him for His own

sake, not for a *payoff* of physical or financial gain. The reward of loving obedience is a closer relationship to God (John 14: 15-18, 21-23). He also wants us to be content with what he provides us, not greedy for more (1 Tim. 6:6).

TAKING PROFITS [14-15]

Investors are always looking to take profits on their financial investments.

This proverb is one of a series of choices between competing alternatives presented in the Proverbs (Prov. 27:5).

- * Wisdom is better than much wealth; it is more profitable (Prov. 3:13-14; 8:11).
- * Fearing the Lord is to be preferred over great treasure associated with trouble (Prov. 15:16).
- * A simple meal with love is better than a feast with hatred (Prov. 15:17).
- * Associating with the humble is better than getting wealthy with the proud (Prov. 16:19).
- * Self-control is better than getting to rule your own city (Prov. 16:32).
- * It is better to be poor and honest than rich and crooked (Prov. 19:1, 22; 22:1; 28:6).
- * An open rebuke is to be preferred over love that is never expressed (Prov. 27:5).
Let us put our God-given abilities to work in order to choose the best!

Learning At Home

As modern-day society is quickly discovering, there is no substitute for a solid, stable home life. Where parents are absent, negligent, or abusive, children will probably not learn to cope with the world in a healthy way. For that reason, proverbs stresses that parents are given to children to impart wisdom (prov.4:3-4). Out of their own seasoning, struggles, and suffering, parents can offer experience and insight that will help the next generation get started on the right course.

Gods intention is that both parents are to be involved in their family' learning process. Fathers are to take the lead as sources of guidance and direction, and mothers are to offer governing principles based on God's Word(1:8, 4:1, 6:20). In addition, Prov. 4:3-4 implies that grandparents play a role, largely through the parenting they have done with the parents of the parents of their grandchildren.

In this way, a family is to "train up a child in the way he should go"(22:6). That gift that the home gives. The child might not appreciate that until he is older, but parents are urged to give it nonetheless. Indeed, they cannot afford not to.

What can you be thankful for as you consider the gifts your parents offered you? In turn, what gifts are you offering your children your children?

"My son, forget not my law; but let your heart keep my commandments" [1]

My son — The preceptor continues to deliver his lessons.

Forget not my law—. Remember what You have heard, and practice what You dost remember; and let all obedience be from the heart: "Let thy heart keep my commandments."

Remember what the psalmist says, "Your word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against You" (Ps. 119:11). Also we are told regarding a young priest named

Ezra: “For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments” (Ezra 7:10).

3:2 For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to you.

3:3 Let not mercy and truth forsake you: bind them about your neck; write them upon the table of your heart:

For it is not once that we have to please God, but constantly. The racer, if, after running even ten heats, he leave the remaining one undone, has lost all; and we, if we begin with good works, and afterward faint, have lost all, have spoiled all. Listen to that profitable admonition that saith, “Let not mercy and truth forsake thee.” (Proverbs 3:3.) He saith not do so once, nor the second time, nor the third, nor the tenth, nor the hundredth, but continually: “let them not forsake thee.” And he did not say, Do not forsake them, but, “Let them not forsake thee,” showing that we are in need of them, and not they of us; and teaching us that we ought to make every effort to keep them with us.

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on Philippians, Introduction.

Let us feed Him now, not one day, nor two, nor three days. “For let not mercy and truth,” saith the Wise Man, “forsake thee.” (Proverbs 3:3.) He saith not “do it once, nor twice” The Virgins, we know, had oil, but not enough to last out (Matthew 25:3, 8.).

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on Ephesians 24.

3:4 So shall you find favor and good understanding in the sight of God and man.

3:3,4 LXX

FOR TRUE VIRGINITY PERFECT VIRTUE IS NECESSARY

Of all virgins of either sex who have truly resolved to preserve virginity for the sake of the kingdom of heaven — of each and every one of them it is required that he be worthy of the kingdom of heaven in every thing. For not by eloquence or renown, by station and descent, or by beauty or strength, or by length of life, is the kingdom of heaven obtained; but it is obtained by the power of faith, when a man exhibits the works of faith. For whosoever is truly righteous, his works testify concerning his faith, that he is truly a believer, with a faith which is great, a faith which is perfect, a faith which is in God, a faith which shines in good works, that the Father of all may be glorified through Christ. Now, those who are truly virgins for the sake of God give heed to Him who hath said, “Let not righteousness and faith fail thee; bind them on thy neck, and You shall find favor for thyself; and devise You good things before God and before men.”

Epistle 1 of the Blessed Clement concerning Virginity, 2.

2. TRUST IN GOD’S PROVIDENCE 5-6.

3:5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart; and lean not unto your own understanding.

3:11

Such is the discipline of wisdom (“for whom the Lord loveth He chaveens”), causing pain in order to produce understanding, and restoring to peace and immortality.

St. Clement of Alexandria: Stromata 2:2.

3:6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your paths.

2. To piety, and to improve afflictions. (7-12)

Should the Lord visit us with trials and sickness, let us not forget that the exhortation speaks to us as to children, for our good. We must not faint under an affliction, be it ever

so heavy and long, not be driven to despair, or use wrong means for relief. Afflictions are so far from doing God's children any hurt, that, by the grace of God, they promote their holiness.

3. HUMILITY 7-8.

3:7 *Be not wise in your own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.*

3:8 *It shall be health to your navel, and marrow to your bones.*

4. CHARITY 9-10.

3:9 *Honor the Lord with your substance, and with the first-fruits of all your increase:*

3:10 *So shall your barns be filled with plenty, and your presses shall burst out with new wine.*

We have to remember what God said to His people that the land was His mine, and He gave it to them. They have to offer the first-fruits and the tithes just to acknowledge that the land was His own.

3:10

I have heard the Scripture say: Who can find a valiant woman? and declare that she is a divine gift, and that a good marriage is brought about by the Lord. Even those without are of the same mind; if they say that a man can win no fairer prize than a good wife, nor a worse one than her opposite. But we can mention none who has been in this respect more fortunate than he. For I think that, had anyone from the ends of the earth and from every race of men attempted to bring about the best of marriages, he could not have found a better or more harmonious one than this. For the most excellent of men and of women were so united that their marriage was a union of virtue rather than of bodies: since, while they excelled all others, they could not excel each other, because in virtue they were quite equally matched.

St. Gregory Nazianzen: On the Death of His Father, 7.

5. SUBMISSION TO GOD'S CHASTENING 11-12.

3:11 *My son, despise not the chasteening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction:*

3:11

It is to the free will of man that the words are addressed: "My son, remove not thyself from the chastening of the Lord." And the Lord said: "I have prayed for thee, Peter, that thy faith fail not." (Luke 22:32). So that a man is assisted by grace, in order that his will may not be uselessly commanded.

St. Augustine: On Grace and Free Will, 9.

3:11

He teaches us to give thanks and rejoice, over and above, at being thought worthy of divine chastisement. "Whom I love," saith He, "I chasten." O blessed servant, on whose amendment the Lord is intent! with whom He deigns to be wroth! whom He does not deceive by dissembling His reproofs! On every side, therefore, we are bound to the duty of exercising patience, from whatever quarter, either by our own errors or else by the snares of the Evil One, we incur the Lord's reproofs. Of that duty great is the reward — namely, happiness. For whom but the patient has the Lord called happy, in saying, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens?"

Tertullian: Of Patience, 11.

3:11

But if God rebukes whom He loves, and rebukes him for the very purpose of amending him, brethren also, and especially priests, do not hate, but love those whom they rebuke, that they may mend them; since God also before predicted by Jeremiah, and pointed to our times, when he said, “And I will give you shepherds according to my heart: and they shall feed you with the food of discipline.” (Jer. 3:15)

St. Cyprian: Treatise 2, On The Dress Of Virgins, 1.
3:11,12

Reproof is the bringing forward of sin, laying it before one. This form of instruction He employs as in the highest degree necessary, by reason of the feebleness of the faith of many...And He uses the bitter and biting language of reproof in His consolations by Solomon, tacitly alluding to the love for children that characterizes His instruction: “My son, despise not You the chaveneing of the LORD; nor faint when You art rebuked of Him: for whom the LORD loveth He chaveneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth;” “For a man who is a sinner escapes reproof.” Ecclus. 32:21 Consequently, therefore, the Scripture says, “Let the righteous reprove and correct me; but let not the oil of the sinner anoint my head.” Ps. 112:5

St. Clement of Alexandria: Instructor 1:9.

Hear the words of David, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn Thy statutes.” (Psalm 119:71.) And again another prophet, who saith, “It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.” (Lamentations 3:27.) And again, “Blessed is the man whom You chaveenest, O Lord.” (Psalm 94:12.) And another who saith, “Despise not the chaveneing of the Lord.” (Proverbs 3:11.) And “if You come near to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation.” (Ecclus. 11:1.) And Christ also said to His disciples, “In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer.” (John 16:33.) And again, “Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice.” (John 16:20.) And again, “Narrow and straitened is the way.” (Matthew 7:14.) Dost You see how tribulation is everywhere lauded, everywhere assumed as needful for us?

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on Philippians, 15.
3:11

The sick are to be admonished that they feel themselves to be sons of God in that the scourge of discipline chavaises them. For, unless He purposed to give them an inheritance after correction, He would not have a care to educate them by afflictions. For hence the Lord says to John by the angel, Whom I love I rebuke and chaven (Revelation 3:19; Proverbs 3:11). Hence again it is written, My son despise not You the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when You art rebuked of Him. For whom the Lord loveth He chaveneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth (Hebrews 12:5, 6). Hence the Psalmist says, Many are the tribulations of the righteous, and out of all these hath the Lord delivered them (Psalm 33:20. Hence also the blessed Job, crying out in his sorrow, says, If I be righteous, I will not lift up my head, being saturated with affliction and misery (Job 10:15). The sick are to be told that, if they believe the heavenly country to be their own, they must needs endure labors in this as in a strange land. For hence it was that the stones were hammered outside, that they might be laid wiYout sound of hammer in the building of the temple of the Lord; because, that is, we are now hammered with scourges wiYout, that we may be afterwards set in our places within, wiYout stroke of discipline, in the

temple of God; to the end that strokes may now cut away whatever is superfluous in us, and then the concord of charity alone bind us together in the building.

Fr. Gregory (the Great), Pastoral Rule, 12.

3:12 *For whom the Lord loves he corrects; even as a father the son in whom he delights.*

God does not whip the devil's children, but He certainly does slap His own. That is a good evidence that you belong to Him (Cf. Job. 5:17-18).

3:12

For whom the Lord loveth He chaveneth, and a rebuke is a fatherly action; while every soul which is unchavened, is unhealed. Is not then freedom from chavement a hard thing? But to fail to be corrected by the chavement is still harder. One of the prophets, speaking of Israel, whose heart was hard and uncircumcised, says, Lord, You have stricken them, but they have not grieved, You have consumed them but they have refused to receive correction; and again, The people turned not to Him that smiteth them; and Why is my people slid-den back by a perpetual backsliding, because of which it will be utterly crushed and destroyed?

St. Gregory Nazianzen: On His Father's Silence, 15.

3:12

Now the children of wrath God punishes in anger; whereas it is in mercy that He punishes the children of grace.

St. Augustine: On Forgiveness of Sins, And Baptism, 2:25.

3. To gain wisdom. (13-20)

No precious jewels or earthly treasures are worthy to be compared with true wisdom, whether the concerns of time or eternity be considered. We must make wisdom our business; we must venture all in it, and be willing to part with all for it. This Wisdom is the Lord Jesus Christ and his salvation, sought and obtained by faith and prayer.

6. SEEKING AFTER WISDOM 13-20.

3:13 *Happy is the man that finds wisdom, and the man that gets understanding.*

Happy is the man who finds Christ, He is the Wisdom for us in our daily life.

3:1 3

"Blessed is the man that hath found wisdom, and the mortal who has seen understanding; for out of its mouth," manifestly Wisdom's, "proceeds righteousness, and it bears law and mercy on its tongue." For both the law and the Gospel are the energy of one Lord, who is "the power and wisdom of God;" and the terror which the law begets is merciful and in order to salvation.

St. Clement of Alexandria: Stromata 1:27.

3:13-15

And let not their ears be pierced, contrary to nature, in order to attach to them ear-rings and ear-drops. For it is not right to force nature against her wishes. Nor could there be any better ornament for the ears than true instruction, which finds its way naturally into the passages of hearing. And eyes anointed by the Word, and ears pierced for perception, make a man a hearer and contemplator of divine and sacred things, the Word truly exhibiting the true beauty "which eye hath not seen nor ear heard before" (1 Cor. 2:9).

St. Clement of Alexandria: Instructor 2:13.

3:14 *For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.*

3:15 *She is more precious than rubies: and all the things you can desire are not to be compared unto her.*

3:16 *Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honor [, and she carries law and mercy upon her tongue LXX].*

3:16

And thus concerning His wisdom we are told, that “she carries law and mercy upon her tongue.” The “*law*,” whereby she may convict the proud, the “*mercy*,” wherewith she may justify the humbled.

St. Augustine: On the Spirit and the Letter, 15 (9).

3:16

We do not then make void the Law through faith, but we establish the Law (Rom. 3:31), which by terrifying leads to faith. Thus certainly the Law works wrath, that the mercy of God may bestow grace on the sinner, frightened and turned to the fulfilment of the righteousness of the law through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is that wisdom of God of which it is written, “She carries law and mercy on her tongue.” The Law whereby she frightens, mercy by which she may help, Law by His servant, mercy by Himself, — the Law, as it were, in the staff which Elisha (2 Kings 4:29 sq.) sent to raise up the son of the widow, and it failed to raise him up, “For if a law had been given which could have given life, righteousness would altogether have been by the law” (Gal. 3:21), but mercy, as it were, in Elisha himself, who, wearing the figure of Christ, by giving life to the dead was joined in the signification of the great sacrament, as it were, of the New Testament.

St. Augustine: Against Two Letters of the Pelagians, 4:11.

3:16

When it is said, “Let us love one another,” it is law; when it is said, “For love is of God,” it is grace. For God’s “wisdom carries law and mercy upon her tongue.” Accordingly, it is written in the Psalm, “For He who gave the law will give blessings.” (Ps. 84:6).

St. Augustine: On Grace and Free Will, 37 (18).

3:17 *Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.*

3:18 *She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retains her.*

The Spirit of God does not open the Word of God to lazy minds, but to those who are alert and want to learn and know the will of God and the Word of God.

3:18

Some contend that those days of the tree of life mentioned by the prophet Isaiah are the present times of the Church of Christ, and that Christ Himself is prophetically called the Tree of Life, because He is Wisdom, and of wisdom Solomon says, “It is a tree of life to all who embrace it;”

St. Augustine: City of God, 20:26.

3:18

For of her it is rightly said, “She is a tree of life to them that lay hold of her.” Just as the one tree was for the bodily Paradise, the other is for the spiritual; the one affording a vigor to the senses of the outward man, the other to those of the inner man.

St. Augustine: On Forgiveness of Sins, And Baptism, 2:35. (21)

3:18

The Prophet Solomon teaches us what this tree of Life is in his exhortation concerning Wisdom: She is a tree of life to all them that lay hold upon her, and lean upon her. This tree then is living; and not only living, but, furthermore, guided by reason; guided by reason, that is, in so far as to yield fruit, and that not casually nor unseasonably, but in its own season. And this tree is planted beside the rills of water in the domain of the Kingdom of God, that is, of course, in Paradise, and in the place where the stream as it issues forth is divided into four heads.

St. Hilary of Poitiers: On Psalm 1 (14).

3:18

For the tree of life is wisdom first begotten of all. “She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her,” says the prophet; “and happy is every one that retaineth her.” “A tree planted by the waterside, that will bring forth his fruit in due season;” that is, learning and charity and discretion are imparted in due time to those who come to the waters of redemption.

He that hath not believed in Christ, nor hath understood that He is the first principle and the tree of life, since he cannot show to God his tabernacle adorned with the most goodly of fruits, how shall he celebrate the feast? How shall he rejoice? Desirest You to know the goodly fruit of the tree? Consider the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, how pleasant they are beyond the children of men.

Methodius: Banquet of the Ten Virgins, 3.

That we should not, then, try to get anything with sin under pretense of almsgiving we are plainly warned by Holy Scripture, which says, The sacrifices of the impious are abominable which are offered of wickedness (Proverbs 21:27). For whatever in God’s sacrifice is offered of wickedness appeases not, but provokes, the anger of Almighty God. Hence again it is written, Honor the Lord from thy just labors (Proverbs 3:9). Whoso, then, takes evilly that he may, as he supposes, give well, it is evident without doubt that he honors not the Lord. Hence also it is said through Solomon, Whoso offers a sacrifice of the substance of the poor is as Though he slew a son in his father’s sight (Ecclus. 34:24).

Fr. Gregory (the Great): Book 9, Epistle 106.

3:18

For hence it is that the Church says by the voice of the elect, His left hand is under my head, and his right hand shall embrace me (Cant. 2:6). The left hand of God, to wit prosperity in the present life, she has put under her head, in that she presses it down in the intentness of her highest love. But the right hand of God embraces her, because in her entire devotion she is encompassed with His eternal blessedness. Hence again, it is said through Solomon, Length of days is in her right hand, but in her left hand riches and glory (Proverbs 3:16). In speaking, then, of riches and glory being placed in her left hand, he shewed after what manner they are to be esteemed. Hence the Psalmist says, Save me with thy right hand (Psalm 117:7). For he says not, with thy hand, but with thy right hand;’ in order, that is, to indicate, in saying right hand, that it was eternal salvation that he sought. Hence again it is written, Thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemies (Exodus 15:6). For the enemies of God, Though they prosper in His left hand, are dashed to pieces with His right; since for the most part the present life elevates the bad, but the coming of eternal blessedness condemns them.

Fr. Gregory (the Great), Pastoral Rule, 26.

3:19 *The Lord by wisdom has founded the earth; by understanding has he established the heavens.*

33:19

If God be, and be called, the Fountain of wisdom and life — as He says by Jeremiah, ‘They have forsaken Me the Fountain of living waters (Jer. 2:13)... and in the book of Baruch it is written, ‘You have forsaken the Fountain of wisdom (3:12),’ — this implies that life and wisdom are not foreign to the Essence of the Fountain, but are proper to It, nor were at any time wiYout existence, but were always. Now the Son is all this, who says, ‘I am the Life (John 14:6),’ and, ‘I Wisdom dwell with prudence.’ Is it not then irreligious to say, ‘Once the Son was not?’ for it is all one with saying, ‘Once the Fountain was dry, destitute of Life and Wisdom.’ But a fountain it would then cease to be; for what begetteth not from itself, is not a fountain. What a load of extravagance! for God promises that those who do His will shall be as a fountain which the water fails not, saying by Isaiah the prophet, ‘And the Lord shall satisfy thy soul in drought, and make thy bones fat; and You shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not (Isa. 58:11).’ And yet these, whereas God is called and is a Fountain of wisdom, dare to insult Him as barren and void of His proper Wisdom. But their doctrine is false; truth witnessing that God is the eternal Fountain of His proper Wisdom; and, if the Fountain be eternal, the Wisdom also must needs be eternal. For in It were all things made, as David says in the Psalm, ‘In Wisdom bast You made them all ;’ (Ps 104:24) and Solomon says, ‘The Lord by Wisdom hath formed the earth, by understanding hath He established the heavens .’ And this Wisdom is the Word, and by Him, as John says, ‘all things were made,’ and ‘wiYout Him was made not one things.’ (John 1:3).

St. Athanasius of Alexandria: Four Discourses Against the Arians, 1:6:19.

:20 *By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew.*

7. ACCEPTING THE GUIDANCE OF WISDOM 21-26.

3:21 *My son, let not them depart from your eyes: keep sound wisdom and discretion,*

3:22 *So shall they be life unto your soul, and grace to your neck.*

Life and grace come through this wisdom of studying the Word of God.

3:23 *Then shall you walk in your way safely, and your foot shall not stumble.*

3:24 *When you lie down, you shall not be afraid: yea, you shall lie down, and your sleep shall be sweet.*

3:25 *Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it comes.*

3:26 *For the Lord shall be your confidence, and shall keep your foot from being taken.*

8. BROTHERLY LOVE AND FORBEARANCE 27-30.

3:27 *Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of your hand to do it.*

3:28 *Say not unto your neighbor, Go, and come again, and to morrow I will give; when you have it by you.*

3:29 *Devise not evil against your neighbor, seeing he dwells securely by you.*

3:30 *Strive not with a man wiYout cause, if he have done you no harm.*

3:31 *Envy you not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways.*

3:32 *For the froward is abomination to the LORD: but his secret is with the righteous.*

9. THE LORD'S CURSE AND BLESSING 33-35.

“The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked: but he blesses the habitation of the just” [33].

“The wise shall inherit glory: but shame shall be the promotion of fools” [35].

Through the centuries there are many folk that envy the rich. And many have discovered, as did the psalmist, that God judges the wicked rich.

Verse 8. It shall be health to thy navel — We need not puzzle ourselves to find out what we may suppose to be a more delicate meaning for the original word *rishor* than navel; for I am satisfied a more proper cannot

be found. It is well known that it is by the umbilical cord that the fetus receives its nourishment all the time it is in the womb of the mother. It receives nothing by the mouth, nor by any other means: by this alone all nourishment is received, and the circulation of the blood kept up. When, therefore, the wise man says, that “trusting in the Lord with the whole heart, and acknowledging him in all a man’s ways, etc., shall be health to the navel, and marrow to the bones;” he in effect says, that this is as essential to the life of God in the soul of man, and to the continual growth in grace, as the umbilical cord is to the life and growth of the fetus in the womb. Without the latter, no human being could ever exist or be born; without the former, no true religion can ever be found. Trust or faith in God is as necessary to derive grace from him to nourish the soul, and cause it to grow up unto eternal life, as the navel string or umbilical cord is to the human being in the first stage of its existence.

3:35

They will not simply obtain, but inherit. The wicked, again, even Though they are exalted, are exalted only so as to have greater dishonor. For as one does not honor an ugly and misshapen fellow, if he exalts him, but only dishonors him the more, by making his shame manifest to a larger number; so also God exalts the wicked, in order that He may make their disgrace patent. For Pharaoh was exalted, but only to have the world as his accuser.

From the Commentary of St. Hippolytus on Proverbs

CHAPTER 4

True wisdom from God is the principle thing. It is that which recommends us to God, which beautifies the soul, which enables us to answer the ends of our creation, to live to some good purpose in the world and which makes our path brighter and brighter until we get to heaven at last.

The Christian walks in the way of light. Christ is their way and Christ is the light. They are guided by the Bible which is the light of their feet.

1. Exhortation to the study of wisdom. (1-13)

2. Cautions against bad company. Exhortation to faith and holiness. (14-27)

1. Exhortation to the study of wisdom. (1-13)

Get the rule over thy corruptions; take more pains to get this than the wealth of this world. An interest in Christ's salvation is necessary. This wisdom is the one thing needful. A soul without true wisdom and grace is a dead soul. How poor, contemptible, and wretched are those, who, with all their wealth and power, die without getting understanding, without Christ, without hope, and without God! Let us give heed to the sayings of Him who has the words of eternal life. Thus our path will be plain before us: by taking, and keeping fast hold of instruction, we shall avoid being straitened or stumbling.

4:1 Hear, you children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding.

Such as I received from my father I give to you, and they were the teachings of a wise and affectionate parent to his only son.

He introduces the subject thus, to show that the teaching he received, and which he was about to give them, was the most excellent of its kind. By this he ensured their attention, and made his way to their heart. Teaching by precept is good; teaching by example is better; but teaching both by precept and example is best of all.

4:1

For a just father brings up [his children] well, when he is diligent in teaching others in accordance with his own upright conduct, so that when he meets with opposition, he may not be ashamed on hearing it said, 'You therefore that teachest others, teachest You not thyself?' (Rom. 2:21) but rather, like the good servant, may both save himself and gain others; and thus, when the grace committed to him has been doubled, he may hear, 'You good and faithful servant, You have been faithful in a little, I will set thee over much: enter into the joy of thy Lord (Matt. 25:21).

St. Athanasius of Alexandria: Paschal Letters, 2:1.

4:2 For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law.

4:2

It must be noted, that he names the law a good gift, on account of the man who takes gifts into his bosom unrighteously. And he forsakes the law who transgresses it; the law, namely, of which he speaks, or which he has kept.

From the Commentary of St. Hippolytus on Proverbs

4:3 For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother.

4:4 He taught me also, and said unto me, Let your heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live.

4:5 Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth.

4:6 Forsake her not, and she shall preserve you: love her, and she shall keep you.

Forsake her not — Wisdom personified is here represented as a guardian and companion, who, if not forsaken, will continue faithful; if loved, will continue a protector.

4:6

If a man is going to carry out the advice of Solomon and take for helpmate and life-companion that true Wisdom of which he says, “Love her, and she shall keep thee,” “honor her, that she may embrace thee,” then he will prepare himself in a manner worthy of such a love, so as to feast with all the joyous wedding guests in spotless raiment, and not be cast forth, while claiming to sit at that feast, for not having put on the wedding garment. It is plain moreover that the argument applies equally to men and women, to move them towards such a marriage.

St. Gregory of Nyssa: On Virginité, 20.

4:7 Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all your getting get understanding.

4:8 Exalt her, and she shall promote you: she shall bring you to honor, when you do embrace her.

4:8

And what is meant by “exalt (fortify) her?” Surround her with holy thoughts; for you have need of large defense, since there are many things to imperil such a possession. But if it is in our power to fortify her, and if there are virtues in our power which exalt the knowledge of God, these will be her bulwarks, — as, for example, practice, study, and the whole chain of other virtues; and the man who observes these, honors wisdom; and the reward is, to be exalted to be with her, and to be embraced by her in the chamber of heaven.

From the Commentary of St. Hippolytus on Proverbs

4:8

Philosophy, therefore, was a preparation, paving the way for him who is perfected in Christ.

“Now,” says Solomon, “defend wisdom, and it will exalt thee, and it will shield thee with a crown of pleasure” (Prov. 4:8,9). For when you have strengthened wisdom with a cope by philosophy, and with right expenditure, you wilt preserve it unassailable by sophists.

St. Clement of Alexandria: Stromata 1:5.

4:9 She shall give to your head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to you.

4:10 Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of your life shall be many.

The years of thy life shall be many. — Vice and intemperance impair the health and shorten the days of the wicked; while true religion prolongs them. Religion excites to industry, promotes sober habits, and destroys evil passions, and harmonizes the soul; and thus, by preventing many diseases, necessarily prolongs life.

4:11 I have taught you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in right paths.

1. **Moses:** Renowned as the first leader of the people of God who taught God’s Law, and asked the parents to teach their children (Deut. 4:5).

2. **Bezalel and Aholiab:** Two master craftsmen who were gifted and called to teach others in the construction of the Tabernacle (Exod. 35:30-35).
3. **Samuel the Prophet:** The last of Israel's judges before the monarchy, who considered laziness in praying and teaching the people is a sin committed against God Himself (1 Sam. 12:23).
4. **David:** He couldn't build the Temple, but he prepared his son Solomon to build and staff it (1 Chr. 28:9-21).
5. **Solomon:** Known for his outstanding wisdom. Which he used to teach numerous subjects, including literature, botany, and zoology (1 Kin. 4:29-34).
6. **Ezra:** A scribe and priest who was committed not only to keeping the Law himself, but to teaching it to others (Ezra 7:10).
7. **Barnabas:** One of the teachers among the believers at Antioch (Acts 13:1), who had a lasting impact on Saul after his conversion to the faith (9:26-30).
8. **Gamaliel:** A renowned Jewish rabbi who was the teacher of Saul during his youth (Acts 22:3),
9. **Paul:** Perhaps the early church's most gifted teacher, known to have taught throughout the Roman world, and in the school of Tyrannus at Ephesus (Acts 19:9).
10. **Priscilla and Aquila:** A family who changed their house into a church, and they taught the way of God to a talented young orator named Apollos (Acts 18:26).
11. **Apollos:** A powerful Alexandrian teacher, whose teaching paved the way for the gospel at Ephesus (Acts 18:24-26).
12. **Timothy:** A young person, who was converted by St. Paul, and became a bishop (1Tim. 1:3; 2 Tim 4:2).
13. **Titus:** Another young person, who was converted by St. Paul, and became a bishop of the church of Crete (Titus 2:1-15).

4:12 When you go, your steps shall not be straitened; and when you run, you shall not stumble.

4:12

Nemesianus of Tubunae said: "That the baptism which is given by heretics and schismatics is not true is everywhere declared in the holy Scriptures, inasmuch as their very prelates are false Christs and false prophets, as the Lord declares by the mouth of Solomon, 'Whoso trusteth in lies, the same feedeth the winds; he also followeth flying birds. For he deserteth the ways of his own vineyard, and hath strayed from the paths of his own field. For he walketh through pathless and dry places, and a land destined to thirst; and he gathereth fruitless weeds in his hands.' And again, 'Abstain from strange water, and drink not of a strange fountain, that You mayest live long, and that years may be added to thy life. And in the gospel our Lord Jesus Christ spake with His own voice, saying, 'Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' This is the Spirit which from the beginning 'moved upon the face of the waters.' For neither can the Spirit act without the water, nor the water without the Spirit.

St. Augustine: On Baptism, Against the Donatists, 6:12:18.

4:13 Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is your life.

2. Cautions against bad company. Exhortation to faith and holiness. (14-27)

4:14 Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men.

Never associate with those whose life is irregular and sinful; never accompany them in any of their acts of transgression.

4:14

The heterodox are the “wicked,” and the transgressors of the law are “evil men,” whose “ways” — that is to say, their deeds — he bids us not enter.

From the Commentary of St. Hippolytus on Proverbs

4:15 Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.

Let it be the serious purpose of thy soul to shun every appearance of evil.

Never, for the sake of worldly gain, or through complaisance to others, approach the way that You wouldst not wish to be found in when God calls thee into the eternal world.

If, through unwatchfulness or unfaithfulness, You at any time get near or into the way of sin, turn from it with the utmost speed, and humble thyself before thy Maker.

And pass away. — Speed from it, run for thy life, and get to the utmost distance; eternally diverging so as never to come near it whilst You have a being.

4:16 For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall.

4:17 For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence.

4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day.

For He saith, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.” (Matthew 5:16) Now nothing is more full of light than a most excellent conversation. As one of the wise men has said, “The paths of the just shine like the light (Proverbs 4:18, LXX.); and they shine not for them alone who kindle the flame by their works, and are guides in the way of righteousness, but also for those who are their neighbors.

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on St. John, 8.

The way of truth is therefore one. But into it, as into a perennial river, streams flow from all sides. It has been therefore said by inspiration: “Hear, my son, and receive my words; that thine may be the many ways of life. For I teach thee the ways of wisdom; that the fountains fail thee not,” (Prov. 4:10, 11,21) which gush forth from the earth itself. Not only did He enumerate several ways of salvation for any one righteous man, but He added many other ways of many righteous, speaking thus: “The paths of the righteous shine like the light.” (Prov. 4:18).

St. Clement of Alexandria: Stromata 1:5.

4:19 The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble.

4:20 My son, attend to my words; incline your ear unto my sayings.

4:21 Let them not depart from your eyes; keep them in the midst of your heart.

Keep them in the midst of thine heart. — Let them be wrapped up in the very center of thy affections; that they may give spring and energy to every desire, word, and wish.

4:22 For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh.

4:23 Keep your heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

4:23

Let us then guard our hearts, let us guard our mouths. Both have been written about. In this place we are bidden to take heed to our mouth; in another place You art told: “Keep thy heart with all diligence.” If David took heed, wilt You not take heed? If Isaiah had unclean lips — who said: “Woe is me, for I am undone, for I am a man, and have unclean lips” — if a prophet of the Lord had unclean lips, how shall we have them clean?

St. Ambrose: St. Ambrose: Duties of the Clergy, 1:3 (10).

4:23

Keep thy heart with all diligence, that it sin not in secret; for there is to be a laying bare of thoughts and of actions. Employ thy hands in labor, and let thy heart meditate in prayer.

St. Ephraim the Syrian: Three Homilies, On admonition and repentance, 9.

4:23

Thus living, let us keep guard carefully, and as it is written, “keep our hearts with all watchfulness .” For we have terrible and crafty foes — the evil spirits — and against them we wrestle, as the Apostle said,” Not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities and against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places .” Great is their number in the air around us”, and they are not far from us.

St. Athanasius of Alexandria: De Vita S. Antoni, 21.

4:24 Put away from you a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from you.

Beware of haveiness, anger, and rash speeches.

And perverse lips — Do not delight in nor acquire the habit of contradicting and gainsaying; and beware of calumniating and backbiting your neighbor.

4:25 Let your eyes look right on, and let your eyelids look straight before you.

4:25

Under the guise of a learner, it is well said in Solomon, My son, do nothing without counsel, and after it is done You shalt not repent (Ecclus. 32:24). And again, Let thine eyelids go before thy steps (Proverbs 4:25). For indeed our eyelids go before our steps, when right counsels prevent our doings. For he who neglects to look forward by consideration to what he is about to do advances his steps with his eyes closed; proceeds on and accomplishes his journey, but goes not in advance of himself by looking forward; and therefore the sooner falls, because he gives no heed through the eyelid of counsel to where he should set the foot of action.

Fr. Gregory (the Great), Pastoral Rule, 15.

4:25

He “looks right on” who has thoughts free of passion; and he has true judgments, who is not in a state of excitement about external appearances. When he says, “Let thine eyes look right on,” he means the vision of the soul.

From the Commentary of St. Hippolytus on Proverbs

4:25

4:26 Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established.

4:27 Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove your foot from evil.

Turn not to the right hand nor to the left — Avoid all crooked ways. Be an upright, downright, and straight-forward man. Avoid tricks, wiles, and deceptions of this kind.

4:27

But we must really walk in the King's highway, and take care not to turn aside from it either to the right hand or to the left, as the Proverbs say.

St. Gregory Nazianzen: In Defense of his Flight to Pontus, 35.

4:27 LXX

We are warned by Solomon, the wisest of men: "Turn not aside to the right hand or to the left;" i.e., do not flatter yourself on your virtues and be puffed up by your spiritual achievements on the right hand; nor, swerving to the path of vices on the left hand, seek from them for yourself (to use the words of the Apostle) "glory in your shame" (Phil. 3:19).

From the Commentary of St. Hippolytus on Proverbs

4:27

Virtue occupies the middle position; whence also he says, that manly courage is the mean between boldness and cowardice.

St. John Cassian: The Institutes, book 11, 4.

4:27

"Let us turn neither to the right hand nor to the left." (Num. 14:29,31). For to turn to the right hand is to deceive oneself, by saying that we are without sin; and to turn to the left is to surrender oneself to one's sins with a sort of impunity.

St. Augustine: On Forgiveness of Sins, And Baptism, 2:57. (35)

CHAPTER 5

THE VICE OF THE ADULTEROUS

We ought industriously to avoid everything that might be an occasion of the sin of adultery or a step towards it, for it is destructive of all the seeds of virtue of the soul and those who are entangled in it have but a step between them and hell.

Farther exhortations to acquire wisdom, 1, 2. The character of a loose woman, and the ruinous consequences of attachment to such, 3-14. Exhortations to chasteity and moderation, 15-21. The miserable end of the wicked, 22, 23.

The evils of licentiousness. (1-14).1

Remedies against licentiousness, The miserable end of the wicked. (15-23).2

1. The evils of licentiousness. (1-14)

5:1 My son, attend unto my wisdom, and bow your ear to my understanding:

Drop as a honey-comb — She uses the most deceitful, flattering, and alluring speeches: as the droppings of the honey out of the comb are the sweetest of all.

5:1

For it is written, My son, attend unto my wisdom, and bow thine ear to my prudence, that You mayest guard thy thoughts (Proverbs 5:1). For, indeed, nothing is more fugitive than the heart, which deserts us as often as it slips away through bad thoughts. For hence the Psalmist says, My heart hath failed me (Psalm 39:13).

Fr. Gregory (the Great), Pastoral Rule, 14.

5:2 That you may regard discretion, and that your lips may keep knowledge.

5:2

He admonishes us to use indeed, but not to linger and spend time with, secular culture. For what was bestowed on each generation advantageously, and at seasonable times, is a preliminary training for the word of the Lord. "For already some men, ensnared by the charms of handmaidens, have despised their consort philosophy, and have grown old, some of them in music, some in geometry, others in grammar, the most in rhetoric."

St. Clement of Alexandria: Stromata 1:5.

5:3 For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil:

5:3,4

Therefore one gives this admonition; "Observe not the beauty of a strange woman, and meet not a woman addicted to fornication. For honey distills from the lips of an harlot, which at the time may seem smooth to thy throat, but afterward You wilt find it more bitter than gall, and sharper than a two-edged sword." For the harlot knows not how to love, but only to ensnare; her kiss hath poison, and her mouth a pernicious drug. And if this does not immediately appear, it is the more necessary to avoid her on that account, because she veils that destruction, and keeps that death concealed, and suffers it not to become manifest at the first.

St. John Chrysostom: Concerning the Statues, 14:10.

But the gestures of a harlot seem to you agreeable. I know it. For the Scripture says, "The lips of a strange woman drop honey." (Proverbs 5:3.) For on this account I take all this trouble, that ye may have no experience of that honey, for it straightway

turns into gall. And this also the Scripture says, "Who for a season is smooth to thy throat, but afterwards You shalt find her more bitter than gall, and sharper than a two-edged sword." (**Proverbs 5:3, 4, Sept.**)

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on 1 Thessalonians, hom. 5.

5:4 But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword.

She first, like a serpent, infuses her poison, by which the whole constitution of her paramour is infected, which soon or late brings on death.

First, the death of the body; and then the damnation of the soul. These are the tendencies of connections with such women.

5:5 Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell.

5:6 Lest you shouldst ponder the path of life, her ways are moveable, that you canst not know them.

5:7 Hear me now therefore, O ye children, and depart not from the words of my mouth.

1:7

Well then, he has begun to fear the day of judgment: by fearing let him correct himself, let him watch against his enemies, i.e. his sins; let him begin to come to life again inwardly, and to mortify his members which are upon the earth, as the apostle says.

St. Augustine: On the Epistle of St. John, hom. 9:2.

5:8 Remove your way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house:

For this is the advice the writer of the Proverbs gives us, when he speaks about the harlot: "Spring away," he says, "tarry not, neither go You near to the door of her house" (Proverbs 5:8): this same thing I would say to you about the love of money. For if by entering gradually you fall into this ocean of madness, you will not be able to get up out of it with ease, and as if you were in whirlpools, struggle as often as ever you may, it will not be easy for you to get clear; so after falling into this far worse abyss of covetousness, you will destroy your own self, with all that belongs to you. (Acts 8:20.) And so my advice is that we be on our watch against the beginning, and avoid little evils, for the great ones are gendered by these.

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on Romans, 12.

5:9 Lest you give your honor unto others, and your years unto the cruel:

5:9

For who are aliens from us but malignant spirits, who are separated from the lot of the heavenly country? And what is our honor but that, Yough made in bodies of clay, we are yet created after the image and likeness of our Maker? Or who else is cruel but that apostate angel, who has both smitten himself with the pain of death through pride, and has not spared, Yough lost, to bring death upon the human ace? He therefore gives his honor unto aliens who, being made after the image and likeness of God, devotes the seasons of his life to the pleasures of malignant spirits.

Fr. Gregory (the Great), Pastoral Rule, 12.

5:10 Lest strangers be filled with your wealth; and your labors be in the house of a stranger;

5:11 And you mourn at the last, when your flesh and your body are consumed,

5:12 And say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof;

5:13 And have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me!

5:14 I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly.

2. Remedies against licentiousness, The miserable end of the wicked. (15-23)

5:15 Drink waters out of your own cistern, and running waters out of your own well.

5:15

Good, then, is this water, even the grace of the Spirit. Who will give this Fount to my breast? Let it spring up in me, let that which gives eternal life flow upon me. Let that Fount overflow upon us, and not flow away. For Wisdom says: "Drink water out of thine own vessels, and from the founts of thine own wells, and let thy waters flow abroad in thy streets." How shall I keep this water that it flow not forth, that it glide not away? How shall I preserve my vessel, lest any crack of sin penetrating it, should let the water of eternal life exude? Teach us, Lord Jesus, teach us as You didst teach Thine apostles, saying: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where rust and moth destroy, and where thieves break through and steal." (Matt. 6:19).

St. Ambrose: Of the Holy Spirit, 1:16:182

5:15

"Ye that thirst, go to the waters," (Isa. 55:1) says Esaias, And "drink water from thine own vessels," Solomon exhorts. Accordingly in "The Laws," the philosopher who learned from the Hebrews, Plato, commands husbandmen not to irrigate or take water from others, until they have first dug down in their own ground to what is called the virgin soil, and found it dry. For it is right to supply want, but it is not well to support laziness.

St. Clement of Alexandria: Stromata 1:1.

5:15-17

If You shalt look unchaveely, and shalt desire thy neighbor's wife, Io! thy portion shall be with the adulterers, and thy hell with the fornicators. Let thine own fountain be for thyself, and drink waters from thy well. Let thy fountains be for thyself alone, and let not another drink with thee. Require purity of thy body as You requirest of thy yoke-fellow. You wouldst not have her commit lewdness, the wife of thy youth, with another man; commit not You lewdness with another woman, the wife of a different husband.

St. Ephraim the Syrian: Three Homilies, On admonition and repentance, 8.

5:15-17

Let them hear what is written, Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord (Proverbs 16:5). For, surely, when in the Word of God he seeks his own glory, he invades the right of the giver; and he fears not at all to postpone to his own praise Him from whom he has received the very thing that is praised. Let them hear what is said to the preacher through Solomon, Drink water out of thine own cistern, and running waters of thine own well. Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and divide thy waters in the streets. Have them to thyself alone, and let not strangers be partakers with thee (Proverbs 5:15-17). For indeed the preacher drinks out of his own cistern, when, returning to his own heart, he first listens himself to what he has to say. He drinks the running waters of his own well, if he is watered by his own word. And in the same place it is well added, Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and divide thy watery in the streets. For indeed it is right that he should himself drink first, and then flow upon others in preaching. For to disperse fountains abroad is to pour outwardly on others the power of preaching. Moreover, to divide waters in the streets is to dispense divine utterances among a great

multitude of hearers according to the quality of each. And, because for the most part the desire of vain glory creeps in when the Word of God has free course unto the knowledge of many, after it has been said, Divide thy waters in the streets, it is rightly added, Have them to thyself alone, and let not strangers be partakers with thee. He here calls malignant spirits strangers, concerning whom it is said through the prophet in the words of one that is tempted, Strangers are risen up against me, and strong ones have sought after my soul (Psalm 53:5). He says therefore, Both divide thy waters in the streets, and yet have them to thyself alone; as if he had said more plainly, It is necessary for thee so to serve outwardly in preaching as not to join thyself through elation to unclean spirits, lest in the ministry of the divine word You admit thine enemies to be partakers with thee. Thus we divide our waters in the streets, and yet alone possess them, when we both pour out preaching outwardly far and wide, and yet in no wise court human praises through it.

Fr. Gregory (the Great), Pastoral Rule, 24.

5:16 Let your fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of waters in the streets.

5:16

Open, then, this porch of thy heart to the Word of God, Who says to thee: “Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it.”

St. Ambrose: Of the Holy Spirit, 3:17:120.

5:16,17

For all who love not God, are strangers, are antichrists. And Yough they come to the churches, they cannot be numbered among the children of God; not to them belongeth that Fountain of life. To have baptism is possible even for a bad man; to have prophecy is possible even for a bad man.

St. Augustine: On the Epistle of St. John, hom. 7:6.

5:17 Let them be only your own, and not strangers' with you.

Let them be only thine own — The off-spring of a legitimate connection; a bastard brood, however numerous, is no credit to any man.

5:17

Let thy fountain of water, it says, be only thine own, and let no stranger share it with thee; and, let the colt of thy favors and the stag of thy love company with thee; do You then take care not to be a strange river, nor to please others better than thine own wife. But if You be carried elsewhere, then You makest a law of lewdness for thy partner also.

St. Gregory Nazianzen: Oration 37:8.

5:18 Let your fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of your youth.

:19 Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy you at all times; and be you ravished always with her love.

Let her breasts satisfy thee — As the infant is satisfied with the breasts of its mother; so shouldst You be with the wife of thy youth.

5:20 And why wilt you, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger?

5:21 For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and he ponders all his goings.

5:22 His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins.

5:22

For You harmest no man, but each one is bound by the bands of his own sins.

St. Augustine: On the Psalms, 18:26.

5:22

“Let a trap come upon them which they know not of” (ver. 8). A magnificent retribution, nothing more just! They have hidden a trap that I might know not: let a trap come upon them which they know not of...“The wicked shall be holden with the cords of his own sins.” Thereby are they deceived, whereby they would deceive. Thence shall come mischief to them, whence they endeavored mischief. For it follows, “And let the net which they have hidden catch themselves, and let them fall into their own trap.” As if any one should prepare a cup of poison for another, and forgetting should drink it up himself: or as if one should dig a pit, that his enemy might fall thereinto in the darkness and himself forgetting what he had dug, should first walk that way, and fall into it...

St. Augustine: On the Psalms, 25:8.

5:22

For the very pleasures which we enjoy become a torment to us, and the delights and enjoyments of this flesh, turn like executioners upon their originator.

St. John Cassian: Conference 24:24.

5:23 *He shall die wiYout instruction; and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.*

5:25

“As cold water is to a thirsty soul so is good news from a far country.” Honored brother, I really hunger for affection. The cause is not far to seek, for iniquity is multiplied and the love of many has grown cold.

St. Basil the Great: Letter 91:1.

CHAPTER 6

Suretyship is to be avoided, because be it proverty and ruin are often brought into families. Proverty and want will certainly come upon those who are slothful. The forward man who devises mischief will surely fall into mischief. Adultery is to be looked upon with utmost dread and detestation as a sin that impoverishes men, debauches their consciences, threatens death and brings infamy upon the reputation.

against idleness 6-11; description of a worthless person, 12-15; seven things hateful to God, 16-19; the benefits of instruction, 20-23; farther exhortations against wicked women 24-33; jealousy, 34, 35.

1. Cautions against rash suretiship. (1-5)

2. A rebuke to slothfulness. (6-11)

3. Seven things hateful to God. (12-19)

6:1 My son, if you be surety for your friend, if you have stricken your hand with a stranger,

6:2 You art snared with the words of your mouth, you art taken with the words of your mouth.

6:2

The licentiousness of the tongue is a great snare, and needs a strong bridle. Therefore also some one saith. "His own lips are a powerful snare to a man, and he is snared by the words of his own mouth." Above all the other members, then, let us control this; let us bridle it; and let us expel from the mouth railings, and contumelies, and foul and slanderous language, and the evil habit of oaths.

St. John Chrysostom: Concerning the Statues, 15:13.

6:3 Do this now, my son, and deliver thyself, when you art come into the hand of your friend; go, humble thyself, and make sure your friend.

Continue to press him for whom You art become surety, to pay his creditor; give him no rest till he do it, else You mayest fully expect to be left to pay the debt.

6:4 Give not sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids.

6:5 Deliver thyself as a roe from the hand of the hunter, and as a bird from the hand of the fowler.

1. Cautions against rash suretiship. (1-5)

2. A rebuke to slothfulness. (6-11)

6:6 Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise:

Go to the ant, You sluggard, the ant, is a remarkable creature for foresight, industry, and economy. At the proper seasons they collect their food-not in the summer to lay up for the winter; for they sleep during the winter, and eat not; and therefore such hoards would be to them useless; but when the food necessary for them is most plentiful, then they collect it for their consumption in the proper seasons. No insect is more laborious, not even the bee itself; and none is more fondly attached to or more careful of its young, than the ant. When the young are in their aurelia state, in which they appear like a small grain of rice, they will bring them out of their nests, and lay them near their holes, for the benefit of the sun; and on the approach of rain, carefully remove them, and deposit them in the nest, the hole or entrance to which they will cover with a piece of thin stone or tile, to prevent the

wet from getting in. It is a fact that they do not lay up any meat for winter; nor does Solomon, either here or in chap. 30:25, assert it. He simply says that they provide their food in summer, and gather it in harvest; these are the most proper times for a stock to be laid in for their consumption; not in winter; for no such thing appears in any of their nests, nor do they need it, as they sleep during that season; but for autumn, during which they wake and work. Spring, summer, and autumn, they are incessant in their labor; and their conduct affords a bright example to men.

6:6

But if You art ashamed to have a woman for thy teacher, fly from sin, and You wilt quickly be able to mount up an the throne which God hath given thee. Since so long as You sinnest the Scripture sends thee not to a woman only, but even to things irrational, and those of the viler sort; yea, it is not ashamed to send thee who art honored with reason, as a disciple to the ant.

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on Matthew, 7:7.

6:6

We say, “Mark such an one, who is less than you, how earnest and watchful he is.” Do You then likewise receive from this animal the best exhortation to industry; and marvel at thy Lord, not only because He hath made heaven and the sun, but because He hath also made the ant. For although the animal be small, it affords much proof of the greatness of God’s wisdom. Consider then how prudent the ant is, and consider how God hath implanted in so small a body, such an unceasing desire of working!

St. John Chrysostom: Concerning the Statues, 12:5.

6:7 Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler,

6:8 Provides her meat in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest.

6:8;

Be therefore prudent, copy the ant, as saith the Scripture: “Store in summer, lest You hunger in winter;” the winter is the last day, the day of tribulation; the winter is the day of offenses and of bitterness: gather what may be there for thee for the future: but if You doest not so, You wilt perish both imprudent and unwise.

St. Augustine: On the Psalms, 49:12..

6:9 How long wilt you sleep, O sluggard? when wilt you arise out of your sleep?

6:10 Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep:

Yet a little sleep, a little slumber — This, if not the language, is the feeling of the sluggard. The ant gathers its food in summer and in harvest, and sleeps in winter when it has no work to do. If the sluggard would work in the day, and sleep at night, it would be all proper. The ant yields him a lesson of reproach.

6:11 So shall your poverty come as one that travellis, and your want as an armed man.

So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth — That is, with slow, but surely approaching steps.

Thy want as an armed man. — That is, with irresistible fury; and You art not prepared to oppose it. The Vulgate, Septuagint, and Arabic add the following clause to this verse: — “But if You wilt be diligent, thy harvest shall be as a fountain; and poverty shall flee far away from thee.”

3. Seven things hateful to God. (12-19)

If the slothful are to be condemned, who do nothing, much more those that do all the ill they can. Observe how such a man is described. He says and does every thing artfully, and with design. His ruin shall come without warning, and without relief. Here is a list of things hateful to God. Those sins are in a special manner provoking to God, which are hurtful to the comfort of human life. These things which God hates, we must hate in ourselves; it is nothing to hate them in others.

6:12 *A naughty person, a wicked man, walks with a froward mouth.*

When he lost his innocence.

A wicked man. He soon became a general transgressor after having departed from God.

6:12-14

Differently to be admonished are sowers of strifes and peacemakers. For sowers of strifes are to be admonished to perceive whose followers they are. For of the apostate angel it is written, when tares had been sown among the good crop, An enemy hath done this (Matthew 13:28). Of a member of him also it is said through Solomon, An apostate person, an unprofitable man, walketh with a perverse mouth, he winketh with his eyes, he beateth with his foot, he speaketh with his finger, with froward heart he deviseth mischief continually, he soweth strifes (Proverbs 6:12-14). Lo, him whom he would speak of as a sower of strifes he first named an apostate; since, unless after the manner of the proud angel he first fell away inwardly by the alienation of his mind from the face of his Maker, he would not afterwards come to sow strifes outwardly. He is rightly described too as winking with his eyes, speaking with his finger, beating with his foot. For it is inward watch that keeps the members outwardly in orderly control. He, then, who has lost stability of mind falls off outwardly into inconstancy of movement, and by his exterior mobility shews that he is stayed on no root within. Let sowers of strifes hear what is written, Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God (Matthew 5:9). And on the other hand let them gather that, if they who make peace are called the children of God, without doubt those who confound it are the children of Satan.

Fr. Gregory (the Great), Pastoral Rule, 23.

6:13 *He winks with his eyes, he speaks with his feet, he teaches with his fingers;*

6:14 *Frowardness is in his heart, he devises mischief continually; he sows discord.*

He plots schemes and plans to bring it to pass.

He soweth discord. — Between men and their wives, by seducing the latter from their fidelity. See the preceding quotation.

6:15 *Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly; suddenly shall he be broken wiWithout remedy.*

Probably alluding to some punishment of the adulterer, such as being stoned to death. A multitude shall join together, and so overwhelm him with stones, that he shall have his flesh and bones broken to pieces, and there shall be no remedy—none to deliver or pity him.

6:16 *These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him:*

These six—doth the Lord hate — 1. A proud look—exalted eyes; those who will not condescend to look on the rest of mankind. 2. A lying tongue—he who neither loves nor tells truth. 3. Hands that shed innocent blood, whether by murder or by battery. 4. A heart

that deviseth imaginations—the heart that fabricates such, lays the foundation, builds upon it, and completes the superstructure of iniquity. 5. Feet that be swift in running to mischief—he who works iniquity with greediness. 6. A false witness that speaketh lies—one who, even on his oath before a court of justice, tells any thing but the truth.

Seven are an abomination unto him — wvwn **naph hs**, “to his soul.”

The seventh is, he that soweth discord among brethren—he who troubles the peace of a family, of a village, of the state; all who, by lies and misrepresentations, strive to make men’s minds evil-affected towards their brethren.

6:17 A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,

6:18 An heart that devises wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief,

6:19 A false witness that speaks lies, and he that sows discord among brethren.

4. Exhortations to walk according to God’s commandments. (20-35)

The word of God has something to say to us upon all occasions. Let not faithful reproofs ever make us uneasy. When we consider how much this sin abounds, how heinous adultery is in its own nature, of what evil consequence it is, and how certainly it destroys the spiritual life in the soul, we shall not wonder that the cautions against it are so often repeated. Let us notice the subjects of this chapter. Let us remember Him who willingly became our Surety, when we were strangers and enemies. And shall Christians, who have such prospects, motives, and examples, be slothful and careless? Shall we neglect what is pleasing to God, and what he will graciously reward? May we closely watch every sense by which poison can enter our minds or affection.

6:20 My son, keep your father’s commandment, and forsake not the law of your mother:

6:21 Bind them continually upon your heart, and tie them about your neck.

6:22 When you goest, it shall lead you; when you sleepest, it shall keep you; and when you awakest, it shall talk with you.

Here the law is personified; and is represented as a nurse, teacher, and guardian, by night and day. An upright man never goes but as directed by God’s word and led by God’s Spirit.

When You sleepest — He commends his body and soul to the protection of his Maker when he lies down and sleeps in peace. And when he awakes in the morning, the promises and mercies of God are the first things that present themselves to his recollection.

6:23 For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life:

It illuminates our path. It shows us how we should walk and praise God.

A general light, showing the nature and will of GOD, and the interest and duty of MAN.

And reproofs of instruction — Or, that instruction which reproves us for our sins and errors leads us into the way of life.

6:24 To keep you from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman.

Solomon had suffered sorely from this quarter; and hence his repeated cautions and warnings to others. The strange woman always means one that is not a man’s own; and

sometimes it may also imply a foreign harlot, one who is also a stranger to the God of Israel.

6:25 Lust not after her beauty in your heart; neither let her take you with her eyelids.

It is a very general custom in the East to paint the eye-lids. I have many Asiatic drawings in which this is expressed. They have a method of polishing the eyes with a preparation of antimony, so that they appear with an indescribable lustre; or, as one who mentions the fact from observation, "Their eyes appear to be swimming in bliss."

6:25

Let not desire of beauty overcome you. Many nets and many snares are spread by the devil. The look of a harlot is the snare of him who loves her. Our own eyes are nets to us, wherefore it is written: "Be not taken with thine eyes." So, then, we spread nets for ourselves in which we are entangled and hampered. We bind chains on ourselves, as we read: "For every one is bound with the chains of his own sins."

St. Ambrose: Concerning Repentance, 1:14:73.

6:26 For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread: and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life.

6:25

Therefore, we do not allow any man whatsoever to sit with a married woman; much less to live in the same house with a maiden who has taken the vow, or to sleep where she sleeps, or to be constantly with her. For this is to be hated and abominated by those who fear God.

Epistle 2 of the Blessed Clement concerning Virginity, 9.

6:27 Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?

6:27

Let us then flee it (this fire of lust) as though following us, though indeed it follows not behind us, but within our very selves. Let us then diligently take heed lest while we are fleeing from it we carry it with ourselves. For we wish for the most part to flee, but if we do not wholly cast it out of our mind, we rather take it up than forsake it. Let us then spring over it, lest it be said to us: "Walk ye in the flame of your fire, which ye have kindled for yourselves." (Isa. 50:11). For as he who "takes fire into his bosom burns his clothes," so he who walks upon fiery coals must of necessity burn his feet, as it is written: "Can one walk upon coals of fire and not burn his feet?"

St. Ambrose: Concerning Repentance, 1:14:75.

6:27

Evil lust is like a burning and a fire. Doth fire consume a garment, and doth not the lust of adultery consume the soul?.

St. Augustine: On the Psalms, 58:12.

6:27

But granted that the eye has fallen upon another, at least let not the inward affection follow. For to have seen is no sin, but one must be careful that it be not the source of sin. The bodily eye sees, but let the eye of the heart be closed; let modesty of mind remain. We have a Lord Who is both strict and indulgent... The Lord said: "Whoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matt. 5:28). He does not say, "Whosoever shall look hath committed adultery," but

“Whosoever shall look on her to last after her.” He condemned not the look but sought out the inward affection.

St. Ambrose: Concerning Repentance, 1:14:70.

6:27

That You mayest not say, What harm is there in the eyes, when there is no necessity that he should be perverted who looks? he shows thee that desire is a fire, and the flesh is like a garment. The latter is an easy prey, and the former is a tyrant. And when anything harmful is not only taken within, but also held fast, it will not go forth again until it has made an exit for itself. For he who looks upon a woman, even Yough he escape the temptation, does not come away pure of all lust. And why should one have trouble, if he can be chavée and free of trouble? See what Job says: “I made a covenant with mine eyes, that I should not think of another’s wife.” Thus well does he know the power of abuse. And Paul for this reason kept “under his body, and brought it into subjection.” And, figuratively speaking, he keeps a fire in his breast who permits an impure Yought to dwell in his heart. And he walks upon coals who, by sinning in act, destroys his own soul.

From the Commentary of St. Hippolytus on Proverbs

6:28 *Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?*

6:29 *So he that goes in to his neighbor’s wife; whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent.*

So he that goeth In to his neighbor’s wife — As sure as he who takes fire into his bosom, or who walks upon live coals, is burnt thereby; so sure he that seduces his neighbour’s wife shall be guilty. That is, he shall be punished.

6:30 *Men do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry;*

6:31 *But if he be found, he shall restore sevenfold; he shall give all the substance of his house.*

6:30,32 LXX

The thief is a grievous offender, but not so grievous a one as the adulterer: for the former, though it be a sorry reason for his conduct, yet at the same time has to plead the necessity arising from indigence; but the latter, when no necessity compels him, by his mere madness rushes into the gulf of iniquity.

St. John Chrysostom: Concerning the Statues, 10:11.

6:32 *But whoso commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding; he that does it destroys his own soul.*

6:33 *A wound and dishonor shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away.*

Among the Romans, when a man was caught in the fact, the injured husband took the law into his own hand; and a large radish was thrust up into the anus of the transgressor, which not only overwhelmed him with infamy and disgrace, but generally caused his death.

6:34 *For jealousy is the rage of a man: therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance.*

6:35 *He will not regard any ransom; neither will he rest content, Yough you gives many gifts.*

7:22

“If it is the incarnate Lord who says ‘I am the way,’ (John 14:6). and ‘No man cometh unto the Father but by me,’ (John 14:6). it is He Himself Who said, ‘The Lord created me beginning of ways.’ The word is also used of the creation and making of a begotten being, as ‘I have created a man through the Lord,’ and again ‘He begat sons and daughters,’ (Gen. 5:4). and so David, ‘Create in me a clean heart, O God,’ (Ps. 51:10). not asking for another, but for the cleansing of the heart he had. And a new creature is spoken of, not as Yough another creation came into being, but because the enlightened are established in better works. If the Father created the Son for works, He created Him not on account of Himself, but on account of the works. But that which comes into being on account of something else, and not on its own account, is either a part of that on account of which it came into being, or is inferior. The Savior will then be either a part of the creature, or inferior to the creature. We must understand the passage of the manhood. And it might be said that Solomon uttered these words of the same wisdom whereof the Apostle makes mention in the passage ‘For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God.’ (1 Cor. 1:21). It must moreover be borne in mind that the speaker is not a prophet, but a writer of proverbs. Now proverbs are figures of other things, not the actual things which are uttered. If it was God the Son Who said, ‘The Lord created me,’ He would rather have said, ‘The Father created me.’ Nowhere did He call Him Lord, but always Father. The word ‘begot’, then, must be understood in reference to God the Son, and the word created, in reference to Him who took on Him the form of a servant. In all these cases we do not mention two, God apart and man apart (for He was One), but in Yought we take into account the nature of each. Peter had not two in his mind when he said, ‘Christ hath offered for us in the flesh (1 Peter 4:1). If, they argue, the Son is a thing begotten and not a thing made, how does Scripture say, ‘Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, Whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ’? (Acts 2:36). We must also say here that this was spoken according to the flesh about the Son of Man; just as the angel who announced the glad tidings to the shepherds says, ‘To you is born to — day a Savior, ‘Who is Christ the Lord’ (Luke 2:11). The word ‘to — day’ could never be understood of Him Who was before the ages. This is more clearly shewn by what comes afterwards where it is said, ‘That same Jesus whom ye have crucified ’ (Acts 2:36). If when the Son was born He was then made wisdom, it is untrue that He was ‘the power of God and the wisdom of God.’ (1 Cor. 1:14). His wisdom did not come into being, but existed always. And so, as Yough of the Father, it is said by David, ‘Be You, God, my defender,’ (Ps. 31:2 LXX). and again, ‘You art become my salvation’ (Ps. 118:21), and so Paul, ‘Let God be true, but every man a liar.’ (Rom. 3:4). Thus the Lord ‘of God is made unto us wisdom and sanctification and redemption.’ (1 Cor. 1:30). Now when the Father was made defender and true, He was not a thing made; and similarly when the Son was made wisdom and sanctification, He was not a thing made. If it is true that there is one God the Father, it is assuredly also true that there is one Lord Jesus Christ the Savior. According to them the Savior is not God nor the Father Lord, and it is written in vain, ‘the Lord said unto my Lord.’ (Ps. 110:1). False is the statement, ‘Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee.’ (Ps. 45:8). False too, ‘The Lord rained from the Lord.’ (Gen. 19:24). False, ‘God created in the image of God.’ (Gen. 1:27). and ‘Who is God save the Lord?’ and ‘Who is a God save our God.’ False the statement of John that ‘the Word was God and the Word was with God; and the words of Thomas of the Son, ‘my Lord and my God.’ The distinctions, then, ought

to be referred to creatures and to those who are falsely and not properly called gods, and not to the Father and to the Son.”

St. Basil the Great: On Proverbs 7:22. The Lord created Me (LXX).

7:26

You have seen her mischief. Wait not to admit the rising of lust; for her death is everlasting. And for the rest, by her words, her arguments in sooth, she wounds, and by her sins she kills those who yield to her. For many are the forms of wickedness that lead the foolish down to hell. And the chambers of death mean either its depths or its treasure. How, then, is escape possible?

From the Commentary of St. Hippolytus on Proverbs

7:2

“Honor the Lord, and be strong: but fear not another besides Him,” we understand it to be meant fearing to sin, and following the commandments given by God, which is the honor that cometh from God. For the fear of God is **De>ov** [in Greek]. But if fear is perturbation of mind, have it that fear is perturbation of mind, yet all fear is not perturbation. Superstition is indeed perturbation of mind; being the fear of demons, that produce and are subject to the excitement of passion. On the other hand, consequently, the fear of God, who is not subject to perturbation, is free of perturbation. For it is not God, but failing away from God, that the man is terrified for. And he who fears this — that is, falling into evils — fears and dreads those evils. And he who fears a fall, wishes himself to be free of corruption and perturbation. “The wise man, fearing, avoids evil: but the foolish, trusting, mixes himself with it,” says the Scripture; and again it says, “In the fear of the LORD is the hope of strength.”

St. Clement of Alexandria: Stromata 2:9.

CHAPTER 7

The word of God, if used for defense and armor, will keep one from the strange woman and the destroying sin of adultery. Let the Word therefore discover to us the fallacies of this sin and suggest to us the answers to all its flatteries.

1. Invitations to learn wisdom. (1-5)

2. The arts of seducers, with warnings against them. (6-27)

1. Invitations to learn wisdom. (1-5)

We must lay up God’s commandments safely. Not only, Keep them, and you shall live; but, Keep them as those that cannot live wiYout them. Those that blame strict and careful walking as needless and too precise, consider not that the law is to be kept as the apple of the eye; indeed the law in the heart is the eye of the soul. Let the word of God dwell in us, and so be written where it will be always at hand to be read. Thus we shall be kept from the fatal effects of our own passions, and the snares of Satan. Let God’s word confirm our dread of sin, and resolutions against it.

7:1 My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with you.

7:2 Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of your eye.

7:3 Bind them upon your fingers, write them upon the table of your heart.

7:4 Say unto wisdom, You art my sister; and call understanding your kinswoman:

7:5 That they may keep you from the strange woman, from the stranger which flatters with her words.

2. The arts of seducers, with warnings against them. (6-27)

Here is an affecting example of the danger of youthful lusts. It is a history or a parable of the most instructive kind. Will any one dare to venture on temptations that lead to impurity, after Solomon has set before his eyes in so lively and plain a manner, the danger of even going near them? Then is he as the man who would dance on the edge of a lofty rock, when he has just seen another fall headlong from the same place. The misery of self-ruined sinners began in disregard to God's blessed commands. We ought daily to pray that we may be kept from running into temptation, else we invite the enemies of our souls to spread snares for us. Ever avoid the neighborhood of vice. Beware of sins which are said to be pleasant sins. They are the more dangerous, because they most easily gain the heart, and close it against repentance. Do nothing till You have well considered the end of it. Were a man to live as long as Methuselah, and to spend all his days in the highest delights sin can offer, one hour of the anguish and tribulation that must follow, would far outweigh

7:6 For at the window of my house I looked through my casement,

7:7 And beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding,

7:8 Passing through the street near her corner; and he went the way to her house,

7:9 In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night:

7:10 And, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart.

7:11 (She is loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house:

7:12 Now is she without, now in the streets, and lies in wait at every corner.)

7:13 So she caught him, and kissed him, and with an impudent face said unto him,

7:14 I have peace offerings with me; this day have I payed my vows.

7:15 Therefore came I forth to meet you, diligently to seek your face, and I have found you.

7:16 I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved works, with fine linen of Egypt.

7:17 I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.

7:18 Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning: let us solace ourselves with loves.

7:19 For the goodman is not at home, he is gone a long journey:

7:20 He hath taken a bag of money with him, and will come home at the day appointed.

7:21 With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him.

7:22 He goes after her straightway, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks;

7:23 Till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird haves to the snare, and knows not that it is for his life.

7:24 Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth.

7:25 Let not your heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths.

7:26 For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her.

7:27 Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.

CHAPTER 7

A farther exhortation to acquire wisdom, in order to be preserved from impure connections, 1-5. The character of a harlot, and her conduct towards a youth who fell into her snare, 6-23. Solemn exhortations to avoid this evil, 24-27.

NOTES ON CHAP. 7

Verse 1. My son, keep my words — See chap. 2:1.

Verse 2. As the apple of thine eye. — As the pupil of the eye, which is of such essential necessity to sight, and so easily injured.

Verse 3. Bind them upon thy fingers — See on chap. 3:3.

Verse 4. You art my sister — You art my dearest friend, and I will treat thee as such.

Verse 5. The strange woman — The prostitute, the adulteress.

Verse 6. I looked through my casement — The casement is a small aperture in a large window, or a window opening on hinges. Here it means the lattice, for they had no glass windows in the East. And the latticed windows produced a double advantage: 1. Making the apartments sufficiently private; and 2. Admitting fresh air to keep them cool.

Verse 7. Among the simple ones — The inexperienced, inconsiderate young men.

A young man void of understanding — *bl rsj cha ar l[b*,

“destitute of a heart.” He had not wisdom to discern the evil intended; nor courage to resist the flatteries of the seducer.

Verse 8. He went the way to her house. — She appears to have had a corner house sufficiently remarkable; and a way from the main street to it.

Verse 9. In the twilight, in the evening — Some time after sun-setting; before it was quite dark.

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In the black and dark night — When there were neither lamps nor moon-shine.

Verse 10. A woman with the attire of a harlot — It appears that sitting in some open place, and covering the face, or having a veil of a peculiar kind on, was the evidence of a harlot, Genesis 38:14, 15-19. No doubt, in Solomon’s time, they had other distinctions. In all other countries, and in all times. the show of their countenance did testify against them; they declared their sin as Sodom; they hid it not. However, this does not seem to have been a mere prostitute; for she was, according to her own declaration, a married woman, and kept house, ver. 19, if her assertions relative to this were not falsehoods, and calculated the better to render him secure, and prevent the suspicion of endangering himself by cohabiting with a common woman; which I am rather inclined to think was the case, for she was subtle of heart.

Verse 11. She is loud and stubborn — *hymh homiyah*, she is never at rest, always agitated; busily employed to gain her end, and this is to go into the path of error: *tro sorereth*, “turning aside;” preferring any way to the right way. And, therefore, it is added, her feet abide not in her house, she gads abroad; and this disposition probably first led her to this vice.

Verse 12. Now is she wiYout — She is continually exposing herself, and showing by her gait and gestures what she is, and what she wants. These two verses are a parenthesis, intended to show the character of the woman.

Verse 13. So she caught him — Laid fast hold on him, and kissed him, to show that she was affectionately attached to him.

And with an impudent face — *hynp hz[h heezzah paneyha*, “she strengthened her countenance,” assumed the most confident look she could; endeavored to appear friendly and sincere.

Verse 14. I have peace-offerings with me — More literally, “the sacrifices of the peace-offerings are with me.” Peace-offerings *Mymlv shelamim*, were offerings the spiritual design of which was to make peace between God and man, to make up the breach between them which sin had occasioned; see the notes on Leviticus 7., where every kind of sacrifice offered under the law is explained. When the blood of these was poured

out at the altar, and the fat burnt there, the breast and right shoulder were the priest’s portion; but the rest of the carcass belonged to the sacrificer, who might carry it home, and make a feast to his friends. See Leviticus 3:1-11. Much light is cast on this place by the fact that the gods in many parts of the East are actually worshipped in brothels, and fragments of the offerings are divided among the wretches who fall into the snare of the prostitutes. — WARD’S Customs.

Have I payed my vows — She seems to insinuate that she had made a vow for the health and safety of this young man; and having done so, and prepared the sacrificial banquet, came actually out to seek him, that he might partake of it with her, ver. 15. But, as she intended to proceed farther than mere friendship, she was obliged to avail herself of the night season, and the absence of her husband.

Verse 16. I have decked my bed — *y r[arsi*, “my couch or sofa;” distinguished from *ybk m mishcabi*, “my bed,” ver. 17, the place to sleep on, as the other was the place to recline on at meals. The tapestry, *uydbrm marbaddim*, mentioned here seems to refer to the covering of the sofa; exquisitely woven and figured cloth. *wfa twbfj chatuboth etun*, the Targum translates painted carpets, such as were manufactured in Egypt; some kind of embroidered or embossed stuff is apparently meant.

Verse 17. I have perfumed any bed with Myrrh — *rm mor*, “aloes,” *mylha ahalim*, and “cinnamon,” *wmnq kinnamon*. We have taken our names from the original words; but probably the *ahalim* may not mean aloes, which is no perfume; but sandal wood, which is very much used in the East. She had used every means to excite the passions she wished to bring into action.

Verse 18. Come, let us take our fill of love — *uydd hwrn nirveh dodim*, “Let us revel in the breasts;” and then it is added, “Let us solace ourselves with loves,” *mybhab hsl[tn nithallesah boohabim*; “let us gratify each other with loves, with the utmost delights.” This does not half express the original; but I forbear. The speech shows the brazen face of this woman, well translated by the Vulgate, “Veni, inebriemur uberibus; et fruamur cupidinis amplexibus.” And the Septuagint has expressed the spirit of it: *elye, kai apolawswnen filiav-deuro, kai egkulisywmen erwti*. “Veni, et

fruamur amicitia-Veni, et colluctemur cupidine.” Yough varied in the words, all the versions have expressed the same thing. In the old MS. Bible, the speech of this woman is as follows: “I have arrayed with cordis my litil bed, and spred with peyntid tapetis of Egipt: I have springid my ligginge place with mirre and aloes and calecum, and be we inwardly drunken with Tetis, and use we the coveytied clippingis to the tyme that the dai wax light”. The original itself is too gross to be literally translated; but quite in character as coming from the mouth of an abandoned woman.

Verse 19. For the good man — Literally, “For the man is not in his house.”

Verse 20. He hath taken — Literally, “The money bag he hath taken in his hand.” He is gone a journey of itinerant merchandising. This seems to be what is intended.

And will come home at the day appointed. — *askh uwyl leyom hakkase*,

the time fixed for a return from such a journey. The Vulgate says, "at the full moon." The Targum, "the day of the assembly." In other words, He will return by the approaching festival.

Verse 21. With her much fair speech — With her blandishments and lascivious talk, she overcame all his scruples, and constrained him to yield.

Verse 22. As an ox goeth to the slaughter — The original of this and the following verse has been variously translated. Dr. Grey corrects and translates thus: "He goeth after her straightway, as an OX goeth to the SLAUGHTER; as a DOG to the CHAIN; and as a DEER till the DART strike through his liver; as a BIRD haveeneth to the SNARE, and knoweth not that it is for its life." Very slight alterations in the Hebrew text produce these differences; but it is not necessary to pursue them; all serve to mark the stupidity and folly of the man who is led away by enticing women or who lives a life of intemperance.

Verse 24. Hearken unto me now, therefore, O ye children — Ye that are young and inexperienced, seriously consider the example set before your eyes, and take warning at another's expense.

Verse 26. For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her. — That is, such like women have been the ruin of 1706 many. [uyllj](#) chalalim, which we render wounded, also signifies soldiers or men of war; and [uymx](#) atsumim, which we render strong men, may be translated heroes. Many of those who have distinguished themselves in the field and in the cabinet have been overcome and destroyed by their mistresses. History is full of such examples.

Verse 27. Her house is the way to hell — [lwa](#) sheol, the pit, the grave, the place of the dead, the eternal and infernal world. And they who, through such, fall into the grave, descend lower, into the chambers of death; the place where pleasure is at an end, and illusion mocks no more.

THE CHURCH

IN THE ORTHODOX CONCEPT

The Church is a subject that stands at the very heart of the Bible, for she is the object of the redemption, which the Bible proclaims. In fact, the church is the new “life in Christ,” or the “**communion with the Father in the Son by the Holy Spirit**,” or the enjoyment of the grace of God. God purchased her at the cost of Christ's Blood (Acts 20:28). Understanding the Church means understanding the relationship between God and man, manifested in the divine plan of salvation, God's Fatherhood, the kingdom of Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit, the means of grace, the lessons from the history of mankind, the destiny of men etc. It is through the Church that God makes known His redeeming wisdom even to the heavenly hosts (Eph. 3:10).

To understand the Church in our Orthodox concept, we have to discuss the following points:

- **The Nature of the Church.**
- **The Church Bible and Tradition.**
- **The Church and the Apostolic Succession.**
- **The Church Renewal.**

NATURE OF THE CHURCH

The Fathers of Alexandria adopted the spiritual concepts of the Church and did not consider it a political or a human organization, for many reasons:

a. Throughout almost twenty centuries the Church of Alexandria had been isolated from politics, and had no civil authority. The Egyptian clergymen found no room in the courts of the rules. St. Athanasius says: [The Fathers never thought the consent of the Emperor thereto, nor the Emperor busy himself with the affairs of the Church¹.]

b. The Alexandrian view of knowledge (*gnosis*) as a divine gift constantly granted by the Father through His Son, attracted even the clergymen towards practicing contemplation, studying the Holy Bible, worshipping etc., and not towards involvement in church administration.

c. Even before the appearance of the monastic movement in Egypt, the Copts clergymen and laymen practiced ascetic life. Their minds and hearts were more often lifted of the heavenly kingdom than to the church administration. The whole church in the fourth century was in danger of secularization, for Christianity had been adopted as the state religion and the emperor's palace was opened widely to the clergymen. At the same time, the Egyptian Church attracted the whole church towards the desert, i.e. towards inner life, to practice heavenly life, despising every earthly glory².

1. Covenant People of God: In the Old Testament, believers looked at the community as a whole, as the people of God and the children of Abraham, who enjoyed a covenant with God (Gen. 17). In the New Testament Christ offered a new covenant giving His Blood and Body, and presenting them as food to His people thus capable of granting them eternal life (Matt. 26:28; Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25).

The Church of the New Testament inherited the promises that were given through the Old Testament, but in a new and spiritual concept. Therefore, the Church is ancient and is new at the same time. We, the members of the Church enjoy the ancient prophecies through the new life, which we practice in Jesus Christ, who never ages. St. Clement of Alexandria, who proclaims the Church as a

¹ *Historia Arianorum* 52.

² *Fr. Malaty: The Coptic Orthodox Church as an Ascetic church*, 1986, p.4.

continuation of the old one, confirms that she is new in Christ. He says, [The new people, in contrast to the older people, are young, because they have heard the new good things³].

The ancientness and newness of our Church have their effects on our life, as follows:

a. In proving our faith in the Holy Trinity and God's redeeming work. For we can't accept the Christian faith nor understand its depths except through the Old Testament, especially the prophecies that mentioned it. The Alexandrian Fathers used the Old Testament in their arguments not only with the Jews but also with the Gentiles, philosophers and simple people. Origen in his numerous volumes often uses the Old Testament texts in explaining the Christian faith, dogmas and doctrines.

b. The ancientness of the Church opens the door of hope in God who loved us, and planned our redemption even before we were formed.

c. The newness of the Church incites us to practice the inner renewal in Christ, not by changing and developing what is outside but by the acceptance of the work of the Holy Spirit within our souls. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2Cor. 5:17). St. Clement says: [We are always young, always new: for those must necessarily be new, who become partakers of the new Word⁴.]

2. The Mother of Believers: The Church is virgin because of her purity (2 Cor. 11:2), and at the same time she is a mother who brings forth children of God unceasingly. Through the motherhood of the church, men can conceive God's loving-kindness. St. Clement of Alexandria speaks of the Church as the Virgin Mother of the Christians, her motherhood is correlated to God's fatherhood, through her loving kindness she feeds her children on the Logos as holy milk. She asserts Him as the Educator (*Paidagogos*) and as the "Subject of teaching." He says: ["Their children," it is said, "shall be borne upon their shoulders, and fondled on their knees; as one whom his mother comforts, so also shall I comfort you" (Isa. 66:12, 13). The mother draws the children to herself; and we seek our mother the Church. Whatever is feeble and tender, as needing help on account of its feebleness, is kindly look on, and is sweet and pleasant, anger changing into help in the case of such ... Thus also the Father of the Universe cherishes affections towards those who have fled to Him, and having begotten them again by His Spirit to the adoption of children, knows them as gentle, and loves those alone, aids and fights for them; and therefore He bestows on them the name of child⁵.]

St. Clement states that the ancient Church, as the mother of believers, presents the most accurate knowledge⁶.

3. The Body of Christ: The Church is the Body of Christ (Rom. 4:12) that grows towards perfection; her children enjoy communion in the Body and Blood of the Lord. St. Clement of Alexandria clearly teaches that the Church is the body of Christ, nourished on His Body and Blood⁷. He attracts everyone to Himself to make him a member of His Crucified and Risen Body, that he might be perfected in Him.

4. A new creation in Christ: Through baptism, the believer receives the rebirth, and he becomes a new creation in Christ (2Cor. 5:17). He dies with Christ and also rises with Him (Eph. 2), possessed and led by the Life-giving Holy Spirit (Rom. 8: 9-14).

The work of the Holy Spirit is the continuous sanctification of the believers so that they might become in the likeness of Christ, the Head. Origen incites us to struggle (by the Holy Spirit) to realize this aim, as he says: [The Christian must conform himself to the image of Christ; the Christian becomes

³ *Paed.1:5:20*

⁴ *Paidagogos 1:5.*

⁵ *Paidagogos 1:5.*

⁷ *Paidagogos 1:6: 42.*

⁶ *Stromata, 7: 15: 92.*

Christ's spirit when he has attached himself to the Word and Wisdom of God in all things that in no way is the image and likeness discolored⁸.] He calls the church: [the assembly of all the Saints⁹.]

St. Clement of Alexandria states: [But he who obeys the mere call, as he is called, neither for fear, nor for enjoyments, is on his way to knowledge (*gnosis*)... It is possible for the Gnostic already to have become god. "I said, you are gods, and sons of the highest" (Ps. 132:6¹⁰.)]

5. The Bride of Christ: The Church waits for her Christ who will come to perform His eternal spiritual marriage with her (Rev. 19:7). Christ called Himself the Bridegroom (Matt. 9:14,15; Mark 2:18-20; Luke 5:33-35; Matt. 25:1-3). Through this concept we acknowledge that the Lord who is the Judge, is coming not to judge us, but to grant her to be close to Him, to unite with Him and to enjoy His glories. As the Groom, He is jealous (Exod. 20:5; 34:24; Deut 4: 25; 5:9; 6:51), for He cannot be in communion with sin. Every sin we commit is a crime not only against His law but rather against His love, for by sin we break the heart of our Heavenly Groom. This concept also means that our unity with God is eternal and indissoluble.

The Alexandrian Fathers, especially Origen in his Commentary on the Canticle of Canticles, adopted this evangelic concept of the Church, in which they found a genuine basis of relationship between God and man, such as:

a. God as the Heavenly Bridegroom, seeks for our souls not to condemn us but to beautify us by His Holy Spirit in the merit of Jesus blood, as His own Bride. He is not in need of our sanctity or worship but He is the Lover of mankind, and so, desires to unite us with Him eternally.

b. Truly He is jealous, for He is the Groom (Exod. 20:5; 34:14, Deut. 4:25; 5:9; 6:15), who cannot be in communication with sin, therefore He asks us to be holy as He is Holy (Lev. 11:44, 45). Any sin we commit is not so much a breach of the divine law but moreover a crime against love, by sin we break our Groom's heart.

c. God's will is that we become very intimate with Him, accept a close communion and fellowship with Him in Christ, an unbreakable and indissoluble relationship, as we enjoy eternal marriage.

d. The Savior Jesus Christ, as the Church's Groom, sent His Holy Spirit to guide her and to shape her as to resemble and to be in the image of her Groom, qualifying her for the eternal glories. St. Athanasius says, [When we drink the Spirit, we are substantially drinking Christ¹¹.] St. Cyril of Alexandria says: [The Holy Spirit is the Life-giving odor of Christ, a living and effective odor, superior attracting a relation to Him in order to take part of God's superior nature¹².] [It is solely through the Holy Spirit that Christ is formed in us and imprints on us His own features and so makes the beauty of the Godhead come alive again in the nature of man¹³.]

Here, I would confirm that the Holy Spirit does not oblige us to accept His action, but we have to struggle using His power... therefore St. Clement says: [But we ought to have works that cry aloud, as becoming "those who walk in the day" (Rom. 13:13). "Let your works shine" (Matt. 5:16), and be hold a man and his works before his face. "For behold God and His works" (Isa. 62:11). For the Gnostic must, as is possible, imitate God¹⁴.]

6. The Dwelling Place of Christ, that grows as the holy temple of God (Eph. 2:21 etc.), a spiritual temple, and a sanctuary in which the Holy Trinity dwell.

⁸ Commentary, on Rom. 7: 7.

⁹ In Cant. Hom. 1 ;3.

¹⁰ Stromata 4:22,23.

¹¹ Ep. ad Serapioni 19. PG 26: 576.

¹² In Joan. 11:2. PG74:452-3.

¹³ Thesaurus 34. PG. 75: 609.

¹⁴ Stromata, 4: 26.

Origen speaks of the Church as God's spiritual temple, saying: [The Spirit of Christ dwells in those who bear, so to say, a resemblance in form and feature to Himself. And the Word of God, wishing to set this clearly before us, represents God as promising to the righteous: "I will dwell in them, and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My People" (2Cor. 6:16, Lev. 26:12; Jer. 3:33; 32:38, Zech. 8:8). And the Savior says: "If any man hears My words, and does them, I and My Father will come to him, and make Our abode with him" (John 14:23). And in other parts of the Holy Scripture where it speaks of the mystery of the resurrection to those whose ears are divinely opened, it says that the temple which has been destroyed shall be built up again of living and most precious stones. Thereby giving us to understand that each of those who are led by the word of God to survive together If the duties of piety, will be a precious stone, in the one great temple of God. Accordingly, Peter says, "You also, as lively stones, are wake up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God Jesus Christ" (1Pet. 2: 5). And Paul also says, "Being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ our being the chief corner stone" (Eph. 2:20). And there is a similar hidden allusion in this passage in Isaiah, which is addressed to Jerusalem: "Behold, I will lay your stones with carbuncles, and lay your foundations with sapphires. And I will make your battlements of jasper, and your gates of crystal, and all your borders of pleasant stones. And all your children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children. In righteousness shall you be established" (Isa. 54:11-14). There are, then among the righteous some who are carbuncles, others sapphires, others jaspers, and others crystals, and thus there is among the righteous every kind of choice and precious stone¹⁵.]

7. The Church is the House of Faith, the house that preserves the deposit of faith without deviation. When the Arians violently entered the Churches while the Orthodox were driven away, St. Athanasius wrote: [For they hold the places, but you the "Apostolic Faith." They are, it is true, in the places, but outside of the true Faith; while you are outside the places indeed, but the Faith, within you. Let us consider which is the greater, the place or the Faith, clearly the true Faith. Good indeed is the place, when the Apostolic Faith is preached there, holy is it if the Holy One dwells there¹⁶.]

8. The Church is the House of Salvation, like the house of Rahab (Jos. 2). There is no salvation outside it. Origen states that there is no salvation outside the Church, the house of redemption. According to him, Rahab (Josh. 2) mystically represents the Church, and the scarlet thread the blood of Christ; and only those in her house are saved. He says: [If anyone wishes to be saved... Let him come to this house where the blood of Christ is for a sign of redemption. For that blood was for condemnation amongst those who said, "His blood be on us and on our children" (Matt. 27:25). Jesus was "for the fall and resurrection of many" (Luke 2: 34); and therefore in respect of those who "speak against His sign." His blood is effective for punishment, but effective for salvation in the case of believers. Let no one therefore persuade himself or deceive himself: outside this house, that is, outside the Church, no one is saved... The sign of salvation (the scarlet thread) was given through the window, because Christ by His incarnation gave us the sight of the light of godhead as it were through a window; that all may attain salvation by that sign. Who shall be found in the house of her who once was a harlot, being made clean by water and the Holy Spirit, and by the blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to whom is glory and power for ever and ever¹⁷.]

9. The Community of Love: The Church reveals the kingdom of God on earth, as the pure kingdom of love, her goal is that every soul may enjoy eternal life... Whoever belongs to the church but has no love, is truly outside the church, for he does not know God (1John 3:14, 16; 4:7,8). This love

¹⁵ *Contra Celsus* 8: 28, 29.

¹⁶ *Epistle*, 29.

¹⁷ *In Lib. Issu Nave* 3: 5.

unites us all in God who is Love, and unites the earthly creatures with the heavenly hosts, men with angels, the militant members with those who are victorious.

10. Community of Joy: The Church in her lovely motherhood, helps her children to carry the Lord's cross joyfully, for she creates an atmosphere of joy even in the periods of persecution. Prisons were changed into places of singing hymns by the confessors, especially on the eve of their martyrdom. The Coptic Icons picture martyrs not in pain or suffering but smiling, waiting their heavenly crowns. In other words, the Alexandrians often look to the Church as the "Community of Joy." According to St. Clement, the Church was symbolized by Rebecca, who - in his opinion - means "laughter." He says: [The Spirit of those that are children in Christ, whose lives are ordered in endurance, rejoice¹⁸.]

11. The Icon of Heaven: The Heavenly One descended to our land made of us His heavenly Church. Thus we live on earth with a heavenly heart and high thought, participating with the heavenly creatures in their hymns, joy and peace. St. Clement of Alexandria states¹⁹ that the earthly Church is a copy of the heavenly one, that is why we pray that God's will may be accomplished on earth as it is in heaven. He also says: [If you enroll yourself as one of God's people, heaven is your country, God your legislation²⁰.]

12. Ever-Youthful Church: The Church never ages (spiritually) nor weakens, for she is united with her Groom who never ages. The Groom grants her His Holy Spirit which renews her unceasingly, therefore her youth is renewed like the eagle's (Ps. 103:5). "Even though our outward man perishes, yet the inward man is renewed day by day" (2Cor. 4:16).

St. Clement of Alexandria says: [Therefore the name "childhood" is for us a life-long season of spring, because the truth abiding in us is ageless and our being made to overflow with that truth, is ageless too. For wisdom is ever fruitful. Ever fixed unchangeable on the same truths, ever constant²¹.]

[You have become old in superstition; as young, enter on the practice of piety. God regards you as innocent children²².]

13. The First-Born Church: Her Groom, the First-Born One, grants all her members the glory of becoming first-born in Him.

St. Clement says: [For this is the first-born Church (Heb. 12:23), composed of many good children; these are the first born enrolled in Heaven, and hold high festival with so many myriad's of angels. We too are first-born sons, who are reared by God, who are genuine friends of the first-born, who first and foremost attained to the knowledge of God²³.]

THE CHURCH DEMOCRACY

1. The Alexandrian Fathers spoke about Church democracy.

It is the peoples' right to choose their shepherds, and it is the duty of the clergyman to show his loving fatherhood and not his authority. Origen says: [He who is called to the episcopacy is called, not to domination, but to the service of the whole church²⁴.]

Every member of the Church - man, woman or a child - has his own role in the church. This equality that depends on the same human nature does not cancel the differences between them, for man has his own role that fits his manhood and woman has her own role. This difference creates a kind of integrity in human beings, the male is in need of the female and vice versa.

¹⁸ *Paidagogos* 1:5.

¹⁹ *Stromata* 4:8:66.

²⁰ *Stromata* 6:14.

²¹ *Paidagogos* 1:5:20.

²² *Protrepticus* 10.

²³ *Protrepticus* 9:82.

²⁴ *PG* 13: 239.

All kinds of obedience that the wife, or the children, or the servants do not weaken the personality of the person, for he or she practices it in the Lord, for the edification of mankind, through his or her breadth of heart and broad-mindedness. If it is misused and the person is obliged to deny his faith or to commit sin he has the right to disobey, suffering even death, as a sign of his love for God.

St. Clement and Origen spoke of the general (laity) priesthood's.

[Do you know that the priesthood has been given to you that is to say, to the whole church of God and to the believers? Hear Peter say to the faithful: "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, an acquired people" (1Pet. 2:9). You, then, have the priesthood since you are a priestly race, so you ought to offer to God a sacrifice of praise (Heb. 13:15), a sacrifice of prayers, a sacrifice of mercy, a sacrifice of purity, a sacrifice of sanctity²⁵].

CHURCH UNITY

St. Clement, as a churchman, looks at "unity as a natural characteristic of the Church, who is united with one God, has one Bible and one Faith. He stresses on the Church unity based on the "One Faith," asking us to avoid the heretics for they cause schism²⁶.

For St. Cyril of Alexandria, the unity of the Church is derived from "the harmony of true doctrine." One of the results of this unity is the harmony of worship that proclaims the true love of believers, acceptable to God the Father."

Origen looks at the sanctity of every member as a base for the church unity for what a member commits has its bad effects on others. He says: [A sinner tarnishes the people... He who commits a fornication or another crime, causes a strain on the whole people²⁷].

THE CHURCH BIBLE AND TRADITION²⁸

Some western writers looked to "tradition" as a blind obedience to the past, and stickfast to a passive solid deposit. In their point of view, tradition is a precise catalogue of a set of ancient doctrines, canons and rites, for it is a museum for antiquity.

The traditional church, in their view, seems to be a solid obscurant and retrograded one, attached to what is old, simply for its antiquity.

The word "tradition" in Greek, as it is mentioned in the New Testament, *Paradosis*," does not mean "imitation," but "delivering a thing and receiving it, i.e., delivering the deposit of faith and receiving it along the generations (Jude 3).

The subjects of Christian Tradition are:

1. The message of Faith in the Holy Trinity and God's redeeming deeds.
2. The deeds and words of Christ.
3. The books of the Old Testament.
4. The spiritual and ethical teachings of Jesus Christ.
5. The curriculum of worship, its concept and order.

In the apostolic age, tradition was the only source of Christian faith, doctrines and worship.

Tradition's role in the Church life of that period may be summarized in the following points:

1. The Early Church received from Christ and His apostles and disciples a new of the Old Testament, which the Jews did not acknowledge. She received the Old Testament with a new concept.
2. The Holy Scriptures in fact are a part of the Church tradition. The tradition in its essence is declaring the word of God by various methods. For tradition concentrated on the apostolic teaching.

²⁵ In Levit. hom. 9: 1.

²⁶ Stromata 7:17; Paidagogos 1:4.

²⁷ In Jos. hom. 7. PG 12: 861:244.

²⁸ Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty: Tradition and Orthodoxy, 1979.

The appearance of the books of the New Testament did not cancel the tradition, but these books command us to preserve the tradition (2 John 12; 3 John 13:14; 1 Cor. 11:34; Titus 1:5; 2Thes. 3:16; John 21:25; 2Cor. 11:23). Through tradition, Christians accepted the books of the New Testament as the inspired word of God, before the Church canonized them. Origen says: "By tradition, I knew the four Gospels, and that they are true ones."

3. In the apostolic age, tradition was the only source of Christian faith, doctrines and worship (1John 1:1; John 19:35, Luke 1:2; Acts 1:21,22). The Apostle Paul considered what he received from the Church through tradition as if received from the Lord Himself (Gal. 1:7; 1Cor. 11:23).

4. Church Tradition preserve the unity of understanding the Holy Scriptures throughout ages, so that no believer interprets them according to his own will. Origen states: "The true disciple of Jesus is He who enters the house, that is to say, the Church. He enters it, thinking as the Church does, and living as she does. This is how he understands the word. The key of the Scriptures must be received from the tradition of the Church, as from the Lord Himself."

5. By tradition, the Church practiced the active new life in Christ.

6. Christ rejected the literal Jewish tradition, which opposed the word of God (Matt. 15:3; Mark 7:13; Col 2:8). The early Church used to participate in the ministry of the Jewish temple with its hymns and Psalms. The Church accepted what was living and in accordance with the word of God. From the Jewish tradition St. Jude knew the dispute between Michael and the devil (Jude 9), and the prophecy of Enoch (Jude 14,15), and the apostle Paul knew the names of those who opposed Moses (2 Tim. 3:8), etc.

CHURCH TRADITION AND THE PRESENT LIFE

Tradition does not mean "rigidity," but giving attention to the past as a basis for the present and to the present as a basis for the future. Tradition is the mystery of church growth and vitality and not of rigidity. We have to understand tradition in its spiritual depth and theological basis and not in holdingfast its literality without understanding.

THE APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION

Our Lord Jesus Christ said to His disciples "as the Father has sent Me, I also send you... Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (John 20:21-23). Thus Christ commissions the disciples to continue His mission on earth, granting them the Holy Spirit and the power to forgive sins. These words of Christ are among the scriptural foundations of the sacrament of holy orders and repentance. Through the consecration and empowerment of the Apostles by the Lord, and through the ordination of others to continue their apostolic mission, Christ's own holy Priesthood is communicated to the bishops and priests of the Church²⁹. Christianity is a discipleship to Christ Himself through His disciples and apostles. St. Hippolytus says, "*episcopus, id est apostlus*," i.e., "the bishop is an apostle."

St. Ignatius says, "For since you are subject to the bishop as to Jesus Christ... It is therefore necessary that as you indeed do, so without the bishop you should do nothing, but should also be subject to the presbyter, as to the apostle of Jesus Christ...³⁰"

"See that you all follow the bishop, even as Jesus Christ does the Father³¹."

St. Clement of Rome says, "The apostles have preached the gospel to us from the Lord Jesus Christ... as thus preaching through countries and cities, they appointed the first-fruits (of their labors), having first proved them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons of these who should afterwards believe. Nor was thus any new thing, since. Indeed many ages before it was written concerning bishops

²⁹ *The Orthodox Study Bible, New Testament and Psalms, 1993, p. 266.*

³⁰ *Ep. to Trallians, ch.2.*

³¹ *Ep. to Smyrnaeans, ch.8. (See also Ep. to Magnesians, ch. 6.)*

and deacons. For thus says the Scripture in a certain place, “I will appoint their bishops (*overseas*) in night righteousness, and their deacons (*servants*) in faith “Isa. 60:17. LXX)³².]

St. Irenaeus says, “It is within the power of all therefore, in every Church, who may wish to see the truth, to contemplate clearly the tradition of the apostles manifested throughout the whole word. And we are in a position to reckon up those who were by the apostles instituted bishops in the Churches, and (to demonstrate) the succession of these new to our own times...³³”

St. Hippolytus of Rome says, “But we as being their (apostles) successors, and as participators in this grace, high-priesthood, and office of teaching, as well as being reputed guardians of the Church, must not be found deficient in vigilance, or disposed to suppress correct doctrines³⁴.”

The bishop is the legal successor in the unbroken chain of the Apostles successors. From this authority, the bishops used to meet in council and take decisions that preserved the Apostolic tradition of the Christian faith.

CHURCH COUNCILS AND CONCILIARITY

The full conciliar expression of the Universal Church is to be found in the meeting of the bishops of the local church. The idea of conciliarity stemmed from the concept of councils.

Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios says:

[The ancient Syro-Alexandrian tradition does not recognize a universal pastor or an ecumenical patriarch. A bishop is the bishop of the local Church as he is of the Catholic Church. The meaning of locality can be extended from a city, to a metropolitanical province or diocese, or even a whole nation, but the concept of a universal or ecumenical bishop or patriarch is not in the authentic Eastern tradition. It was a peculiar claim of the Imperial Churches of Rome and; Constantinople, which the other Churches were always reluctant to accept.

Catholics believe in the infallibility of the ecumenical councils, which follows that of the Church.

CHURCH RENEWAL AS A CONSTANT MOVEMENT³⁵

What does the Orthodox Church mean by **renewal** through her Bible and tradition?

Many Western missionaries consider themselves as the preachers of the *Renewal Movement*. In a questionnaire was presented in the consultative council between the EMEU (Evangelicals for Middle East Understanding) and the MECC (Middle East Council of Churches), under the title “The Spiritual Renewal,” they asked:

[6. Do the Middle East Christians feel a need to learn from Western spirituality?]

According to the Orthodox view renewal is a Constant Movement. Renewal in the understanding of our Church, is a constant growth and a joy in this new life.

Renewal is associated with a life of repentance,

With a life of personal worship,

With a life of communal worship, which is inflamed with the Spirit.

It is our behavior and our relationships with others.

It is an alliance with the celestial hosts and the saints.

It is witnessing to the Lord Jesus, and preoccupation with our salvation.

It is a new life constantly growing in Jesus.

Renewal is a life of experience with the Holy Trinity!

³² *First Epistle, ch. 42.*

³³ *Adv. Haer. 3:3:1.*

³⁴ *The Refutation of all Heresies, preface.*

³⁵ *Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty: The Fiery Spirit, 1997, p. 45ff.*

1. Renewal and Individualism: In our **Orthodox understanding, renewal** touches the entire aspects of life. A worshipper does not separate his personal relationship from his communal Church life. Even in the confinement of his private room, a believer should always pray in a congregational spirit. In his repentance he should support others, in his downfall he should know that he saddens and influences many! A congregation which is illuminated by the Spirit is like a furnace in which coal could be immediately inflamed, as soon as it touches the burning coal which in turn supports the censer as a whole. In the confinement of our room we carry the church with the fiery Spirit, which is in us. And in our congregational worship, we consider our salvation and spiritual maturity, saying with the apostle, “*I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified*” (1 Cor. 9:27).

2. Renewal is a Daily Exhilaration and a New Experience with the Holy Trinity: Some of the Western Christians often mention renewal as an inner individual elation with Jesus. After some tens of years a new movement arose, focusing on the illumination of the Spirit (*Charismatic Movement*). Before, they used to concentrate on Jesus Christ, but now on the work of the Holy Spirit. I ask, where is the role of the Father? It saddens my heart when the role of the Father is completely disregarded. His tender and infinite love, through which “*He gave His Only-Begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life*” (John 3:16) is neglected! Our belief in the fiery Spirit of God is inseparable from our belief in the Father and the Son, as through Him we attain the spirit of adoption, for He presents us with unity in Jesus as children of the Father. I am not intended here to discuss a theological theme.

3. Renewal and the Word of God: Renewal is the rejoicing in the word of God; it is not based on the renewal on the method of teaching, in as much as the approach to the spiritual intensity, under the guidance of the fiery Spirit. He is the One who reveals to us the Person of Jesus Christ, who is hidden behind the words, so that we may meet Him and experience His goodness. He then carries us to His Father’s bosom, so that we may rejoice in the warm of His unique Fatherhood. **Renewal** in the teaching of the word of God is a constant growth in our daily experience with God. Unlike the Philosophers who look at Him as an absolute being, asking man to worship Him and submit to Him. But God who created the world for our sake, declared His Fatherly love, by sending His Son to render us with salvation, and the Holy Spirit to carry us to the glory to partake of His kingdom. Thus we sing with David saying, “*With Your light we see Light.*”

4. Renewal and the Liturgical Life: Liturgy is a congregational worship, it is not meant for the priest and deacons only. Any Liturgy where the whole congregation does not participation, but merely the turn of listeners, is a deviation from the true function of the Liturgy. Participation of the whole congregation, young and old, emphasizes the belief of the church as one holy Body of Christ, which comprises the spirit of congregational and mutual worship.

5. Renewal and Christian Behavior: In our Orthodox Christian understanding, **life with Jesus** is a unified life. We do not separate our life into a life of private or group worship, witnessing to Christ's Gospel or dealing with others at work, either with friends, beloved people or ones who annoy us. It is one life, which is daily renewed from all aspects, and each growth should be for the general good, not in one side at the expense of the other, but all complementary to each other. Thus **church renewal** affects directly or indirectly our practical attitude under any circumstances. The most important aspect in the phase of **renewal** is for the believer to share **a life of joy** by feeling the kingdom of God within him. A true Christian would run to Jesus in time of suffering, Who will change his anguish to experiences of glory. St. Paul lived a life of joy amidst all his suffering. In his imprisonment, together with Silas, they used to glorify God at midnight “*At midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them*” (Acts 16:25).

We cannot separate the **spirit** from **love**, as you cannot test the joy of the Spirit without true love. Unlimited Love is that which is not only focused on those who love you, but rather is extended to those who are against you.

Another issue which concerns **living behavior**, is your esteem of others, whatever their status, they should always be considered as children of God, in whom you see God's image. The love of Jesus is offered to all, without exception. We can't miss, how Jesus treated children with honor and deep love, teaching us how to treat everybody.

Here we need a **renewal movement** in our relationship with all members in church, from two aspects: Firstly, the understanding of the fatherhood of the priest and the motherhood of the Church. The priest in his fatherhood role represents a living picture of God's Fatherhood. Any deviation or carelessness in his role is a distortion to God's image. As a father the priest is to be attached and dedicated, to his congregation unto death, even further for he prays on their behalf. As a father, he should feel his need of his offspring, not to satisfy his materialistic and psychological needs but rather to experience celestial life, where love is abundant. The Orthodox priest's correlation with the church is comparable to a bridegroom attached to his bride. His fidelity to his one and only love, that he never thinks to divorce her or desert her, to unite with another church, together with his devotion to his people, will open the heart of the youth to see in him the love of God! Second aspects, which compliments the first, is that it is not expedient for a priest to be authoritarian, but he should bow down, in order to carry every member on his shoulders with love to Christ. He has to be aware that he is responsible to present the spirit of creative love that never destroys his children's personalities. But rather make it grow, so that they many enjoy the spirit of leadership and skill, if possible since childhood. A fatherly priest is he who places his children as his first priority, longing to see them even more successful than himself. And being keen that everyone knows his positive role at Church. Actually that's the real concept of spiritual discipleship, meaning to develop a living leadership, begetting spiritual children who carry different talents, probably different from the priest's, but following the same spirit, without putting them in one or the same form.

RENEWAL AND THE CONCEPT OF ECUMENISM

The concept of *ecumenism* was not originated from the **renewal movement**, but it is as old as the establishment of the Apostolic Era! Since then the church has tried to preserve the nature of ecumenical church as the one Body of Christ. St. Athanasius felt that the division between churches was caused because of the difference in certain terms, he stressed that if the term held the same meaning in our intellect, we should not allow the expressions and terms to divide us!

The **concept of ecumenism** is the acceptance of the one Christian faith with earnestness and zeal. Ecumenism not at the expense of the true one faith, is not the getting together of few churches, but rather their unity in one faith, through a **living spiritual renewal of every local church**. It is our greatest desire to see the church in the whole world inflamed with the Spirit, to practice her living Bible with one heart, one spirit and one faith, enjoying the work of the Trinity in all aspects of her life.

Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty

CHAPTER 9**1. The invitations of Wisdom. (1-12)****2. The invitations of folly. (13-18)****1. The invitations of Wisdom. (1-12)**

Christ has prepared ordinances to which his people are admitted, and by which nourishment is given here to those that believe in him, as well as mansions in heaven hereafter. The ministers of the gospel go forth to invite the guests. The call is general, and shuts out none that do not shut out themselves. Our Savior came, not to call the righteous, but sinners; not the wise in their own eyes, who say they see. We must keep from the company and foolish pleasures of the ungodly, or we never can enjoy the pleasures of a holy life. It is vain to seek the company of wicked men in the hope of doing them good; we are far more likely to be corrupted by them. It is not enough to forsake the foolish, we must join those that walk in wisdom. There is no true wisdom but in the way of religion, no true life but in the end of that way. Here is the happiness of those that embrace it. A man cannot be profitable to God; it is for our own good. Observe the shame and ruin of those who slight it. God is not the Author of sin: and Satan can only tempt, he cannot force. You shalt bear the loss of that which You scornest: it will add to thy condemnation.

9:1 Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn out her seven pillars:

But we say that in the earlier part of the book, where he says that “Wisdom has built herself a house” he refers darkly in, these words to the preparation of the flesh of the Lord: for the trite Wisdom did not dwell in another’s building, but built for Itself that dwelling-place from the body of the Virgin. Here, however, he adds to his discourse that which of both is made one — of the house, I mean, and of the Wisdom which built the house, that is to say, of the Humanity and of the Divinity that was commingled with man; and to each of these he applies suitable and fitting terms, as you may see to be the case also in the Gospels, where the discourse, proceeding as befits its subject, employs the more lofty and divine phraseology to indicate the Godhead, and that which is humble and lowly to indicate the Manhood. So we may see in this passage also Solomon prophetically moved, and delivering to us in its fullness the mystery of the Incarnation. For we speak first of the eternal power and energy of Wisdom; and here the evangelist, to a certain extent, agrees with him in his very words. For as the latter in his comprehensive phrase proclaimed Him to be the cause and Maker of all things, so Solomon says that by Him were made those individual things which are included in the whole. For he tells us that God by Wisdom established the earth, and in understanding prepared the heavens, and all that follows these in order, keeping to the same sense: and that he might not seem to pass over without mention the gift of excellence in men, he again goes on to say, speaking in the person of Wisdom, the words we mentioned a little earlier; I mean, “I made counsel my dwelling-place, and knowledge, and understanding,” and all that relates to instruction in intellect and knowledge.

St. Gregory of Nyssa: Against Eunomius, 3:2.

9:1

Here certainly we perceive that the Wisdom of God, that is, the Word co-eternal with the Father, hath builded Him an house, even a human body in the virgin womb, and hath subjoined the Church to it as members to a head, hath slain the martyrs as victims, hath furnished a table with wine and bread, where appears also the priesthood after the order of Melchizedek, and hath called the simple and the void of sense, because, as saith the apostle, “He hath chosen the weak things of this world that He might confound the things which are mighty.” (1 Cor. 1:27) Yet to these weak ones she saith what follows, “Forsake simplicity, that ye may live; and seek prudence, that ye may have life.”

St. Augustine: City of God, 17:20.

9:1

Testimony of the Holy Gregory, bishop of Nyssa from his Book against Eunomius: —

“We assert therefore that when He said above that wisdom built for herself a house, he intimates by the phrase the formation of the flesh of the Lord, for the very wisdom made its home in no strange dwelling, but built itself its dwelling of the Virgin’s body.”

Of the same from the same treatise: —

“The Word was before the ages, but the flesh was made in the last times, and no one would say on the contrary either that the flesh was before the ages, or the Word made in the last times.”

Of the same from the same treatise: —

“The expression ‘created me ‘ is not to be understood of the divine and the undefiled, but, as has been said, of our created nature, according to the dispensation of the incarnation.”

Theodoret: Dialogues.

9:1

As to the honor paid to Seven there are many testimonies, but we will be content with a few out of the many. For instance, seven precious spirits are named; for I think Isaiah loves to call the activities of the Spirit spirits; and the Oracles of the Lord are purified seven times according to David, and the just is delivered from six troubles and in the seventh is not smitten. But the sinner is pardoned not seven times, but seventy times seven. And we may see it by the contrary also (for the punishment of wickedness is to be praised), Cain being avenged seven times, that is, punishment being exacted from him for his fratricide, and Lamech seventy times seven, because he was a murderer after the law and the condemnation. And wicked neighbors receive sevenfold into their bosom; and the House of Wisdom rests on seven pillars and the Stone of Zerubbabel is adorned with seven eyes; and God is praised seven times a day. And again the barren beareth seven, the perfect number, she who is contrasted with her who is imperfect in her children.”

St. Gregory Nazianzen: On Pentecost, 3.

9:1

For as we read that the Father created the mystery of the Lord’s Incarnation, the Spirit too created it; and so too we read that Christ Himself created His own Body. For the Father created it, as it is written: “The Lord created Me,” and in another place, “God sent His Son, made of a woman, made under the law.” And the Spirit created the whole mystery, according to that which we read, for “Mary was found with child of the Holy Spirit.”

You find, then, that the Father created and the Spirit created; learn, too, that the Son of God also created, when Solomon says: “Wisdom hath made herself a house.”

St. Ambrose: Of the Holy Spirit, 2:6:59, 60.

9:1

Christ, he means, the wisdom and power of God the Father, hath builded His house, i.e., His nature in the flesh derived from the Virgin, even as he(John) hath said beforetime, “The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us.” As likewise the wise prophet testifies: Wisdom that was before the world, and is the source of life, the infinite “Wisdom of God, hath builded her house” by a mother who knew no man, — to wit, as He assumed the temple of the body. “And hath raised her seven pillars;” that is, the fragrant grace of the all-holy Spirit, as Isaiah says: “And the seven spirits of God shall rest upon Him,” But others say that the seven pillars are the seven divine orders which sustain the creation by His holy and inspired teaching; to wit, me prophets, the apostles, the martyrs, the hierarchs, the hermits, the saints, and the righteous. And the phrase, “She hath killed her beasts,” denotes the prophets and martyrs who in every city and country are slain like sheep every day by the unbelieving, in behalf of the truth, and cry aloud, “For thy sake we are killed all the day long, we were counted as sheep for the slaughter.” And again, “She hath mingled her wine” in the bowl, by which is meant, that the Savior, uniting his Godhead, like pure wine, with the flesh in the Virgin, was born of her at once God and man without confusion of the one in the other. “And she hath furnished her table:” that denotes the promised knowledge of the Holy Trinity; it also refers to His honored and undefiled body and blood, which day by day are administered and offered sacrificially at the spiritual divine table, as a memorial of that first and ever-memorable table of the spiritual divine supper. And again, “She hath sent forth her servants:” Wisdom, that is to say, has done so — Christ, to wit — summoning them with lofty announcement. “Whoso is simple, Let him turn to me,” she says, alluding manifestly to the holy apostles, who traversed the whole world, and called the nations to the knowledge of Him in truth, with their lofty and divine preaching. And again, “And to those that want understanding she said” — that is, to those who have not yet obtained the power of the Holy Ghost — “Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled for you;” by which is meant, that He gave His divine flesh and honored blood to us, to eat and to drink it for the remission of sins.

From the Commentary of St. Hippolytus on Proverbs

9:1

He intends the new Jerusalem, or the sanctified flesh. By the seven pillars he means the sevenfold unity of the Holy Spirit resting upon it; as Isaiah testifies, saying, “She has slain” her “victims.”

From the Commentary of St. Hippolytus on Proverbs

9:1

Let us then consider Christ in both ways, the divine Word made one in Mary with Him which is from Mary. For in her womb the Word fashioned for Himself His house, as at the beginning He formed Adam from the earth; or rather more divinely, concerning whom Solomon too says openly, knowing that the Word was also called Wisdom, ‘Wisdom builded herself an house ;’ which the Apostle interprets when he says, ‘Which house are we ,’ and elsewhere calls us a temple, as far as it is fitting to God to inhabit a temple, of which the image, made of stones, He by Solomon commanded the ancient people to build; whence, on the appearance of the Truth, the image ceased.

St. Athanasius of Alexandria: Four Discourses Against the Arians, 4:34.

9:1-5

Those, however, who receive the representations of Scripture according to the understanding of the apostles, entertain the hope that the saints will eat indeed, but that it will be the bread of life, which may nourish the soul with the food of truth and wisdom, and enlighten the mind, and cause it to drink from the cup of divine wisdom, according to the declaration of holy Scripture.

Origen: De Principiis 2:11:3.

9:1-5

Moreover the Holy Spirit by Solomon shows before the type of the Lord’s sacrifice, making mention of the immolated victim, and of the bread and wine, and, moreover, of the altar and of the apostles, and says, “Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath underlaid her seven pillars; she hath killed her victims; she hath mingled her wine in the chalice; she hath also furnished her table: and she hath sent forth her servants, calling together with a lofty announcement to her cup, saying, Whoso is simple, let him turn to me; and to those that want understanding she hath said, Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled for you.” He declares the wine mingled, that is, he foretells with prophetic voice the cup of the Lord mingled with water and wine, that it may appear that that was done in our Lord’s passion which had been before predicted.

St. Cyprian: Epistle Lxii To Caecilius, On The Sacrament Of The Cup Of The Lord, 5.

9:2 She hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table.

9:3 She hath sent forth her maidens: she cries upon the highest places of the city,

It is a custom to the present day, in Asiatic countries, to send their invitations to guests by a company of females, preceded by eunuchs: they go to the doors of the invited, and deliver their message.

9:4 Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wants understanding, she saith to him,

9:5

For no one shall partake of the spiritual table, but one who is called by Him, and who has listened to the wisdom which says, “Take and eat.”

St. Dionysius the Great: Extant Fragments, ANF, p. 114.

9:5 Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled.

Among the ancient Jews, Greek, and Romans, wine was rarely drunk without being mingled with water; and among ancient writers we find several ordinances for this. Some direct three parts of water to one of wine; some five parts; and Pliny mentions some wines that required twenty waters: but the most common proportions appear to have been three parts of water to two of wine. The masach, mingled wine, was wine mingled, not with water, to make it weaker; but with spices and other ingredients to make it stronger. The ingredients were honey, myrrh, mandragora, opium, and such like, which gave it not only an intoxicating but stupifying quality also. Perhaps the mixed wine here may mean wine of the strongest and best quality, that which was good to cheer and refresh the heart of man.

9:6 Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding.

9:7 He that reproves a scorner gets to himself shame: and he that rebukes a wicked man gets himself a blot.

9:8 Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate you: rebuke a wise man, and he will love you.

9:8

Or was it for this reason that no one, even of such as these, dared to profess himself a wise man, — because they (the philosophers) imagined that a wise man was one without sin? But our Scriptures do not say this, which say, “Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.” For doubtless he who thinks a man ought to be rebuked, judges him to have sin. However, for my part, I dare not profess myself a wise man even in this sense; it is enough for me to assume, what they themselves cannot deny, that to dispute of wisdom belongs also to the philosopher, i.e., the lover of wisdom. For they have not given over so disputing who have professed to be lovers of wisdom rather than wise men.

St. Augustine: On the Trinity, 14:1:2

9:9 Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.

Verse 9. Give instruction to a wise man — Literally give to the wise, and he will be wise. Whatever you give to such, they reap profit from it. They are like the bee, they extract honey from every flower.

We might proceed to all the other points, but then the discussion would become too long, and its extent too great. We will therefore desist from proceeding farther, and leave it to you to take in hand the rest, for it is in your power at home to put these things together, and examine their difference, and in the same way to go over what remains. “Give,” saith one, “a starting place to the wise, and he becometh wiser.” (Proverbs 9:9, LXX.) The beginning is from us, but the end will be from you. We must now resume the connection.

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on St. John, 14.

9:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.

Verse 10. The fear of the Lord — See on chap. 1:7. The knowledge of the holy; **μῦ dq** kedoshim, of the holy ones: Sanctorum, of the saints. —

Vulgate. bough agiwn, the counsel of the holy persons.

9:10

PHILOSOPHERS HAD NOT SUCCEEDED! IN DISCOVERING GOD. THE UNCERTAINTY AND CONFUSION OF THEIR SPECULATIONS...

Now what wise man is so devoid of truth, as not to know that God is the Father and Lord of wisdom itself and truth? Besides, there is that divine oracle uttered by Solomon: “The fear of the Lord,” says he, “is the beginning of wisdom.” But fear has its origin in knowledge; for how will a man fear that of which he knows nothing? Therefore he who shall have the fear of God, even if he be ignorant of all things else, if he has attained to the knowledge and truth of God, will possess full and perfect wisdom. This, however, is what philosophy has not clearly realized.

Tertullian: Ad Nationes, Book 2:2

9:10

“THE beginning” of our salvation and the safeguard of it is, as I said, “the fear of the Lord.” For through this those who are trained in the way of perfection can gain a start in, conversion as well as purification from vices and security in virtue. And when this has gained an entrance into a man’s heart it produces contempt of all things, and begets a forgetfulness of kinsfolk and an horror of the world itself. But by the contempt for the loss of all possessions humility is gained.

St. John Cassian: The Institutes, book 4, 39.

9:11 For by me your days shall be multiplied, and the years of your life shall be increased.

Verse 11. For by me thy days shall be multiplied — Vice shortens human life, by a necessity of consequence: and by the same, righteousness lengthens it. There is a long addition here in the Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate: “He who trusts in falsity feeds on the winds; and is like him who chases the fowls of heaven. He forsakes the way of his own vineyard, and errs from the paths of his own inheritance. He enters also into lonely and desert places, and into a land abandoned to thirst; and his hands collect that which yields no fruit.”

9:11

The divine Instructor enjoins us not to approach to another’s river, meaning by the figurative expression “another’s river,” “another’s wife;” the wanton that flows to all, and out of licentiousness gives herself up to meretricious enjoyment with all. “Abstain from water that is another’s,” He says, “and drink not of another’s well,” admonishing us to shun the stream of “voluptuousness,” that we may live long, and that years of life may be added to us; both by not hunting after pleasure that belongs to another, and by diverting our inclinations.

St. Clement of Alexandria: Instructor 3:2.

9:12 If you be wise, you shalt be wise for thyself: but if you scornest, you alone shalt bear it.

Verse 12. If You be wise — It is thy own interest to be religious. Yough thy example may be very useful to thy neighbors and friends, yet the chief benefit is to thyself. But if You scorn-refuse to receive-the doctrines of wisdom, and die in thy sins, You alone shalt suffer the vengeance of an offended God.

9:12

The wise man gives counsel to others, as the upright man does, and shares with him in wearing the form of either virtue.

St. Ambrose: Duties of the Clergy, 3:2 (14).

9:12

Observe that the wise man must be useful to many; so that he who is useful only to himself cannot be wise. For great is the condemnation of wisdom if she reserves her power simply for the one possessing her. But as poison is not injurious to another body, but only to that one which takes it, so also the man who turns out wicked will injure himself, and not another. For no man of real virtue is injured by a wicked man.

From the Commentary of St. Hippolytus on Proverbs

9:12

For they themselves also “follow flying birds,” since they do not attain to what they desire. But not only the heretic, but everyone who leads an evil life “deserteth the ways of his own vineyard, and hath strayed from the paths of his own field. And he walketh through pathless and dry places, and a land destined to thirst; and he gathereth fruitless weeds in his hands;” because all justice is fruitful, and all iniquity is barren. Those, again, who “drink strange water out of a strange fountain,” are found not only among heretics, but among all who do not live according to the teaching of God, and do live according to the teaching of the devil.

St. Augustine: On Baptism, Against the Donatists, 6:12:19.

9:12 LXX

And before hell too, we shall here suffer the utmost ills. “For if You be evil,” it is said, “You alone shalt endure the evil; but if good, it is for thyself and for thy neighbor.” Mark, at any rate, how this took place in the former instances also.

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on Matthew, 62:5.

9:12

The Devil is wicked; I grant this indeed, but he is wicked for himself not towards us if we are wary. For the nature of wickedness is of this kind. It is destructive to those alone who hold to it. Virtue is the contrary. It is not only able to profit those who hold to it, but those nearest at hand too. And in order that You mayest learn that evil is evil in itself, but good is also good to others, I provide thee with proverbial evidence: “My son” saith he “if You art become evil, You shall bear thine evils alone, but if wise, for thyself and thy neighbor.”

St. John Chrysostom: Resisting the Temptation of the Devil, 3:1.

On the contrary, the wicked man strikes himself first, and none other than himself. “For alone,” it is said, “shall he bear his troubles.” (Proverbs 9:12.) Ever in him the soul is full of dejection, his Youghts being ever entangled: whether he must hear aught or say aught, he does all with complaints, with accusation. Far, very far from such do friendship and harmony make their abode: but fightings are there, and enmities, and all unpleasantness.

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on Acts, 7.

9:12 LXX

Nemesianus of Thubunae said: That the baptism which heretics and schismatics bestow is not the true one, is everywhere declared in the Holy Scriptures, since their very leading men are false Christs and false prophets, as the Lord says by Solomon: “He who trusteth in that which is false, he feedeth the winds; and the very same, moreover, followeth the flight of birds. For he forsaketh the ways of his own vineyard, he has wandered from the paths of his own little field. But he walketh through pathless places, and dry, and a land destined for thirst; moreover, he gathereth together fruitless things in his hands.” And again: “Abstain from strange water, and from the fountain of another do not drink, that you may live a long time; also that the years of life may be added to thee.” [19]. And in the Gospel our Lord Jesus Christ spoke with His divine voice, saying, “Except a man be born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” (John 3:5).

The Seventh Council Of Carthage Under Cyprian Concerning The Baptism Of Heretics.

2. The invitations of folly. (13-18)

How diligent the tempter is, to seduce unwary souls into sin! Carnal, sensual pleasure, stupefies conscience, and puts out the sparks of conviction. This tempter has no solid reason to offer; and where she gets dominion in a soul, all knowledge of holy things is lost and forgotten. She is very violent and pressing. We need to seek and pray for true wisdom, for Satan has many ways to withdraw our souls from Christ. Not only worldly lusts and abandoned seducers prove fatal to the souls of men; but false teachers, with doctrines that flatter pride and give liberty to lusts, destroy Yousands. They especially draw off such as have received only partial serious impressions. The depths of Satan are depths of hell; and sin, wiYout remorse, is ruin, ruin wiYout remedy. Solomon shows the hook; those that believe him, will not meddle with the bait. Behold the wretched, empty, unsatisfying, deceitful,

and stolen pleasure sin proposes; and may our souls be so desirous of the everlasting enjoyment of Christ, that on earth we may live to him, daily, by faith, and ere long be with him in glory.

9:13-18

But says the Instructor: "Hie away, and tarry not in the place; nor fix thine eye on her: for thus shalt You pass over a strange water, and cross to Acheron." Wherefore thus saith the Lord by Isaiah, "Because the daughters of Sion walk with lofty neck, and with winkings of the eyes, and sweeping their garments as they walk, and playing with their-feet; the Lord shall humble the daughters of Sion, and will uncover their form" — their deformed form. I, deem it wrong that servant girls, who follow women of high rank, should either speak or act unbecomingly to them. But I think it right that they should be corrected by their mistresses.

St. Clement of Alexandria: Instructor 3:11.

9:13 A foolish woman is clamorous: she is simple, and knows nothing.

Verse 13. A foolish woman is clamorous — Vain, empty women, are those that make most noise. And she that is full of clamor, has generally little or no sense. We have had this character already, see chap. 7:11. The translation of the Septuagint is very remarkable: gunh afrwn kai yrasedia, endehv qwmou ginetai, "A lewd and foolish woman shall be in need of a morsel of bread."

9:13

You wert more inward to me than my most inward part; and higher than my highest. I came upon that bold woman, who "is simple, and knoweth nothing," the enigma of Solomon, sitting "at the door of the house on a seat," and saying, "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." This woman seduced me, because she found my soul beyond its portals, dwelling in the eye of my flesh, and thinking on such food as through it I had devoured.

St. Augustine: Confession, 3:6 (11).

9:14 For she sitteth at the door of her house, on a seat in the high places of the city,

Verse 14. For she sitteth at the door of her house — Her conduct here marks at once her folly, impudence, and poverty. See above on chap. 7:6, etc., where the reader will find a similar character.

9:15 To call passengers who go right on their ways:

9:16 Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: and as for him that wants understanding, she saith to him,

Verse 16. Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither — FOLLY or PLEASURE here personified, uses the very same expressions as employed by Wisdom, ver. 4. Wisdom says, "Let the simple turn in to me." No, says Folly, "Let the simple turn in to me." If he turn in to Wisdom, his folly shall be taken away and he shall become wise; if he turn in to Folly, his darkness will be thickened, and his folly will remain.

Wisdom sets up her school to instruct the ignorant:

Folly sets her school up next door, to defeat the designs of Wisdom.

Thus the saying of the satirist appears to be verified: —

"Wherever God erects a house of prayer, The devil surely builds a chapel there. And it is found upon examination, The latter has the larger congregation."

9:17 Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.

Verse 17. Stolen waters are sweet — I suppose this to be a proverbial mode of expression, importing that illicit pleasures are sweeter than those which are legal The meaning is easy to be discerned; and the conduct of 1725 multitudes shows that they are ruled by this adage. On it are built all the adulterous intercourses in the land.

9:17

For sin has her own special bread, of her death, and calling to those who are lovers of pleasure and lack understanding, she saith, 'Touch with delight secret bread, and sweet waters which are stolen ;' for he who merely touches them knows not that that which is born from the earth perishes with her. For even when the sinner thinks to find pleasure, the end of that food is not pleasant, as the Wisdom of God saith again, 'Bread of deceit is pleasant to a man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel .' And, 'Honey droppeth from the lips of a whorish woman, which for a time is sweet to thy palate; but at the last You shalt find it more bitter than gall, and sharper than a two-edged sword .' Thus then he eats and rejoices for a little time; afterwards he spurneth it when he hath removed his soul afar. For the fool knoweth not that those who depart far from God shall perish. And besides, there is the restraint of the prophetic admonition which says,

9:17

Sinners indeed thirst, but not for the grace of the Spirit; but being inflamed with wickedness, they are wholly set on fire by pleasures, as saith the Proverb, 'All day long he desires evil desires.' But the Prophet cries against them, saying, 'Who unto those who rise up early, and follow strong drink; who continue until the evening, for wine inflameth them.' (Prov. 21:26; Isa. 5:11). And since they run wild in wantonness, they dare to thirst for the destruction of others. Having first drunk of lying and unfaithful waters, those things have come upon them, which are stated by the Prophet; 'My wound,' saith he, 'is grievous, whence shall I be healed; it hath surely been to me like deceitful waters, in which there is no trust.' (Jer. 15:18). Secondly, while they drink with their companions, they lead astray and disturb the right mind, and turn away the simple from it. And what does he cry? 'Woe unto him who causeth his neighbor to drink turbid destruction, and maketh him drunk, that he may look upon his caverns.' (Hab. 2:15 LXX). But those who dissemble, and steal away the truth, quench their hearts. Having first drunk of these things, they go on to say those things which the whore saith in the Proverbs, 'Lay hold with delight on hidden bread, and sweet stolen waters.' They lay snares secretly, because they have not the freedom of virtue, nor the boldness of Wisdom, who praises herself in the gates, and employs freedom of speech in the broad ways, preaching on high walls.

St. Athanasius of Alexandria: Paschal Letters, 20:2

'What have You to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Gihon? And what have You to do in the way of Asshur, to drink the waters of the rivers ?' (Jer. 2:18). And the Wisdom of God which loves mankind forbids these things, crying, 'But depart quickly, tarry not in the place, neither fix thine eye upon it; for thus You shalt pass over strange waters, and depart quickly from the strange river .' She also calls them to herself,

St. Athanasius of Alexandria: Paschal Letters, 6:11.

9:18 But he knows not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell.

Verse 18. But he knoweth not that the dead are there — See on chap. 2:18. He does not know that it was in this way the first apostates from God and truth walked. **uyapr** rephaim; gigantev, the GIANTS. — Septuagint. The sons of men, the earth-born, to distinguish them from the sons of God, those who were born from above. See the notes on Genesis 6:1, etc.

Her guests are in the depths of hell. — Those who have been drawn out of the way of understanding by profligacy have in general lost their lives, if not their souls, by their folly. The Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic make a long addition to this verse: "But draw You back, that You mayest not die in this place; neither fix thy eyes upon her; so shalt You pass by those strange waters. But abstain You from strange waters, and drink not of another's fountain, that You mayest live a long time, and that years may be added to thy life." Of this addition there is nothing in the Hebrew, the Chaldee, or the Vulgate, as now printed: but in the editio princeps are the following words: Qui enim applicabitur illi descendet ad inferos; nam qui abscesserit ab ea salvabitur. These words were in the copy from which my old MS. Bible has been made, as the following version proves: "Who forsooth schal ben joynd to hir, schal falle down on to hell: for whi he that goth awai fro hir, schal be saved. Three of my own MSS. have the same reading.

9:18 LXX

This Spirit is denoted by the Lord under the name of water: and we have heard from this epistle, "Believe not every spirit;" and those words of Solomon bear witness, "From strange water keep thee far."

St. Augustine: On the Epistle of St. John, hom. 6:11.

9:18

"But go forth," says he, "do not linger in her place, nor fix thine eye on her;" lest if the angels see us taken up with unclean and foul Youghts, they may not be able to say to us in passing by: "The blessing of the Lord be upon you." (Ps. 128:8). For it is impossible for the soul to continue in good Youghts, when the main part of the heart is taken up with foul and earthly considerations. For this saying of Solomon's is true: "When thine eyes look on a strange woman, then shall thy mouth speak wickedly, and You shalt lie as it were in the midst of the sea, and as a pilot in a great storm. But You shalt say: They have beaten me, but I felt no pain; and they mocked me, but I felt not." (Prov. 23:33-35).

St. John Cassian: Conference 20:9.

9:19

And again, sacred Scripture warns, and says, "Keep thee from the strange water, and drink not from a fountain of strange water." It is required, then, that the water should first be cleansed and sanctified by the priest, that it may

wash away by its baptism the sins of the man who is baptized; because the Lord says by Ezekiel the prophet: “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be cleansed from all your filthiness; and from all your idols will I cleanse you: a new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.” (Ezek. 36:25,26). But how can he cleanse and sanctify the water who is himself unclean, and in whom the Holy Spirit is not? since the Lord says in the book of Numbers, “And whatsoever the unclean person toucheth shall be unclean.” (Numbers 19:2). Or how can he who baptizes give to another remission of sins who himself, being outside the Church, cannot put away his own sins?

St. Cyprian: Epistle Lxix To Januarius And Other Numidian Bishops, On Baptizing Heretics

9:19 LXX What, then, is to be made of what is written, “Abstain from strange water, and drink not from a strange fountain,” if, leaving the sealed fountain of the Church, you take up strange water for your own, and pollute the Church with unhallowed fountains? For when you communicate with the baptism of heretics, what else do you do than drink from their slough and mud; and while you yourself are purged with the Church’s sanctification, you become befouled with the contact of the filth of others? And do you not fear the judgement of God when you are giving testimony to heretics in opposition to the Church, although it is written, “A false witness shall not be unpunished?” (Prov. 19:50).

Epistle Lxxiv: Firmilian, Bishop Of Caesurae In Cappadocia, To Cyprian, Against The Letter Of Stephen. AD 256., 23.

9:22

Accordingly it is added: “For he hath forsaken the ways of his own vineyard, and wandered in the tracks of his own husbandry.” Such are the sects which deserted the primitive Church. Now he who has fallen into heresy passes through an arid wilderness, abandoning the only true God, destitute of God, seeking waterless water, reaching an uninhabited and thirsty land, collecting sterility with his hands. And those destitute of prudence, that is, those involved in heresies, “I enjoin,” remarks Wisdom, saying, “Touch sweetly stolen bread and the sweet water of theft;” the Scripture manifestly applying the terms bread and water to nothing else but to those heresies, which employ bread and water in the oblation, not according to the canon of the Church.

St. Clement of Alexandria: Stromata 1:20.

CHAPTER 10

The head of the just man will be crowned with the blessings both of God and man, and they shall leave behind them blessed memories. The wicked man's ways will turn out to be his shame and when his body is in the grave, his name will be spoken only with contempt.

It is impossible to give summaries of such chapters as these, where almost every verse contains a separate subject. Our common version not being able to exhibit the contents as usual, simply says, "From this chapter to the five and twentieth are sundry observations upon moral virtues, and their opposite vices." In general the wise man states in this chapter the difference between the wise and the foolish, the righteous and the wicked, the diligent and the idle. He speaks also of love and hatred, of the good and the evil tongue, or of the slanderer and the peace-maker.

10:1 *The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son makes a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.*

Some ancient MSS. of the Vulgate have "The second book of the Proverbs." The preceding nine chapters can only be considered as an introduction, if indeed they may be said to make even a part, of the proverbs of Solomon, which appear to commence only at the tenth chapter.

A wise son maketh a glad father.

10:2 *Treasures of wickedness profit nothing: but righteousness delivers from death.*

10:3 *The LORD will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish: but he casts away the substance of the wicked.*

Though the righteous may be poor, the Lord will not suffer him to want what is needful for spiritual life.

The righteous have God for their feeder; and because of his infinite bounty, they can never famish for want of the bread of life. On the contrary, the wicked are often, in the course of his providence, deprived of the property of which they make a bad use.

10:3

For daily bread cannot be wanting to the righteous man, since it is written, "The Lord will not slay the soul of the righteous by hunger; " and again "I have been young and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread (Ps. 37:25)". And the Lord moreover promises and says, "Take no Yought, saying, "What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the nations seek. And your Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." To those who seek God's kingdom and righteousness, He promises that all things shall be added. For since all things are God's, nothing will be wanting to him who possesses God, if God Himself be not wanting to him. Thus a meal was divinely provided for Daniel: when he was shut up by the king's command in the den of lions, and in the midst of wild beasts who were hungry, and yet spared him, the man of God was fed. Thus Elijah in his flight was nourished both by ravens ministering to him in his solitude, and by birds bringing him food in his persecution. And — oh detestable cruelty of the malice of man! — the wild beasts spare, the birds feed, while men lay snares, and rage!

St. Cyprian: Treatise Iv On The Lord's Prayer, 21.

10:3

Are you afraid that your patrimony perchance may fall short, if you should begin to do liberally from it? Yet when has it ever happened that resources could fail the righteous man, since it is written, "The Lord will not slay with famine the righteous soul?" Elias in the desert is fed by the ministry of ravens; and a meal from heaven is made ready for Daniel in the den, when shut up by the king's command for a prey to the lions; and you are afraid that food should be wanting to you... The Lord Himself in the Gospel bears witness, for the rebuke of those whose mind is doubtful and faith small, and says: "Behold the fowls of heaven, that they sow not, nor reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them: are you not of more value than they?" (Matt. 5:26) God feeds the fowls, and daily food is afforded to the sparrows; and to creatures which have no sense of things divine there is no want of drink or food. Thinkest You that to a Christian — thinkest You that to a servant of the Lord — thinkest You that to one given up to good works — thinkest You that to one that is dear to his Lord, anything will be wanting?

St. Cyprian: Treatise Viii On Works And Alms, 11.

10:4 *He becomes poor that deals with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent makes rich.*

“Poverty” (it is said) “humbles a man.” (**Proverbs 10:4, LXX.**) And again Christ [says], “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” (Matthew 5:3) Dost You then grieve because You art upon a path leading to virtue? Dost You not know that this gives us great confidence?

St. John Chrysostom: *Homilies on Hebrews, 13.*

10:4

“Poverty,” it is said, “humbles a man.” By poverty is meant that niggardliness by which the rich are poor, having nothing to give away.

St. Clement of Alexandria: *Instructor 3:4.*

10:4

Manly He calls those who despise wealth, and are free in bestowing it.

St. Clement of Alexandria: *Instructor 2:13.*

10:5 He that gathers in summer is a wise son: but he that sleeps in harvest is a son that causes shame.

Here is just blame of those who trifle away opportunities, both for here and for hereafter.

If summer and harvest be neglected, in vain does a man expect the fruits of autumn.

10:6 Blessings are upon the head of the just: but violence covers the mouth of the wicked.

10:7 The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot.

Both the just and the wicked must die; but between their souls there is a vast difference.

Verse 7. The memory of the just is blessed — Or, is a blessing.

But the name of the wicked shall rot. — This is another antithesis; but there are only two antithetic terms, for memory and name are synonymous. — Lowth. The very name of the wicked is as offensive as putrid carrion.

10:7 LXX

But even in my tears and admiration I must respect the law which regards such matters: nor is this alien to our philosophy; for he says The memory of the just is accompanied with eulogies, and also, Let tears fall down over the dead, and begin to lament, as if You hadst suffered great harm thyself: removing us equally from insensibility and immoderation.

St. Gregory Nazianzen: *Panegyric of His Brother St. Caesarius, 1*

10:8 The wise in heart will receive commandments: but a prating fool shall fall.

The wise in heart puts his knowledge in practice.

the shallow blabbing fool shall be cast down..

“Blessed is every simple soul,” and, “he that walketh simply walketh surely.” (**Proverbs 10:8**) For this is the cause of all sorts of evil, that the many do not know how to apply rightly even the testimony of the Scriptures. Thus in this place, the writer does not mean (by “simple”) the man who is foolish, or who knows nothing, but him who is free from wickedness, who is no evil-doer, who is wise.

St. John Chrysostom: *Homilies on St. John, 17.*

10:9 He that walks uprightly walks surely: but he that perverts his ways shall be known.

The upright man is always safe; he has not two characters to support; he goes straight forward, and is never afraid of detection, because he has never been influenced by hypocrisy or deceit.

Was it not to shepherds that the Gospel was first preached? and to Joseph, being a man of simple mind, insomuch that he did not let a suspicion of adultery frighten him into doing wrong? Did not God elect rustics, those artless men? For it is written, “Blessed is every simple soul.” (Proverbs 11:25.) And again, “He that walketh simply, walketh surely.” (**Proverbs 10:9.**) “True,” you will say, “but prudence also is needed.” Why, what is simplicity, I pray you, but prudence? For when you suspect no evil, neither can you fabricate any: when you have no annoyances, neither can you remember injuries.

St. John Chrysostom: *Homilies on Acts, 7.*

10:9

Let the insincere hear what is written, He that walketh in simplicity walketh surely (Proverbs 10:9). For indeed simplicity of conduct is an assurance of great security. Let them hear what is said by the mouth of the wise man, The Holy Spirit of discipline will flee deceit (Wisdom 1:5). Let them hear what is again affirmed by the witness of Scripture, His communing is with the simple (Proverbs 3:32). For God’s communing is His revealing of secrets to human minds by the illumination of His presence. He is therefore said to commune with the simple, because He illuminates with the ray of His visitation concerning supernal mysteries the minds of those whom no shade of duplicity obscures.

Fr. Gregory (the Great), *Pastoral Rule*, 11.

10:10 He that winks with the eye causes sorrow: but a prating fool shall fall.

Instead of the latter clause, on which see ver. 8, the Septuagint has, ο de elegcwn meta parrhsiaiv eirhnopoieiū “but he that reproveth with freedom, maketh peace.” This is also the reading of the Syriac and Arabic. A faithful open reproving of sin is more likely to promote the peace of society than the passing it by slightly, or taking no notice of it; for if the wicked turn to God at the reproof, the law of peace will soon be established in his heart, and the law of kindness will flow from his tongue.

10:10

But languishing looks, and ogling, which is to wink with the eyes, is nothing else than to commit adultery with the eyes, lust skirmishing through them. For of the whole body, the eyes are first destroyed. “The eye contemplating beautiful objects (kala>), gladdens the heart;” that is, the eye which has learned rightly (kalw~v) to see, gladdens. “Winking with the eye, with guile, heaps woes on men.” Such they introduce the effeminate Sardanapalus, king of the Assyrians, sitting on a couch with his legs up, fumbling at his purple robe, and casting up the whites of his eyes. Women that follow such practices, by their looks offer themselves for prostitution. “For the light of the body is the eye,” says the Scripture, by which the interior illuminated by the shining light appears. Fornication in a woman is in the raising of the eyes (Ecclus. 26:9).

St. Clement of Alexandria: *Instructor* 3:11.

10:11 The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life: but violence covers the mouth of the wicked.

The good man’s mouth is always open to teach, comfort, and correct others.

mekor chayim, is the vein of lives; an allusion to the great aorta, which conveys the blood from the heart to every art of the body. The latter clause of this verse is the same with that of ver. 6.

10:12 Hatred stirs up strifes: but love covers all sins.

It seeks for occasions to provoke enmity. It delights in broils. On the contrary, love conciliates; removes aggravations; puts the best construction on every thing; and pours water, not oil, upon the flame.

10:12

On what grounds a dispute can arise among spiritual persons

FOR as our enemy separates brethren who are still weak and carnal by a sudden burst of rage on account of some trifling and earthly matter, so he sows the seeds of discord even between spiritual persons, on the ground of some difference of Youghts, from which certainly those contentions and strifes about words, which the Apostle condemns, for the most part arise: whereby consequently our spiteful and malignant enemy sows discord between brethren who were of one mind. For these words of wise Solomon are true: “Contention breeds hatred: but friendship will be a defense to all who do not strive.”

St. John Cassian: *Conference* 16:8.

10:13 In the lips of him that hath understanding wisdom is found: but a rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding.

Those that foolishly go on in wicked ways, prepare rods for themselves.

He that can learn, and will not learn, should be made to learn. The rod is a most powerful instrument of knowledge. Judiciously applied, there is a lesson of profound wisdom in every twig.

10:14 Wise men lay up knowledge: but the mouth of the foolish is near destruction.

Whatever knowledge may be useful, we must lay it up, that it may not be to seek when we want it. The wise gain this wisdom by reading, by hearing the word, by meditation, by prayer, by faith in Christ, who is made of God unto us wisdom.

They keep secret every thing that has a tendency to disturb domestic or public peace; but the foolish man blabs all out, and produces much mischief. Think much, speak little, and always think before you speak. This will promote your own peace and that of your neighbor.

10:15 The rich man’s wealth is his strong city: the destruction of the poor is their poverty.

10:16 The labor of the righteous tends to life: the fruit of the wicked to sin.

The good man labors that he may be able to support life; this is his first object: and then to have something to divide with the poor; this is his next object.

The fruit of the wicked to sin. — This man lives to eat and drink, and his property he spends in riot and excess. God’s blessings are cursed to him.

10:17 He is in the way of life that keeps instruction: but he that refuses reproof errs.

The traveler that has missed his way, and cannot bear to be told of it, and to be shown the right way, must err still. The truly religious man accumulates knowledge that he may the better know how to live to God, and do most good among men.

10:18 He that hides hatred with lying lips, and he that utters a slander, is a fool.

He is especially a fool who thinks to hide anything from God; and malice is no better.

This is a common case. How many, when full of resentment, and deadly hatred, meditating revenge and cruelty, and sometimes even murder, have pretended that they Yought nothing of the injury they had sustained; had passed by the insult, etc.! Thus lying lips covered the malevolence of a wicked heart.

10:19 In the multitude of words there wants not sin: but he that refrains his lips is wise.

Those that speak much, speak much amiss. He that checks himself is a wise man, and therein consults his own peace.

It is impossible to speak much, and yet speak nothing but truth; and injure no man's character in the mean while.

10:19

“For in the multitude of words there wanteth not transgression.” If indeed then You have anything useful to say, open thy lips. But if there be nothing necessary for thee to say, be silent, for it is better.

St. John Chrysostom: Instructions to Catechumens, 2:4.

10:19

The virtue of silence, especially in Church, is very great. Let no sentence of the divine lessons escape you; if you give ear, restrain your voice, utter no word with your lips which you would wish to recall, but let your boldness to speak be sparing. For in truth in much speaking there is abundance of sin.

St. Ambrose: Concerning Virgins, 3:3,11.

10:20 The tongue of the just is as choice silver: the heart of the wicked is little worth.

10:20

“For the oracles of the Lord are pure oracles, melted in the fire, tried in the earth, purified seven times” (Ps. 12:6). Just as silver often purified, so is the just man brought to the test, becoming the Lord's coin and receiving the royal image. Or, since Solomon also calls the “tongue of the righteous man gold that has been subjected to fire,” (Prov. 10:20) intimating that the doctrine which has been proved, and is wise, is to be praised and received, whenever it is amply tried by the earth: that is, when the gnostic soul is in manifold ways sanctified, through withdrawal from earthy fires.

St. Clement of Alexandria: Stromata 6:7.

10:21 The lips of the righteous feed many: but fools die for want of wisdom.

The Dangerous Tongue [18-21

Jesus' brother James recognized this destructive pattern in the early church. He realized how easy it can be to blurt out comments without weighing the value of what is said, and he warned first-century Christians about lack of restraint when it comes to the tongue:

- He urged them to be quick to listen but slow to speak (James 1:19).
- He cautioned them not to think themselves religious if they could not control what they said (1:26).
- He told them not to claim to have faith unless their deeds matched their words (2:14-24).
- He wanted them to understand that the tongue boasts great things despite its tiny size (3:5).
- He warned them that the tongue is “afire, a world of iniquity” (3:6), “an unruly evil, full of deadly poison” (3:8), and a fountain of grumbling (5:9).
- He pointed out that speech can be an unpredictable source of either blessing or cursing, like a spring that gives either fresh water or bitter, or a fig tree that bears olives, or a grapeving that bears figs (3:10-12).
- He noted that some were using as a means of maligning one another (4:11).
- He challenged believers about making promises and oaths that were inconsistent (5:12).

10:22 The blessing of the LORD, it makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it.

10:23 It is as sport to a fool to do mischief: but a man of understanding has wisdom.

10:24 The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him: but the desire of the righteous shall be granted.

The largest desire of eternal blessings the righteous can form, will be granted.

The wicked is full of fears and alarms; and all that he has dreaded and more than he has dreaded, shall come upon him. The righteous is always desiring more of the salvation of God, and God will exceed even his utmost desires.

10:25 As the whirlwind passes, so is the wicked no more: but the righteous is an everlasting foundation.

The course of prosperous sinners is like a whirlwind, which soon spends itself, and is gone.

Verse 25. As the whirlwind passeth — As tornadoes that sweep every thing away before them; so shall the wrath of God sweep away the wicked; it shall leave him neither branch nor root. But the righteous, being built on the eternal foundation, **mlw[dwsy** yesod olam, shall never be shaken.

10:26 As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him.

10:26

Is then unrighteousness eaten? . . . Unrighteousness eaten? It is not I that say: hear the Scripture: “As a sour grape is vexation to the teeth, and smoke to the eyes, so is unrighteousness to them that use it.” For he that shall have eaten unrighteousness, that is, he that shall have had unrighteousness willfully, shall not be able to eat righteousness. For righteousness is bread. Who is bread? “I am the living bread which came down from heaven.” Himself is the bread of our heart... Is then even righteousness eaten? If it were not eaten, the Lord would not have said, “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness.”

St. Augustine: On the Psalms, 49(Second Part):7.

10:27 The fear of the LORD prolongs days: but the years of the wicked shall be shortened.

10:28 The hope of the righteous shall be gladness: but the expectation of the wicked shall perish.

10:29 The way of the LORD is strength to the upright: but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity.

Verse 29. The way of the Lord is strength — In the path of obedience the upright man ever finds his strength renewed; the more he labors the stronger he grows.

10:30 The righteous shall never be removed: but the wicked shall not inhabit the earth.

The wicked would be glad to have this earth their home for ever, but it cannot be so.

The righteous is built on the eternal foundation.

10:31 The mouth of the just brings forth wisdom: but the froward tongue shall be cut out.

10:32 The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable: but the mouth of the wicked speaks frowardness.

Verse 32. The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable — And what they believe to be most pleasing and most profitable, that they speak, but the wicked man knows as well what is perverse, and that he speaks forth. As the love of God is not in his heart, so the law of kindness is not on his lips.

CHAPTER 11

The ways of righteousness are plain and safe and in them we may enjoy a holy security. The ways of wickedness are dangerous and those who indulge themselves in sin are fitting themselves for destruction. A parallel of the advantages of the righteous and wise, opposed to the miseries of the wicked and the foolish. True and false riches.

11:1 *A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight.*

This refers to the balance itself deceitfully constructed, so that it is sooner turned at one end than at the other. This is occasioned by one end of the beam being longer than the other.

the perfect stone probably because weights were first made of stone; see the law, Deuteronomy 25:13-35.

11:1; 20:10

Every kind of unfair action is shameful. Even in common things, false weights and unjust measures are accursed. And if fraud in the market or in business is punished, can it seem free from reproach if found in the midst of the performance of the St. Ambrose: Duties of virtue?

St. Ambrose: Duties of the Clergy, 3:9 (65).

11:2 *When pride comes, then comes shame: but with the lowly is wisdom.*

11:3 *The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them.*

11:4 *Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivers from death.*

Riches will stand men in no stead in the day of death. Among men they can do all things; but they cannot purchase the remission of sins, nor turn aside the wrath of God when that is poured out upon the opulent transgressor.

11:5 *The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way: but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness.*

11:6 *The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them: but transgressors shall be taken in their own naughtiness.*

If we are wise, we will take steps to escape sin's snare before we are entrapped by it. God provides us with just look to him (1 Cor. 10:13; James 1:5; 4:6-10).

11:7 *When a wicked man dies, his expectation shall perish: and the hope of unjust men perishes.*

When a godly man dies, all his fears vanish; but when a wicked man dies, his hopes vanish.

HOPE is a great blessing to man in his present state of trial and suffering; because it leads him to expect a favorable termination of his ills. But hope was not made for the wicked; and yet they are the very persons that most abound in it! They hope to be saved, and get at last to the kingdom of God; though they have their face towards perdition, and refuse to turn. But their hope goes no farther than the grave. There the wicked man's expectation is cut off, and his hope perishes. But to the saint, the penitent, and the cross-bearers in general, what a treasure is hope! What a balm through life!

11:8 *The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked comes in his stead.*

11:9 *An hypocrite with his mouth destroys his neighbor: but through knowledge shall the just be delivered.*

11:10 *When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices: and when the wicked perish, there is shouting.*

11:11 *By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted: but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked.*

11:12 *He that is void of wisdom despises his neighbor: but a man of understanding holds his peace.*

Sometimes the wisest thing we can do is to keep silent, especially when someone else might be injured by our comments (Prov. 11:12).

11:13 *A talebearer reveals secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit conceals the matter.*

11:14 *Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.*

History is littered with the wreckage of nations led by leaders who felt so self-confident that they ignored their advisers and made unilateral, autonomous decisions. This is mute testimony to the truth of Proverbs that multifaceted counsel is a matter of national security (Prov. 11:14). The same is true for individuals. One can either "go it alone" as if he were omniscient, or else solicit a variety of informed opinions in order to make the wisest possible choice. For more on the need for outside help, see "The wisdom of the Taking counsel" at Prov. 24:6. We shall often find it to our advantage to advise with others.

11:14 LXX

SUCH is discretion, which is not only the "light of the body," but also called the sun by the Apostle, as it said "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." (Eph. 4:26). It is also called the guidance of our life: as it said "Those who have no guidance, fall like leaves." (Prov. 11:14 LXX). It is most truly named counsel, without which the authority of Scripture allows us to do nothing, so that we are not even permitted to take that spiritual "wine which maketh

glad the heart of man” (Ps. 103:15) without its regulating control: as it is said “Do everything with counsel, drink thy wine with counsel,” (Prov. 31:3 LXX). and again “like a city that has its walls destroyed and is not fenced in, so is a man who does anything without counsel.” (Prov. 25:28 LXX). And how injurious the absence of this is to a monk, the illustration and figure in the passage quoted shows, by comparing it to a city that is destroyed and without walls. Heroin lies wisdom, herein lies intelligence and understanding without which our inward house cannot be built, nor can spiritual riches be gathered together, as it is said: “A house is built with wisdom, and again it is set up with intelligence. With understanding the storehouses are filled with all precious riches and good things.” (Prov. 24:3,4 LXX). This I say is “solid food,” which can only be taken by those who are full grown and strong, as it is said: “But solid food is for full grown men, who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil.” (Heb. 5:14),

St. John Cassian: Conference 2:4.

11:15 He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it: and he that hates suretiship is sure.

The welfare of our families, our own peace, and our ability to pay just debts, must not be brought into danger. But here especially let us consider the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in becoming Surety even for enemies. He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it — He shall find evil upon evil in it. See on chap. 6:1.

11:16 A gracious woman retains honor: and strong men retain riches.

Instead of this clause, the Septuagint have, gunh eucaristov egeirei andri doxan, “A gracious woman raiseth up honor to the man;” “But she that hateth righteous things is a throne of dishonor.” A good wife is an honor to her husband; and a bad wife is her husband’s reproach: if this be so, how careful should a man be whom he marries!

11:17 The merciful man does good to his own soul: but he that is cruel troubles his own flesh.

11:18 The wicked works a deceitful work: but to him that sows righteousness shall be a sure reward.

11:19 As righteousness tends to life: so he that pursues evil pursues it to his own death.

11:20 They that are of a froward heart are abomination to the LORD: but such as are upright in their way are his delight.

11:21 Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished: but the seed of the righteous shall be delivered.

11:22 As a jewel of gold in a swine’s snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion.

11:22

If virginity is believed to be a vastly precious thing and to have a divine look (as indeed is the case, as well as men believe of it), yet, if the whole life does not harmonize with this perfect note, and it be marred by the succeeding discord of the soul, this thing becomes but “the jewel of gold in the swine’s snout,” or “the pearl that is trodden under the swine’s feet.”

St. Gregory of Nyssa: On Virginity, 17.

11:22

For, in a word, if one thinks himself made beautiful by gold, he is inferior to gold; and he that is inferior to gold is not Lord of it. But to confess one’s self less ornamental than the Lydian ore, how monstrous! As, then, the gold is polluted by the dirtiness of the sow, which stirs up the mire with her snout, so those women, that are luxurious to excess in their wantonness, elated by wealth, dishonor by the stains of amatory indulgences what is the true beauty.

St. Clement of Alexandria: Instructor 3:11.

11:23 The desire of the righteous is only good: but the expectation of the wicked is wrath.

11:24 There is that scatters, and yet increases; and there is that withholds more than is meet, but it tends to poverty.

11:25 The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that waters shall be watered also himself.

11:25 LXX

“Every soul that is blessed is simple,” not cleaving to things earthly nor with glued wings groveling, but beaming with the brightness of virtues, on the twin wings of twin love doth spring into the free air; and seeth how from her is withdrawn that whereon she was treading, not that whereon she was resting, and she saith securely, “The Lord hath given, the Lord hath taken away; as it hath pleased the Lord, so hath been done: be the name of the Lord blessed.”...

St. Augustine: On the Psalms, 67:3.

11:25

He says, The soul which blesseth shall be made fat; and he that inebriates shall be inebriated also himself (Proverbs 11:25). For he that blesses outwardly by preaching receives the fatness of inward enlargement; and, while he ceases not to inebriate the minds of his hearers with the wine of eloquence, he becomes increasingly inebriated with the drought of a multiplied gift.

Fr. Gregory (the Great), Pastoral Rule, 25.

Let us then repeat to ourselves soothing charms drawn from the holy Scripture, and say, "Thou art earth and ashes." "Why is earth and ashes proud?" (Ecclus. 10:9), and, "The sway of his fury shall be his destruction" (Ecclus. 1:22): and, "The wrathful man is not comely" (Proverbs 11:25, LXX.); for there is nothing more shameful, nothing uglier than a visage inflamed with anger.

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on St. John, 48.

11:26 He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him: but blessing shall be upon the head of him that sells it.

11:26

To get an increase in price is a sign not of simplicity but of cunning. Elsewhere it says: "He that seeketh a high price for his corn is cursed among the people."

St. Ambrose: Duties of the Clergy, 3:6 (37).

11:26

Rightly, therefore, Solomon says: "He that withholdeth corn shall leave it for the nations," not for his heirs, for the gains of avarice have nothing to do with the rights of succession.

St. Ambrose: Duties of the Clergy, 3:6 (44).

11:26

For to hide corn is to retain with one's self the words of sacred preaching. And every one that does so is cursed among the people, because through his fault of silence only he is condemned in the punishment of the many whom he might have corrected. If persons by no means ignorant of the medicinal art were to see a sore that required lancing, and yet refused to lance it, certainly by their mere inactivity they would be guilty of a brother's death.

Fr. Gregory (the Great), Pastoral Rule, 25.

11:26

As therefore 'he who withholdeth corn in seed-time is cursed,' according to the divine proverb, so he who neglects grace, and hides it without culture, is properly cast out as a wicked and unthankful person. On this account, he praises those who increased [their talents], saying, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful in a little, I will place thee over much; enter into the joy of thy Lord (Matt. 25:23),

St. Athanasius of Alexandria: Paschal Letters, 3:2.

11:27 He that diligently seeks good procures favor: but he that seeks mischief, it shall come unto him.

11:28 He that trusts in his riches shall fall; but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.

11:29 He that troubles his own house shall inherit the wind: and the fool shall be servant to the wise of heart.

vs. 29: He that brings trouble upon himself and his family, by carelessness, or by wickedness, shall be unable to keep and enjoy what he gets, as a man is unable to hold the wind, or to satisfy himself with it. He who dissipates his property by riotous living, shall be as unsatisfied as he who attempts to feed upon air.

11:30 The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winns souls is wise.

11:30

The fruit of righteousness and the tree of life is Christ. He alone, as man, fulfilled all righteousness. And with His own underived life He has brought forth the fruits of knowledge and virtue like a tree, whereof they that eat shall receive eternal life, and shall enjoy the tree of life in paradise, with Adam and all the righteous. But the souls of the unrighteous meet an untimely expulsion from the presence of God, by whom they shall be left to remain in the flame of torment.

From the Commentary of St. Hippolytus on Proverbs

11:31 Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner.

Even the righteous, when they offend on earth, shall meet with sharp corrections; much more will the wicked meet the due reward of their sins. The Septuagint, Syrian, and Arabic read this verse as follows: "And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" And this St. Peter quotes *litteratim*, #1Pe 4:18,

12:16

In the same way too must this be taken: “A fool declares his anger in the very same hour, but a prudent man hides his shame.” For he does not lay it down that a shameful outburst of anger ought to be hidden by wise men in such a way that while he blames a speedy outburst of anger he fails to forbid a tardy one, as certainly, if owing to human weakness it does burst forth, he means that it should be hidden for this reason, that while for the moment it is wisely covered up, it may be destroyed forever. For the nature of anger is such that when it is given room it languishes and perishes, but if openly exhibited, it burns more and more.

St. John Cassian: Conference 16:27.

12:5

But they arise from ourselves, when in the course of nature we recollect what we are doing or have done or have heard. Of which the blessed David speaks: “I thought upon the ancient days, and had in mind the years from of old, and I meditated, by night I exercised myself with my heart, and searched out my spirit.” (Ps. 76:6,7) And again: “the Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vain:” (Ps. 93:11) and “the thoughts of the righteous are judgments.” (Prov. 12:5). In the gospel too the Lord says to the Pharisees: “why do ye think evil in your hearts?” (Matt. 9:11)

St. John Cassian: Conference 1:19.

12:2

Not from men, but with the Lord, will he obtain favor.

From the Commentary of St. Hippolytus on Proverbs

12:23

He called those who believe in Him His seat: for from them hath He made Himself a seat, since in them Wisdom sitteth; for the Son of God is the Wisdom of God. But we have heard from another passage of Scripture a strong confirmation of this interpretation. “The soul of the righteous is the seat of Wisdom.” Because then they who have believed in Him have been made righteous: justified by faith, they have become His own seat: He sitteth in them, judging from them, and guiding them...

St. Augustine: On the Psalms, 97:4.

12:23

Therefore, because God surpasseth all knowledge, He is said to sit above the fullness of knowledge. Let there be therefore in thee fullness of knowledge, and even thou shalt be the throne of God... He knoweth all things: for our hairs are numbered before God. But the fullness of knowledge which He willed man to know is different from this; the knowledge which He willed thee to have, pertaineth to the law of God. And who can, thou mayest perhaps say unto me, perfectly know the Law, so that he may have within himself the

St. Augustine: On the Psalms, 99:3.

12:6

But when they proceed from those who are hired to advocate the cause of heresy, and since, according to the divine proverb, ‘The words of the wicked are to lie in wait,’ and ‘The mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things,’ and ‘The counsels of the wicked are deceit :’ it becomes us to watch and be sober, brethren, as the Lord has said, lest any deception arise from subtlety of speech and craftiness; lest any one come and pretend to say, ‘I preach Christ,’ and after a little while he be found to be Antichrist.

St. Athanasius of Alexandria: Ad Episcopos Aegypti, 9.

12:4

And again, “A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband.” They must, as far as possible, correct their gestures, looks, steps, and speech. For they must not do as some, who, imitating the acting of comedy, and practicing the mincing motions of dancers, conduct themselves in society as if on the stage, with voluptuous movements, and gliding steps, and affected voices, casting languishing glances round, tricked out with the bait of pleasure.

St. Clement of Alexandria: Instructor 3:11.

CHAPTER 12

In the life of the righteous, there is all true comfort and satisfaction and at the end of life there is eternal joy. The man who devises wickedness in under condemnation and all his triumphing on earth is but for a moment. Of the benefit of instruction, and the cultivation of piety. The virtuous woman. The different lot of the just and unjust. The humane man. The industrious man. The fool and the wise man. The uncharitable. The excellence of the righteous. The slothful is in want. Righteousness leads to life, etc.

12:1 Whoso loves instruction loves knowledge: but he that hates reproof is brutish.

Vs. 1: Those who have grace, will delight in the instructions given them. Those that stifle their convictions, are like brutes.

Verse 1. Whoso loveth instruction — *rswm* musar, discipline or correction, loves knowledge; for correction is the way to knowledge.

But he that hateth reproof is brutish. — *r[b* baar, he is a bear; and expects no more benefit from correction than the ox does from the goad.

12:2 A good man obtains favor of the LORD: but a man of wicked devices will he condemn.

vs. 2: The man who covers selfish and vicious designs under a profession of religion or friendship, will be condemned.

Verse 2. A good man obtaineth favor — First, it is God who makes him good; for every child of Adam is bad till the grace of God changes his heart. Secondly, while he walks in the path of obedience he increases in goodness, and consequently in the favor of the Lord.

12:2

Not from men, but with the Lord, will he obtain favor.

From the Commentary of St. Hippolytus on Proverbs

12:3 A man shall not be established by wickedness: but the root of the righteous shall not be moved.

vs. 3: Though men may advance themselves by sinful arts, they cannot settle and secure themselves. But those who by faith are rooted in Christ, are firmly fixed.

Verse 3. A man shall not be established by wickedness — Evil is always variable: it has no fixed principle, except the root that is in the human heart; and even that is ever assuming new forms. Nothing is permanent but goodness; and that is unchangeable, because it comes from GOD. The produce of goodness is permanent, because it has God's blessing in it: the fruit of wickedness, or the property procured by wickedness, is transitory, because it has God's curse in it. The righteous has his root in God; and therefore he shall not be moved.**12:4 A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that makes ashamed is as rottenness in his bones.**

vs. 4: A wife who is pious, prudent, and looks well to the ways of her household, who makes conscience of her duty, and can bear crosses; such a one is an honor and comfort to her husband. She that is the reverse of this, preys upon him, and consumes him.

Verse 4. A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband — *lyj ṭa* esheth chayil, a strong woman. Our word virtue (virtus) is derived from vir, a man; and as man is the noblest of God's creatures, virtue expresses what is becoming to man; what is noble, courageous, and dignified: and as vir, a man, comes from vis, power or strength; so it implies what is strong and vigorous in principle: and as in uncivilized life strength and courage were considered the very highest, because apparently the most necessary, of all virtues; hence the term itself might have become the denomination of all excellent moral qualities; and is now applied to whatever constitutes the system of morality and moral duties. In some parts of the world, however, where arts and sciences have made little progress, strength is one of the first qualifications of a wife, where the labors of the field are appointed to them. It is not an uncommon sight in different parts of Africa, to see the wives (queens) of the kings and chiefs going out in the morning to the plantations, with their mattock in their hand, and their youngest child on their back; and when arrived at the ground, lay the young prince or princess upon the earth, which when weary of lying on one side, will roll itself on the other, and thus continue during the course of the day, without uttering a single whimper, except at the intervals in which its mother gives it suck; she being employed all the while in such labor as we in Europe generally assign to our horses. In these cases, the strong wife is the highest acquisition; and is a crown to her husband, though he be king of Bonny or Calabar. It is certain that in ancient times the women in Judea did some of the severest work in the fields, such as drawing water from the wells, and watering the flocks, etc. On this account, I think, the words may be taken literally; and especially when we add another consideration, that a woman healthy, and of good muscular powers, is the most likely to produce and properly rear up a healthy offspring; and children of this kind are a crown to their parents.

Is as rottenness in his bones. — Does not this refer to a woman irregular in her manners, who by her incontinence not only maketh her husband ashamed, but contracts and communicates such diseases as bring rottenness into the bones? I think so. And I think this was the view taken of the text by Coverdale, who translates thus: "A stedfast woman is a crowne unto her hussbonde: but she that behaveth herself dishonestly is a corruption in his bones."

12:4

And again, “A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband.” They must, as far as possible, correct their gestures, looks, steps, and speech. For they must not do as some, who, imitating the acting of comedy, and practicing the mincing motions of dancers, conduct themselves in society as if on the stage, with voluptuous movements, and gliding steps, and affected voices, casting languishing glances round, tricked out with the bait of pleasure.

St. Clement of Alexandria: Instructor 3:11.

12:5 The thoughts of the righteous are right: but the counsels of the wicked are deceit.

vs. 5: Thoughts are not free; they are under the Divine knowledge, therefore under the Divine command. It is a man’s shame to act with deceit, with trick and design.

12:5

But they arise from ourselves, when in the course of nature we recollect what we are doing or have done or have heard. Of which the blessed David speaks: “I thought upon the ancient days, and had in mind the years from of old, and I meditated, by night I exercised myself with my heart, and searched out my spirit.” (Ps. 76:6,7) And again: “the Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vain:” (Ps. 93:11) and “the thoughts of the righteous are judgments.” (Prov. 12:5). In the gospel too the Lord says to the Pharisees: “why do ye think evil in your hearts?” (Matt. 9:11)

St. John Cassian: Conference 1:19.

12:6 The words of the wicked are to lie in wait for blood: but the mouth of the upright shall deliver them.

vs. 6: Wicked people speak mischief to their neighbors. A man may sometimes do a good work with one good word.

12:6

But when they proceed from those who are hired to advocate the cause of heresy, and since, according to the divine proverb, ‘The words of the wicked are to lie in wait,’ and ‘The mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things,’ and ‘The counsels of the wicked are deceit :’ it becomes us to watch and be sober, brethren, as the Lord has said, lest any deception arise from subtlety of speech and craftiness; lest any one come and pretend to say, ‘I preach Christ,’ and after a little while he be found to be Antichrist.

St. Athanasius of Alexandria: Ad Episcopos Aegypti, 9.

12:7 The wicked are overthrown, and are not: but the house of the righteous shall stand.

vs. 7: God’s blessing is often continued to the families of godly men, while the wicked are overthrown.

Verse 7. The wicked are overthrown — Seldom does God give such a long life or numerous offspring.

But the house of the righteous shall stand. — God blesses their progeny, and their families continue long in the earth; whereas the wicked seldom have many generations in a direct line. This is God’s mercy, that the entail of iniquity may be in some sort cut off, so that the same vices may not be strengthened by successive generations. For generally the bad root produces not only a bad plant, but one worse than itself.

12:8 A man shall be commended according to his wisdom: but he that is of a perverse heart shall be despised.

vs. 8: The apostles showed wisdom by glorying in shame for the name of Christ.

12:9 He that is despised, and hath a servant, is better than he that honors himself, and lacks bread.

vs. 9: He that lives in a humble state, who has no one to wait upon him, but gets bread by his own labor, is happier than he that glories in high birth or gay attire, and wants necessaries.

Verse 9. He that is despised, and hath a servant — I believe the Vulgate gives the true sense of this verse: *Melior est pauper, et sufficiens sibi; quam gloriosus, et indigenus pane.*

“Better is the poor man who provides for himself, than the proud who is destitute of bread.” The versions in general agree in this sense. This needs no comment. There are some who, through pride of birth, etc., would rather starve, than put their hands to menial labor. Though they may be lords, how much to be preferred is the simple peasant, who supports himself and family by the drudgery of life!

12:10 A righteous man regards the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.

Animals do have rights!

One of the most complex issues of modern society is the impact that meeting the needs of people has on animals and their environment. Does the Bible have anything to say about this often division topic?

One principle that Scripture seems to affirm is that animals do, in fact, have certain God-given rights. For example, the Lord regards a person’s care and concern for the life of an animal as righteousness, while cruelty to an

animal is an act of wickedness (Prov.12:10). The point is that animals have a right to be treated with wisdom and kindness, not cruelty. God pays attention to how we treat animals.

However, it is also true that God has given human beings dominion, or authority, over the other creature (Gen. 1:26). Animals are a resource to be managed and used as humans see fit. Yet people are accountable to God for exercising this dominion. Wisdom, or the “fear of the Lord” (Prov. 1:7), suggests that we treat animals as God their Creator would treat them. For example, we know that God has an interest in the preservation of species (Gen. 7:1-5, 23-24; 8:1, 17; Luke12:6). Likewise, He is concerned that farm and work animals be cared for properly (Ex. 23:12; Deut. 22:4). Shouldn't these concern influence the way we treat animals today?

vs. 10: A godly man would not put even an animal to needless pain. But the wicked often speak of others as well used, when they would not endure like treatment for a single day.

Verse 10. A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast — One principal characteristic of a holy man is mercy: cruelty is unknown to him; and his benevolence extends to the meanest of the brute creation. Pity rules the heart of a pious man; he can do nothing that is cruel. He considers what is best for the comfort, ease health, and life of the beast that serves him, and he knows that God himself careth for oxen: and one of the ten commandments provides a seventh part of time to be allotted for the rest of laboring beasts as well as for man.

I once in my travels met with the Hebrew of this clause on the sign board of a public inn: *wtmhb ꞗpn qydx [dwy yodea tsaddik nephesh*

behemto. “A righteous man considereth the life of his beast;” which, being very appropriate, reminded me that I should feed my horse.

The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel. — *yrzja achzari*, are violent, without mercy, ruthless. The wicked, influenced by Satan, can show no other disposition than what is in their master. If they appear at any time merciful, it is a cloak which they use to cover purposes of cruelty. To accomplish its end, iniquity will assume any garb, speak mercifully, extol benevolence, sometimes even give to the poor! But, timeo Danaos, et dona ferentes. The cry of fire at midnight, provided it be in another's dwelling, is more congenial to their souls than the; cry of mercy. Look at the human fiends, “out-heroding Herod,” in horse races, bruising matches, and cock fights, and in wars for the extension of territory, and the purposes of ambition. The hell is yet undescribed, that is suited to such monsters in cruelty.

persons is void of understanding.

vs. 11: It is men's wisdom to mind their business, and follow an honest calling. But it is folly to neglect business; and the grace of God teaches men to disdain nothing but sin.

Verse 11. He that tilleth his land — God's blessing will be in the labor of the honest agriculturist.

But he that followeth vain persons — He who, while he should be cultivating his ground, preparing for a future crop, or reaping his harvest, associates with fowlers, coursers of hares, hunters of foxes, or those engaged in any champaign amusements, is void of understanding; and I have known several such come to beggary.

To this verse the Septuagint add the following clause: ‘ov estin en oinwn diatribaiv, en toiv eautou ocurwmasi kataleiqei atimian. “He who is a boon companion in banquets, shall leave dishonor in his own fortresses.” This has been copied by the Vulgate and the Arabic. That is The man who frequents the ale-house enriches that, while he impoverishes his own habitation.

12:11 He that tills his land shall be satisfied with bread: but he that follows vain 12:12 The wicked desires the net of evil men: but the root of the righteous yields fruit.

vs. 12: When the ungodly see others prosper by sin, they wish they could act in the same way. But the root of Divine grace, in the heart of the righteous, produces other desires and purposes. Verse 12. The wicked desireth the net of evil men — They applaud their ways, and are careful to imitate them in their wiles.

12:13 The wicked is snared by the transgression of his lips: but the just shall come out of trouble.

vs. 13: Many a man has paid dear in this world for the transgression of his lips.

Verse 13. The wicked is snared by the transgression of his lips — A man who deals in lies and false oaths will sooner or later be found out to his own ruin. There is another proverb as true as this: A liar had need of a good memory; for as the truth is not in him, he says and unsays, and often contradicts himself.

12:14 A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth: and the recompence of a man's hands shall be rendered unto him.

vs. 14: When men use their tongues aright, to teach and comfort others, they enjoy acceptance through Christ Jesus; and the testimony of their conscience, that they in some measure answer the end of their being.

12:15 *The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkens unto counsel is wise.*

vs. 15: A fool, in the sense of Scripture, means a wicked man, one who acts contrary to the wisdom that is from above. His rule is, to do what is right in his own eyes.

12:16 *A fool's wrath is presently known: but a prudent man covers shame.*

vs. 16: A foolish man is soon angry, and is hasty in expressing it; he is ever in trouble and running into mischief. It is kindness to ourselves to make light of injuries and affronts, instead of making the worst of them.

Verse 16. A fool's wrath is presently known — We have a proverb very like this, and it will serve for illustration:

—
A fool's bolt is soon shot.

A weak-minded man has no self-government; he is easily angered, and generally speaks whatever comes first to his mind.

12:16

In the same way too must this be taken: "A fool declares his anger in the very same hour, but a prudent man hides his shame." For he does not lay it down that a shameful outburst of anger ought to be hidden by wise men in such a way that while he blames a speedy outburst of anger he fails to forbid a tardy one, as certainly, if owing to human weakness it does burst forth, he means that it should be hidden for this reason, that while for the moment it is wisely covered up, it may be destroyed forever. For the nature of anger is such that when it is given room it languishes and perishes, but if openly exhibited, it burns more and more.

St. John Cassian: Conference 16:27.

12:17 *He that speaks truth shews forth righteousness: but a false witness deceit.*

vs. 17: It is good for all to dread and detest the sin of lying, and to be governed by honesty.

12:17

Why do you fear to confess your sins to our good Lord? "Set them forth," He says, "that thou mayest be justified." The rewards of justification are set before him who is still guilty of sin, for he is justified who voluntarily confesses his own sin; and lastly, "the just man is his own accuser in the beginning of his speaking." The Lord knows all things, but He waits for your words, not that He may punish, but that He may pardon. It is not His will that the devil should triumph over you and accuse you when you conceal your sins. Be beforehand with your accuser: if you accuse yourself, you will fear no accuser; if you report yourself, though you were dead you shall live.

St. Ambrose: Concerning Repentance, 2:7:53.

12:18 *There is that speaks like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health.*

vs. 18: Whisperings and evil surmises, like a sword, separate those that have been dear to each other. The tongue of the wise is health, making all whole.

Verse 18. There is that speaketh — Instead of **hfwb** boteh, blabbing out, blustering, several MSS. have **jfwb** boteach, TRUSTING: and instead of

twrqdmk kemadkeroth, AS the piercings, seven MSS., with the

Complutensian Polyglot, have **twrqdmb** bemadkeroth, IN the piercings. 1740

"There is that trusteth in the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health." But I suppose the former to be the true reading.

12:19 *The lip of truth shall be established for ever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment.*

vs. 19: If truth be spoken, it will hold good; whoever may be disoblged, still it will keep its ground.

Verse 19. A lying tongue is but for a moment. — Truth stands for ever; because its foundation is indestructible: but falsehood may soon be detected; and, though it gain credit for a while, it had that credit because it was supposed to be truth.

12:20 *Deceit is in the heart of them that imagine evil: but to the counsellors of peace is joy.*

vs. 20: Deceit and falsehood bring terrors and perplexities. But those who consult the peace and happiness of others have joy in their own minds.

12:21 *There shall no evil happen to the just: but the wicked shall be filled with mischief.*

vs. 21: If men are sincerely righteous, the righteous God has engaged that no evil shall happen to them. But they that delight in mischief shall have enough of it.

Verse 21. There shall no evil happen to the just — No, for all things work together for good to them that love God. Whatever occurs to a righteous man God turns to his advantage. But, on the other hand, the wicked are filled with mischief: they are hurt, grieved, and wounded, by every occurrence; and nothing turns to their profit.

12:22 Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight.

vs. 22: Make conscience of truth, not only in words, but in actions.

12:23 A prudent man conceals knowledge: but the heart of fools proclaims foolishness.

vs. 23: Foolish men proclaim to all the folly and emptiness of their minds.

Verse 23. A prudent man concealeth knowledge — “If a fool hold his peace he may pass for a wise man.” I have known men of some learning, so intent on immediately informing a company how well cultivated their minds were, that they have passed either for insignificant pedants or stupid asses.

12:23

He called those who believe in Him His seat: for from them hath He made Himself a seat, since in them Wisdom sitteth; for the Son of God is the Wisdom of God. But we have heard from another passage of Scripture a strong confirmation of this interpretation. “The soul of the righteous is the seat of Wisdom.” Because then they who have believed in Him have been made righteous: justified by faith, they have become His own seat: He sitteth in them, judging from them, and guiding them...

St. Augustine: On the Psalms, 97:4.

12:23

Therefore, because God surpasseth all knowledge, He is said to sit above the fullness of knowledge. Let there be therefore in thee fullness of knowledge, and even thou shalt be the throne of God... He knoweth all things: for our hairs are numbered before God. But the fullness of knowledge which He willed man to know is different from this; the knowledge which He willed thee to have, pertaineth to the law of God. And who can, thou mayest perhaps say unto me, perfectly know the Law, so that he may have within himself the

St. Augustine: On the Psalms, 99:3.

12:24 The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute.

vs. 24: Those who will not take pains in an honest calling, living by tricks and dishonesty, are paltry and beggarly.

Verse 24. The hand of the diligent shall bear rule — And why? because by his own industry he is independent; and every such person is respected wherever found.

12:25 Heaviness in the heart of man makes it stoop: but a good word makes it glad.

vs. 25: Care, fear, and sorrow, upon the spirits, deprive men of vigor in what is to be done, or courage in what is to be born. A good word from God, applied by faith, makes the heart glad.

Verse 25. Heaviness in the heart of a man maketh it stoop — Sorrow of heart, hopeless love, or a sense of God’s displeasure—these prostrate the man, and he becomes a child before them.

But a good word maketh it glad. — A single good or favorable word will remove despondency; and that word, “Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee,” will instantly remove despair.

12:26 The righteous is more excellent than his neighbor: but the way of the wicked seduces them.

vs. 26: The righteous is abundant; though not in this world’s goods, yet in the graces and comforts of the Spirit, which are the true riches. Evil men vainly flatter themselves that their ways are not wrong.

Verse 26. The righteous is more excellent than his neighbor — That is, if the neighbor be a wicked man. The spirit of the proverb lies here: The POOR righteous man is more excellent than his sinful neighbor, though affluent and noble. The Syriac has it, “The righteous deviseth good to his neighbor.” A late commentator has translated it, “The righteous explore their pastures.” How *wh[rm]* can be translated THEIR pastures I know not; but none of the versions understood it in this way. The Vulgate is rather singular: Qui negligit damnum propter amicum, justus est. “He who

neglects or sustains a loss for the sake of his friend, is a just man.” The Septuagint is insufferable: “The well-instructed righteous man shall be his own friend.” One would hope these translators meant not exclusively; he should love his neighbor as himself.

12:27 The slothful man roasts not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious.

vs. 27: The slothful man makes no good use of the advantages Providence puts in his way, and has no comfort in them. The substance of a diligent man, though not great, does good to him and his family. He sees that God gives it to him in answer to prayer.

Verse 27. The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting — Because he is a slothful man, he does not hunt for prey; therefore gets none, and cannot roast, that he may eat. There is some obscurity in the original on which the versions cast little light. Coverdale translates the whole verse thus: “A discreatfull man schal fynde no vauntage: but he that is content with what he hath, is more worth than golde.” My old MS. Bible: “The gylful man schal not fynd wynnyng: and the substance of a man schal ben the pris of gold.

By translating **hymr** remiyah the deceitful, instead of the slothful man, which appears to be the genuine meaning of the word, we may obtain a good sense, as the Vulgate has done: “The deceitful man shall not find gain; but the substance of a (just) man shall be the price of gold.” But our common version, allowing **hymr** remiyah to be translated fraudulent, which is its proper meaning, gives the best sense: “The fraudulent man roasteth not that which he took in hunting,” the justice of God snatching from his mouth what he had acquired unrighteously.

But the substance of a diligent man — One who by honest industry acquires all his property-is precious, because it has the blessing of God in it.

12:28 In the way of righteousness is life: and in the pathway thereof there is no death.

vs. 28: The way of religion is a straight, plain way; it is the way of righteousness. There is not only life at the end, but life in the way; all true comfort.

Verse 28. In the way of righteousness is life — **μyyj** chaiyim, lives; life temporal, and life eternal.

And in the pathway thereof there is no death. — Not only do the general precepts and promises of God lead to life eternal, and promote life temporal; but every duty, every act of faith, patience of hope, and labor of love, though requiring much self-abasement, self-denial, and often an extension of corporal strength, all lead to life. For in every case, in every particular, “the path of duty is the way of safety.” The latter clause is only a repetition of the sense of the former.

13:18

Those riches are good, to acquire which is the work of great virtue and merit, and the righteous possessor of which is praised by David who says “The generation of the righteous shall be blessed: glory and riches are in his house, and his righteousness remaineth for ever:” (Ps. 111:2,3) and again “the ransom of a man’s life are his riches.” [8]. And of these riches it is Said in the Apocalypse to him who has them not and to his shame is poor and naked: “I will begin,” says he, “to vomit thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest I am rich and wealthy and have need of nothing: and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I counsel thee to buy of me gold fire-tryed, that thou mayest be made rich, and mayest be clothed in white garments, and that the shame of thy nakedness may not appear.” (Rev. 3:16-18).

St. John Cassian: Conference 3:9.

13:8

And in this sense we “charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate.” (1 Tim. 4:17,18). For, as Solomon says, “riches” are the true good, which “are the ransom of the life of a man;” but the poverty which is the opposite of these riches is destructive, for by it “the poor cannot bear rebuke.”

Origen: Against Celsus, 7:21.

13:25

“The righteous eateth to the satisfying of his soul, but the belly of the wicked shall want.” For we must consider the food promised in the law as the food of the soul, which is to satisfy not both parts of man’s nature, but the soul only. And the words of the Gospel, although probably containing a deeper meaning, may yet be taken in their more simple and obvious sense. as teaching us not to be disturbed with anxieties about our food and clothing, but, while living in plainness, and desiring only what is needful, to put our trust in the providence of God.

Origen: Against Celsus, 7:24.

13:13

But the deceitful, and he that is not pure of heart, and possesses nothing that is pure (as the Proverb saith, ‘To a deceitful man there is nothing good ‘), shall assuredly, being a stranger, and of a different race from the saints, be accounted unworthy to eat the Passover, for ‘a foreigner shall not eat of it .’ (Exod. 12:43). Thus Judas, when he thought he kept the Passover, because he plotted deceit against the Savior, was estranged from the city which is above, and from the apostolic company. For the law commanded the Pass-over to be eaten with due observance; but he, while eating it, was sifted of the devil , who had entered his soul.

St. Athanasius of Alexandria: Paschal Letters, 6:11.

And Paul also says, “Only that we remember the poor” (Galatians 2:10): and everywhere the Scripture has much discourse concerning this matter. “The ransom,” it saith, “of a man’s soul is his own wealth” (**Proverbs 13, 8**): and With reason: for, saith (Christ), “if thou wouldest be perfect, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and come, follow Me.” (Matthew 19:21.) This may well be part of perfection.

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on Acts, 25.

13:8

For the Scripture avouches, “that the true riches of the soul are a man’s ransom,” that is, if he is rich, he will be saved by distributing it. For as gushing wells, when pumped out, rise again to their former measure, so giving away, being the benignant spring of love, by communicating of its drink to the thirsty, again increases and is replenished, just as the milk is wont to flow into the breasts that are sucked or milked.

St. Clement of Alexandria: Instructor 3:7.

13:5

For there is one God who feeds the fowls and the fishes, and, in a word, the irrational creatures; and not one thing whatever is wanting to them, though “they take no thought for their food” (Matt. 6:25;etc.). And we are better than they, being their lords, and more closely allied to God, as being wiser; and we were made, not that we might eat and drink, but that we might devote ourselves to the knowledge of God. “For the just man who eats is satisfied in his soul, but the belly of the wicked shall want,” filled with the appetites of insatiable gluttony.

St. Clement of Alexandria: Instructor 2:1.

He came to you, to receive pity from you, but he goes away having received a deadly blow, and weeps the more. For when by reason of his poverty he is compelled to beg, and is insulted on account of his begging, think how great will be the punishment of those who insult him. "He that dishonoreth the poor," it says, "provoketh his Maker." (Proverbs 14:12, 31, Sept) For tell me, did He suffer him to be poor for thy sake, that thou mightest be able to heal thyself — and dost thou insult him who for thy sake is poor? What obstinacy is this! what an act of ingratitude is it! "Admonish him as a brother," he says, and after having given, he orders you to admonish him. But if even without giving we insult him, what excuse shall we have?

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on 2 Thessalonians, hom. 5.

CHAPTER 13

The destruction of sinners is unavailable, for God's wrath pursues them, and whom God pursues is sure to be overtaken. The happiness of the saints is indefeatable, for God has promised that they shall be abundantly recompensed for all the they have done and the ill they have suffered.

13:1 A wise son hears his father's instruction: but a scorner hears not rebuke.

vs. 1: There is great hope of those that reverence their parents. There is little hope of any who will not hear those that deal faithfully with them.

13:2 A man shall eat good by the fruit of his mouth: but the soul of the transgressors shall eat violence.

vs. 2: By our words we must be justified or condemned, Matthew 12:37.

13:3 He that keeps his mouth keeps his life: but he that opens wide his lips shall have destruction.

vs. 3: He that thinks before he speaks, that suppresses evil if he have thought it, keeps his soul from a great deal both of guilt and grief. Many a one is ruined by an ungoverned tongue.

13:4 The soul of the sluggard desires, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.

Diligence Prevails

It is often said that the difference between success and failure is determined by how badly one wants to succeed. Yet while desire is certainly important in achievement, desire alone will not prevail. Instead, diligence seems to make the difference (Prov. 13:4). Diligence, however, does not necessarily mean just. Working harder, but working smarter. To learn more about this distinction, see Prov. 24:3-6.

vs. 4: The slothful desire the gains the diligent get, but hate the pains the diligent take; therefore they have nothing. This is especially true as to the soul.

13:5 A righteous man hates lying: but a wicked man is loathsome, and comes to shame.

vs. 5: Where sin reigns, the man is loathsome. If his conscience were awake, he would abhor himself, and repent in dust and ashes.

13:6 Righteousness keeps him that is upright in the way: but wickedness overthrows the sinner.

vs. 6: An honest desire to do right, preserves a man from fatal mistakes, better than a thousand fine-drawn distinctions.

13:7 There is that makes himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that makes himself poor, yet hath great riches.

vs. 7: Some who are really poor, trade and spend as if they were rich: this is sin, and will be shame, and it will end accordingly. Some that are really rich, would be thought to be poor: in this there is want of gratitude to God, want of justice and charity to others. There are many hypocrites, empty of grace, who will not be convinced of their poverty. There are many fearing Christians, who are spiritually rich, yet think themselves poor; by their doubts, and complaints, and griefs, they make themselves poor. *13:8 The ransom of a man's life are his riches: but the poor hears not rebuke.*

vs. 8: Great riches often tempt to violence against those that possess them; but the poor are free from such perils.

13:9 The light of the righteous rejoices: but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out.

vs. 9: The light of the righteous is as that of the sun, which may be eclipsed and clouded, but will continue: the Spirit is their Light, he gives a fullness of joy: that of the wicked is as a lamp of their own kindling, easily put out.

13:10 Only by pride comes contention: but with the well advised is wisdom.

vs. 10: All contentions, whether between private persons, families, churches, or nations, are begun and carried forward by pride. Disputes would be easily prevented or ended, if it were not for pride.

13:11 Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathers by labor shall increase.

vs. 11: Wealth gotten by dishonesty or vice, has a secret curse, which will speedily waste it.

13:12 Hope deferred makes the heart sick: but when the desire comes, it is a tree of life.

vs. 12: The delay of what is anxiously hoped for, is very painful to the mind; obtaining it is very pleasant. But spiritual blessings are chiefly intended.

13:13 Whoso despises the word shall be destroyed: but he that fears the commandment shall be rewarded.

vs. 13: He that stands in awe of God, and reverences his word, shall escape destruction, and be rewarded for his godly fear.

13:14 The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.

vs. 14: The rule by which the wise regulate their conduct, is a fountain yielding life and happiness.

13:15 Good understanding gives favor: but the way of transgressors is hard.

vs. 15: The way of sinners is hard upon others, and hard to the sinner himself. The service of sin is slavery; the road to hell is strewn with the thorns and thistles that followed the curse.

13:16 Every prudent man deals with knowledge: but a fool lays open his folly.

vs. 16: It is folly to talk of things of which we know nothing, and to undertake what we are no way fit for.

13:17 A wicked messenger falls into mischief: but a faithful ambassador is health.

vs. 17: Those that are wicked, and false to Christ and to the souls of men, do mischief, and fall into mischief; but those that are faithful, find sound words healing to others and to themselves.

13:18 Poverty and shame shall be to him that refuses instruction: but he that regards reproof shall be honored.

vs. 18: He that scorns to be taught, will certainly be brought down.

13:19 The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul: but it is abomination to fools to depart from evil.

vs. 19: There are in man strong desires after happiness; but never let those expect any thing truly sweet to their souls, who will not be persuaded to leave their sins.

13:20 He that walks with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.

Wisdom Through Relationships

Perhaps you are wondering how you can develop the kind of wisdom described in Proverbs. The place to start is by cultivating friendships with wise people (Prov. 13:20). Wisdom is not a set of facts to be memorized, but a set of life skills to be mastered (see “Wisdom” at Prov. 1:2). Relationships are the key to making this happen.

A beautiful illustration of this principle can be found in the relationship of Moses with his father-in-law Jethro. Moses was heading toward burnout when Jethro took him a side. He not only warned the young leader that he was in imminent danger of collapse, but wisely counseled him to delegate authority (Ex. 18:17-27). As a result, Moses developed an organization structure that enabled him to lead Israel for the next forty years. That system might never have come about had Moses not had a relationship with a wise man like Jethro.

But it is not enough to choose wise friends. Proverbs also warns us about friendships with those described as “fools” (see “The Foolishness of fools” at Prov. 14:24). The point is not to try to avoid all contact with foolish people, which would be impossible. Rather, knowing that the company we keep can have profound influence on us, we should avoid becoming overly familiar with unwise people. We should not listen to their advice or emulate their habits.

As you reflect on your network of relationships, whose friendship are you cultivating? Are they people who possess wisdom? Or are you building relationships with those who scoff at and reject God’s ways? Be careful, because the wrong set of friends can lead to disaster (13:20).

vs. 20: Multitudes are brought to ruin by bad company. And all that make themselves wicked will be destroyed.

13:21 Evil pursues sinners: but to the righteous good shall be repayed.

vs. 21: When God pursues sinners he is sure to overtake them; and he will reward the righteous.

13:22 A good man leaves an inheritance to his children’s children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just.

vs. 22: The servant of God who is not anxious about riches, takes the best method of providing for his children.

13:23 Much food is in the tillage of the poor: but there is that is destroyed for want of judgment.

vs. 23: The poor, yet industrious, thrive, though in a homely manner, while those who have great riches are often brought to poverty for want of judgment.

13:24 He that spares his rod hates his son: but he that loves him chastens him betimes.

Love Sets Limits

No parent enjoys hearing the plaintive cries of a little one in response to correction or punishment. As a result, some parents back off from enforcing tough standards, certain that a happy child is a healthy child. But Proverbs says that discipline is a demonstration of love, whereas lack of it is a form of hate (Prov. 13:24). Do you care enough for your children to set limits on their behavior? See “Rearing Children with the Rod” at Prov. 19:18.

vs. 24: He acts as if he hated his child, who, by false indulgence, permits sinful habits to gather strength, which will bring sorrow here, and misery hereafter.

13:25 The righteous eats to the satisfying of his soul: but the belly of the wicked shall want.

vs. 25: It is the misery of the wicked, that even their sensual appetites are always craving. The righteous feeds on the word and ordinances, to the satisfying of his soul with the promises of the gospel, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Bread of life.

CHAPTER 13

Various moral sentences; the wise child; continence of speech; of the poor rich man and the rich poor man; ill-gotten wealth; delay of what is hoped for; the bad consequences of refusing instruction; providing for one's children; the necessity of correcting them, etc.

NOTES ON CHAP. 13

Verse 1. A wise son heareth his father's instruction — The child that has had a proper nurturing, will profit by his father's counsels; but the child that is permitted to fulfill its own will and have its own way, will jest at the reproofs of its parents.

Verse 3. He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life — How often have the foolish, headstrong, and wicked, forfeited their lives by the treasonable or blasphemous words they have spoken! The government of the tongue is a rare but useful talent.

But he that openeth wide his lips — He that puts no bounds to his loquacity, speaks on every subject, and gives his judgment and opinion on every matter. It has often been remarked that God has, given us two EYES, that we may SEE much; two EARS, that we may HEAR much; but has given us but ONE tongue, and that fenced in with teeth, to indicate that though we hear and see much, we should speak but little.

Verse 4. The soul of the sluggard desireth and hath nothing — We often hear many religious people expressing a desire to have more of the Divine life, and yet never get forward in it. How is this? The reason is, they desire, but do not stir themselves up to lay hold upon the Lord. They are always learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. They seek to enter in at the strait gate, but are not able, because they do not strive.

Verse 7. There is that maketh himself rich — That labors hard to acquire money, yet hath nothing; his excessive covetousness not being satisfied¹⁷⁴³

with what he possesses, nor permitting him to enjoy with comfort what he has acquired. The fable of the dog in the manger will illustrate this.

There is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches. — "As poor," said St. Paul, "yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing all things." The former is the rich poor man; the latter is the poor rich man.

As the words are here in the hithpael conjugation, which implies reflex action, or the action performed on one's self, and often signifies feigning or pretending to be what one is not, or not to be what one is; the words may be understood of persons who feign or pretend to be either richer or poorer than they really are, to accomplish some particular purpose. "There is that feigneth himself to be rich, yet hath nothing; there is that feigneth himself to be poor, yet hath great riches." Both these characters frequently occur in life.

Verse 8. The ransom of a man's life — Those who have riches have often much trouble with them; as they had much trouble to get them, so they have much trouble to keep them. In despotic countries, a rich man is often accused of some capital crime, and to save his life, though he may be quite innocent, is obliged to give up his riches; but the poor, in such countries, are put to no trouble.

Verse 9. The light of the righteous rejoiceth — They shall have that measure of prosperity which shall be best for them; but the wicked, howsoever prosperous for a time, shall be brought into desolation. Light and lamp in both cases may signify posterity. The righteous shall have a joyous posterity; but that of the wicked shall be cut off. So 1 Kings 11:36: "And unto his son will I give one tribe, that David my servant may have a light (*in* ner, a lamp) always before me." 1 Kings 15:4: "Nevertheless for David's sake did the Lord give them a lamp, to set up his son after him." See also Psalm 132:17, and several other places.

Verse 10. By pride cometh contention — Perhaps there is not a quarrel among individuals in private life, nor a war among nations, that does not proceed from pride and ambition. Neither man nor nation will be content to be less than another; and to acquire the wished-for superiority all is thrown into general confusion, both in public and private life. It was to destroy this spirit of pride, that Jesus was manifested in the extreme of¹⁷⁴⁴

humility and humiliation among men. The salvation of Christ is a deliverance from pride, and a being clothed with humility. As far as we are humble, so far we are saved.

Verse 11. Wealth gotten by vanity — Wealth that is not the result of honest industry and hard labor is seldom permanent. All fortunes acquired by speculation, lucky hits, and ministering to the pride or luxury of others, etc., soon become dissipated. They are not gotten in the way of Providence, and have not God's blessing, and therefore are not permanent.

Verse 12. Hope deferred maketh the heart sick — When once a good is discovered, want of it felt, strong desire for the possession excited, and the promise of attainment made on grounds unsuspected, so that the reality of the thing and the certainty of the promise are manifest, hope posts forward to realize the blessing. Delay in the gratification pains the mind; the increase of the delay prostrates and sickens the heart; and if delay sickens the heart, ultimate disappointment kills it. But when the thing desired, hoped for, and expected comes, it is a tree of life, מַיִיץ אֵץ ets chaiyim, "the tree of lives;" it comforts and invigorates both body and soul. To the tree of lives, in the midst of the gardens of paradise, how frequent are the allusions in the writings of Solomon, and in other parts of the Holy Scriptures! What deep, and perhaps yet unknown, mysteries were in this tree!

Verse 13. Whoso despiseth the word — The revelation which God has in his mercy given to man shall be destroyed; for there is no other way of salvation but that which it points out.

But he that feareth the commandment — That respects it so as to obey it, walking as this revelation directs shall be rewarded; shall find it to be his highest interest, and shall be in peace or safety, as the Hebrew word מִלְּי may be translated.

Verse 14. The law of the wise is a fountain of life — Perhaps it would be better to translate, "The law is to the wise man a fountain of life." It is the same to him as the "vein of lives," מַיִיץ רִוּקָם mekor chaiyim, the great

aorta which transmits the blood from the heart to every part of the body. There seems to be here an allusion to the garden of paradise, to the tree of

lives, to the tempter, to the baleful issue of that temptation, and to the death entailed on man by his unwisely breaking the law of his God.

Verse 16. The way of transgressors is hard. — Never was a truer saying; most sinners have more pain and difficulty to get their souls damned, than the righteous have, with all their cross-bearings, to get to the kingdom of heaven.

Verse 17. A wicked messenger — The Septuagint: βασίλευς yrasuev, a bold king; instead of ὄραμ malach, a messenger, they had read ὄραμ melech, a king: but they are singular in this rendering; none of the other versions have it so. He that betrays the counsels of his government, or the interests of his country, will sooner or later fall into mischief; but he that faithfully and loyally fulfils his mission, shall produce honor and safety to the commonwealth.

Verse 19. The desire accomplished — See on ver. 12.

Verse 20. He that walketh with wise men shall be wise — To walk with a person implies love and attachment; and it is impossible not to imitate those we love. So we say, "Show me his company, and I'll tell you the man." Let me know the company he keeps, and I shall easily guess his moral character.

Verse 22. A good man leaveth an inheritance — He files many a prayer in heaven in their behalf, and his good example and advices are remembered and quoted from generation to generation. Besides, whatever property he left was honestly acquired, and well-gotten goods are permanent. The general experience of men shows this to be a common case; and that property ill-gotten seldom reaches to the third generation. This even the heathens observed. Hence:

De male quaesitis non gaudet tertius haeres.

"The third generation shall not possess the goods that have been unjustly acquired."

Verse 23. That is destroyed for want of judgment. — O, how much of the poverty of the poor arises from their own want of management! They have little or no economy, and no foresight. When they get any thing, they

speedily spend it; and a feast and a famine make the chief varieties of their life.

Verse 24. He that spareth his rod hateth his son — That is, if he hated him, he could not do him a greater disservice than not to correct him when his obstinacy or disobedience requires it. We have met with this subject already, and it is a favourite with Solomon. See the places referred to in the margin.

The Revelation Mr. Holden makes some sensible observations on this passage: "By the neglect of early correction the desires (passions) obtain ascendancy; the temper becomes irascible, peevish, querulous. Pride is nourished, humility destroyed, and by the habit of indulgence the mind is incapacitated to bear with firmness and equanimity the cares and sorrows, the checks and disappointments, which flesh is heir to."

Verse 25. To the satisfying of his soul — His desires are all moderate; he is contented with his circumstances, and is pleased with the lot which God is pleased to send. The wicked, though he use all shifts and expedients to acquire earthly good, not sticking even at rapine and wrong, is frequently in real want, and always dissatisfied with his portion. A contented mind is a continual feast. At such feasts he eats not.

CHAPTER 13

The destruction of sinners is unavoidable, for God's wrath pursues them, and whom God pursues is sure to be overtaken. The happiness of the saints is undefeatable, for God has promised that they shall be abundantly recompensed for all the they have done and the ill they have suffered.

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13:8

But riches themselves are not blameable. For “the ransom of a man’s life are his riches,” since he that gives to the poor redeems his soul. So that even in these material riches there is place for virtue. You are like steersmen in the vast sea. If a man steers his course well, he quickly passes over the sea so as to attain to the port, but one who knows not how to direct his property is drowned together with his freight. And so it is written: “The wealth of rich men is a most strong city.”

St. Ambrose: Letter, 63:92.

13:8

And in this sense we “charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate.” (1 Tim. 4:17.18). For, as Solomon says, “riches” are the true good, which “are the ransom of the life of a man;” but the poverty which is the opposite of these riches is destructive, for by it “the poor cannot bear rebuke.”

Origen: Against Celsus, 7:21.

And Paul also says, “Only that we remember the poor” (Galatians 2:10): and everywhere the Scripture has much discourse concerning this matter. “The ransom,” it saith, “of a man’s soul is his own wealth” (Proverbs 13, 8): and With reason: for, saith (Christ), “if thou wouldest be perfect, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and come, follow Me.” (Matthew 19:21.) This may well be part of perfection.

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on Acts, 25.

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13:9

I will remind you again about Illuminations, and that often, and will reckon them up from Holy Scripture. For I myself shall be happier for remembering them (for what is sweeter than light to those who have tasted light?) and I will dazzle you with my words. There is sprung up a light for the righteous, and its partner joyful gladness. And, The light of the righteous is everlasting; and Thou art shining wondrously from the everlasting mountains, is said to God, I think of the Angelic powers which aid our efforts after good. And you have heard David’s words; The Lord is my Light and my Salvation, whom then shall I fear? And now he asks that the Light and the Truth may be sent forth for him, now giving thanks that he has a share in it, in that the Light of God is marked upon him; that is, that the signs of the illumination given are impressed upon him and recognized.

St. Gregory Nazianzen: Oration On Holy Baptism, 36.

13:10 Only by pride comes contention: but with the well advised is wisdom.

vs. 10: All contentions, whether between private persons, families, churches, or nations, are begun and carried forward by pride. Disputes would be easily prevented or ended, if it were not for pride.

Verse 10. By pride cometh contention — Perhaps there is not a quarrel among individuals in private life, nor a war among nations, that does not proceed from pride and ambition. Neither man nor nation will be content to be less than another; and to acquire the wished-for superiority all is thrown into general confusion, both in public and private life. It was to destroy this spirit of pride, that Jesus was manifested in the extreme of humility and humiliation among men. The salvation of Christ is a deliverance from pride, and a being clothed with humility. As far as we are humble, so far we are saved.

13:11 Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathers by labor shall increase.

vs. 11: Wealth gotten by dishonesty or vice, has a secret curse, which will speedily waste it.

Verse 11. Wealth gotten by vanity — Wealth that is not the result of honest industry and hard labor is seldom permanent. All fortunes acquired by speculation, lucky hits, and ministering to the pride or luxury of others, etc., soon become dissipated. They are not gotten in the way of Providence, and have not God’s blessing, and therefore are not permanent.

13:12 Hope deferred makes the heart sick: but when the desire comes, it is a tree of life.

vs. 12: The delay of what is anxiously hoped for, is very painful to the mind; obtaining it is very pleasant. But spiritual blessings are chiefly intended.

Verse 12. Hope deferred maketh the heart sick — When once a good is discovered, want of it felt, strong desire for the possession excited, and the promise of attainment made on grounds unsuspected, so that the reality of the thing and the certainty of the promise are manifest, hope posts forward to realize the blessing. Delay in the gratification pains the mind; the increase of the delay prostrates and sickens the heart; and if delay sickens the heart, ultimate disappointment kills it. But when the thing desired, hoped for, and expected comes, it is a tree of life, **μϣϣϣ** ¶ **ets** chaiyim, “the tree of lives;” it comforts and invigorates both body and soul. To the tree of lives, in the midst of the

gardens of paradise, how frequent are the allusions in the writings of Solomon, and in other parts of the Holy Scriptures! What deep, and perhaps yet unknown, mysteries were in this tree!

13:13 Whoso despises the word shall be destroyed: but he that fears the commandment shall be rewarded.

vs. 13: He that stands in awe of God, and reverences his word, shall escape destruction, and be rewarded for his godly fear.

Verse 13. Whoso despiseth the word — The revelation which God has in his mercy given to man—shall be destroyed; for there is no other way of salvation but that which it points out.

But he that feareth the commandment — That respects it so as to obey it, walking as this revelation directs—shall be rewarded; shall find it to be his highest interest, and shall be in peace or safety, as the Hebrew word **אַל** y may be translated.

13:13

But the deceitful, and he that is not pure of heart, and possesses nothing that is pure (as the Proverb saith, ‘To a deceitful man there is nothing good ‘), shall assuredly, being a stranger, and of a different race from the saints, be accounted unworthy to eat the Passover, for ‘a foreigner shall not eat of it .’ (Exod. 12:43). Thus Judas, when he thought he kept the Passover, because he plotted deceit against the Savior, was estranged from the city which is above, and from the apostolic company. For the law commanded the Pass-over to be eaten with due observance; but he, while eating it, was sifted of the devil , who had entered his soul.

St. Athanasius of Alexandria: Paschal Letters, 6:11.

13:14 The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.

vs. 14: The rule by which the wise regulate their conduct, is a fountain yielding life and happiness.

Verse 14. The law of the wise is a fountain of life — Perhaps it would be better to translate, “The law is to the wise man a fountain of life.” It is the same to him as the “vein of lives,” **מַיִם רַבִּים** mekor chaiyim, the great aorta which transmits the blood from the heart to every part of the body. There seems to be here an allusion to the garden of paradise, to the tree of 1745

lives, to the tempter, to the baleful issue of that temptation, and to the death entailed on man by his unwisely breaking the law of his God.

13:15 Good understanding gives favor: but the way of transgressors is hard.

vs. 15: The way of sinners is hard upon others, and hard to the sinner himself. The service of sin is slavery; the road to hell is strewn with the thorns and thistles that followed the curse.

13:16 Every prudent man deals with knowledge: but a fool lays open his folly.

vs. 16: It is folly to talk of things of which we know nothing, and to undertake what we are no way fit for.

Verse 16. The way of transgressors is hard. — Never was a truer saying; most sinners have more pain and difficulty to get their souls damned, than the righteous have, with all their cross-bearings, to get to the kingdom of heaven.

13:17 A wicked messenger falls into mischief: but a faithful ambassador is health.

vs. 17: Those that are wicked, and false to Christ and to the souls of men, do mischief, and fall into mischief; but those that are faithful, find sound words healing to others and to themselves.

Verse 17. A wicked messenger — The Septuagint: **βασιλευς** yrasuev, a bold king; instead of **מַלְאָךְ** malach, a messenger, they had read **מֶלֶךְ** melech, a king: but they are singular in this rendering; none of the other versions have it so. He that betrays the counsels of his government, or the interests of his country, will sooner or later fall into mischief; but he that faithfully and loyally fulfils his mission, shall produce honor and safety to the commonwealth.

13:18 Poverty and shame shall be to him that refuses instruction: but he that regards reproof shall be honored.

vs. 18: He that scorns to be taught, will certainly be brought down.

13:18

Those riches are good, to acquire which is the work of great virtue and merit, and the righteous possessor of which is praised by David who says “The generation of the righteous shall be blessed: glory and riches are in his house, and his righteousness remaineth for ever:” (Ps. 111:2,3) and again “the ransom of a man’s life are his riches.” [8]. And of these riches it is Said in the Apocalypse to him who has them not and to his shame is poor and naked: “I will begin,” says he, “to vomit thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest I am rich and wealthy and have need of nothing: and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I counsel thee to buy

of me gold fire-tried, that thou mayest be made rich, and mayest be clothed in white garments, and that the shame of thy nakedness may not appear.” (Rev. 3:16-18).

St. John Cassian: Conference 3:9.

13:19 The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul: but it is abomination to fools to depart from evil.

vs. 19: There are in man strong desires after happiness; but never let those expect any thing truly sweet to their souls, who will not be persuaded to leave their sins.

Verse 19. The desire accomplished — See on ver. 12.

13:20 He that walks with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.

Wisdom Through Relationships

Perhaps you are wondering how you can develop the kind of wisdom described in Proverbs. The place to start is by cultivating friendships with wise people (Prov. 13:20). Wisdom is not a set of facts to be memorized, but a set of life skills to be mastered (see “Wisdom” at Prov. 1:2). Relationships are the key to making this happen.

A beautiful illustration of this principle can be found in the relationship of Moses with his father-in-law Jethro. Moses was heading toward burnout when Jethro took him a side. He not only warned the young leader that he was in imminent danger of collapse, but wisely counseled him to delegate authority (Ex. 18:17-27). As a result, Moses developed an organization structure that enabled him to lead Israel for the next forty years. That system might never have come about had Moses not had a relationship with a wise man like Jethro.

But it is not enough to choose wise friends. Proverbs also warns us about friendships with those described as “fools” (see “The Foolishness of fools” at Prov. 14:24). The point is not to try to avoid all contact with foolish people, which would be impossible. Rather, knowing that the company we keep can have profound influence on us, we should avoid becoming overly familiar with unwise people. We should not listen to their advice or emulate their habits.

As you reflect on your network of relationships, whose friendship are you cultivating? Are they people who possess wisdom? Or are you building relationships with those who scoff at and reject God’s ways? Be careful, because the wrong set of friends can lead to disaster (13:20).

vs. 20: Multitudes are brought to ruin by bad company. And all that make themselves wicked will be destroyed.

Verse 20. He that walketh with wise men shall be wise — To walk with a person implies love and attachment; and it is impossible not to imitate those we love. So we say, “Show me his company, and I’ll tell you the man.” Let me know the company he keeps, and I shall easily guess his moral character.

13:21 Evil pursues sinners: but to the righteous good shall be repayed.

vs. 21: When God pursues sinners he is sure to overtake them; and he will reward the righteous.

13:22 A good man leaves an inheritance to his children’s children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just.

vs. 22: The servant of God who is not anxious about riches, takes the best method of providing for his children.

Verse 22. A good man leaveth an inheritance — He files many a prayer in heaven in their behalf, and his good example and advices are remembered and quoted from generation to generation. Besides, whatever property he left was honestly acquired, and well-gotten goods are permanent. The general experience of men shows this to be a common case; and that property ill-gotten seldom reaches to the third generation. This even the heathens observed. Hence: De male quaesitis non gaudet tertius haeres. “The third generation shall not possess the goods that have been unjustly acquired.”

13:23 Much food is in the tillage of the poor: but there is that is destroyed for want of judgment.

vs. 23: The poor, yet industrious, thrive, though in a homely manner, while those who have great riches are often brought to poverty for want of judgment.

Verse 23. That is destroyed for want of judgment. — O, how much of the poverty of the poor arises from their own want of management! They have little or no economy, and no foresight. When they get any thing, they speedily spend it; and a feast and a famine make the chief varieties of their life.

Verse 24. He that spareth his rod hateth his son — That is, if he hated him, he could not do him a greater disservice than not to correct him when his obstinacy or disobedience requires it. We have met with this subject already, and it is a favourite with Solomon. See the places referred to in the margin.

The Revelation Mr. Holden makes some sensible observations on this passage: “By the neglect of early correction the desires (passions) obtain ascendancy; the temper becomes irascible, peevish, querulous. Pride is nourished,

humility destroyed, and by the habit of indulgence the mind is incapacitated to bear with firmness and equanimity the cares and sorrows, the checks and disappointments, which flesh is heir to.”

13:24 *He that spares his rod hates his son: but he that loves him chastens him betimes.*

Love Sets Limits

No parent enjoys hearing the plaintive cries of a little one in response to correction or punishment. As a result, some parents back off from enforcing tough standards, certain that a happy child is a healthy child. But Proverbs says that discipline is a demonstration of love, whereas lack of it is a form of hate (Prov. 13:24). Do you care enough for your children to set limits on their behavior? See “Rearing Children with the Rod” at Prov. 19:18.

vs. 24: He acts as if he hated his child, who, by false indulgence, permits sinful habits to gather strength, which will bring sorrow here, and misery hereafter.

13:25 *The righteous eats to the satisfying of his soul: but the belly of the wicked shall want.*

vs. 25: It is the misery of the wicked, that even their sensual appetites are always craving. The righteous feeds on the word and ordinances, to the satisfying of his soul with the promises of the gospel, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Bread of life.

Verse 25. To the satisfying of his soul — His desires are all moderate; he is contented with his circumstances, and is pleased with the lot which God is pleased to send. The wicked, though he use all shifts and expedients to acquire earthly good, not sticking even at rapine and wrong, is frequently in real want, and always dissatisfied with his portion. A contented mind is a continual feast. At such feasts he eats not.

13:25

“The righteous eateth to the satisfying of his soul, but the belly of the wicked shall want.” For we must consider the food promised in the law as the food of the soul, which is to satisfy not both parts of man’s nature, but the soul only. And the words of the Gospel, although probably containing a deeper meaning, may yet be taken in their more simple and obvious sense. as teaching us not to be disturbed with anxieties about our food and clothing, but, while living in plainness, and desiring only what is needful, to put our trust in the providence of God.

Origen: Against Celsus, 7:24.

He came to you, to receive pity from you, but he goes away having received a deadly blow, and weeps the more. For when by reason of his poverty he is compelled to beg, and is insulted on account of his begging, think how great will be the punishment of those who insult him. “He that dishonoreth the poor,” it says, “provoketh his Maker.” (Proverbs 14:12, 31, Sept) For tell me, did He suffer him to be poor for thy sake, that thou mightest be able to heal thyself — and dost thou insult him who for thy sake is poor? What obstinacy is this! what an act of ingratitude is it! “Admonish him as a brother,” he says, and after having given, he orders you to admonish him. But if even without giving we insult him, what excuse shall we have?

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on 2 Thessalonians, hom. 5.

CHAPTER 14

The house of the wicked, though built ever so strong and high, shall be brought to disgrace and at length made extinct. The tabernacle of the upright, through moveable and despicable shall, at all events have grace and comfort, and shall be eternally established.

Various moral sentiments. The antithesis between wisdom and folly, and the different effects of each.

14:1 Every wise woman builds her house: but the foolish plucks it down with her hands.

Vs. 1: A woman who has no fear of God, who is willful and wasteful, and indulges her ease, will as certainly ruin her family, as if she plucked her house down.

Verse 1. Every wise woman buildeth her house — By her prudent and industrious management she increases property in the family, furniture in the house, and food and raiment for her household. This is the true building of a house. The thriftless wife acts differently, and the opposite is the result. Household furniture, far from being increased, is dilapidated; and her household are ill-fed, ill-clothed, and worse educated.

14:2 He that walks in his uprightness fears the LORD: but he that is perverse in his ways despises him.

vs. 2: Here are grace and sin in their true colors. Those that despise God's precepts and promises, despise God and all his power and mercy.

14:3 In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride: but the lips of the wise shall preserve them.

vs. 3: Pride grows from that root of bitterness which is in the heart. The root must be plucked up, or we cannot conquer this branch. The prudent words of wise men get them out of difficulties.

Verse 3. The mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride — The reproofs of such a person are ill-judged and ill-timed, and generally are conveyed in such language as renders them not only ineffectual, but displeasing, and even irritating.

14:3

“Out of the mouth of fools there is a rod for wrong-doing.” Folly, then, is condemned because it causes wrong-doing. Ought we not rather to avoid this, than death, or loss, or want, or exile, or sickness? Who would not think some blemish of body or loss of inheritance far less than some blemish of soul or loss of reputation?

St. Ambrose: Duties of the Clergy, 3:4 (24).

14:4 Where no oxen are, the crib is clean: but much increase is by the strength of the ox.

vs. 4: There can be no advantage without something which, though of little moment, will affright the indolent.

Verse 4. But much increase is by the strength of the ox. — The ox is the most profitable of all the beasts used in husbandry. Except merely for speed, he is almost in every respect superior to the horse. 1. He is longer lived. 2. Scarcely liable to any diseases. 3. He is steady, and always pulls fair in his gears. 4. He lives, fattens, and maintains his strength on what a horse will not eat, and therefore is supported on one third the cost. 5. His manure is more profitable. And, 6, When he is worn out in his labor his flesh is good for the nourishment of man, his horns of great utility, and his hide almost invaluable. It might be added, he is little or no expense in shoeing, and his gears are much more simple, and much less expensive, than those of the horse. In all large farms oxen are greatly to be preferred to horses. Have but patience with this most patient animal, and you will soon find that there is much increase by the strength and labor of the ox.

14:4

For that the people of holy Church increases, that spiritual crops of corn for the heavenly garner are multiplied, we never doubted that this was from the grace of Almighty God which flowed largely to you, most blessed ones. We therefore render thanks to Almighty God, that we see fulfilled in you what is written, Where there is much increase, there the strength of the oxen is manifest (Proverbs 14:4). For, if a strong ox had not drawn the plough of the tongue over the ground of the hearts of hearers, so great an increase of the faithful would by no means have sprung up.

Fr. Gregory (the Great), Book 8, Epistle 30 to EULOGIUS, BISHOP OF ALEXANDRIA

14:5 A faithful witness will not lie: but a false witness will utter lies.

vs. 5: A conscientious witness will not dare to represent anything otherwise than according to his knowledge.

14:6 A scorner seeks wisdom, and finds it not: but knowledge is easy unto him that understands.

vs. 6: A scorner treats Divine things with contempt. He that feels his ignorance and unworthiness will search the Scriptures in a humble spirit.

Verse 6. A scorner seeketh wisdom — I believe the scorner means, in this book, the man that despises the counsel of God; the infidel. Such may seek wisdom; but he never can find it, because he does not seek it where it is to be found; neither in the teaching of God's Spirit, nor in the revelation of his will.

14:7 Go from the presence of a foolish man, when you perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge.

vs. 7: We discover a wicked man if there is no savor of piety in his discourse.

Verse 7. When thou perceivest not-the lips of knowledge. — Instead of daath, knowledge, several MSS. have sheker, a lie. How this reading came I cannot conjecture. The meaning of the adage is plain: Never associate with a vain, empty fellow, when thou perceivest he can neither convey nor receive instruction.

14:8 The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way: but the folly of fools is deceit.

vs. 8: We are travelers, whose concern is, not to spy out wonders, but to get to their journey's end; to understand the rules we are to walk by, also the ends we are to walk toward. The bad man cheats himself, and goes on in his mistake.

Verse 8. Is to understand his way — Instead of **ybh** habin, to understand, **ykh** hachin, to DIRECT his way, is found in one MS. It makes a very good sense.

14:9 Fools make a mock at sin: but among the righteous there is favor.

vs. 9: Foolish and profane men consider sin a mere trifle, to be made light of rather than mourned over. Fools mock at the sin-offering; but those that make light of sin, make light of Christ.

Verse 9. Fools make a mock at sin — And only fools would do so. But he that makes a sport of sinning, will find it no sport to suffer the vengeance of an eternal fire. Some learned men by their criticisms have brought this verse into embarrassments, out of which they were not able to extricate it. I believe we shall not come much nearer the sense than our present version does.

14:9 LXX

Lucius of Castra Galbae said:... — let it be done as it is written, "The house of those that are contrary to the law owes a cleansing." And it is a consequence that those who, having been baptized by people who are contrary to the Church, are polluted, must first be cleansed, and then at length be baptized.

The Seventh Council Of Carthage Under Cyprian Concerning The Baptism Of Heretics.

14:9 LXX

'The houses of those that are opposed to the law must needs be cleansed;' and it therefore follows that those who have been polluted by being baptized by men opposed to Christ should first be cleansed, and only then baptized."

St. Augustine: On Baptism, Against the Donatists, 6:14:21.

14:10 The heart knows his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy.

vs. 10: We do not know what stings of conscience, or consuming passions, torment the prosperous sinner. Nor does the world know the peace of mind a serious Christian enjoys, even in poverty and sickness.

Verse 10. The heart knoweth his own bitterness — **wꞥpn trm** morrath naphsho, "The bitterness of its soul." Under spiritual sorrow, the heart feels, the soul feels; all the animal nature feels and suffers. But when the peace of God is spoken to the troubled soul, the joy is indescribable; the whole man partakes of it. And a stranger to these religious feelings, to the travail of the soul, and to the witness of the Spirit, does not intermeddle with them; he does not understand them: indeed they may be even foolishness to him, because they are spiritually discerned.

14:11 The house of the wicked shall be overthrown: but the tabernacle of the upright shall flourish.

vs. 11: Sin ruins many great families; whilst righteousness often raises and strengthens even mean families.

vs. 12: The ways of carelessness, of worldliness, and of sensuality, seem right to those that walk in them; but self-deceivers prove self-destroyers. See the vanity of carnal mirth. *14:13 Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness.*

Verse 12. There is a way which seemeth right unto a man — This may be his easily besetting sin, the sin of his constitution, the sin of his trade. Or it may be his own false views of religion: he may have an imperfect repentance, a false faith, a very false creed; and he may persuade himself that he is in the direct way to heaven. Many of the papists, when they were burning the saints of God in the flames at Smithfield, thought they were doing God service! And in the late Irish massacre, the more of the Protestants they piked to death, shot, or burnt, the more they believed they deserved of God's favor and their Church's gratitude. But cruelty and murder are the short road, the near way, to eternal perdition.

14:12 There is a way which seems right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

Verse 13. Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful — Many a time is a smile forced upon the face, when the heart is in deep distress. And it is a hard task to put on the face of mirth, when a man has a heavy heart.

14:14 The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself.

vs. 14: Of all sinners backsliders will have the most terror when they reflect on their own ways.

Verse 14. The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways — 1. Who is the backslider? *gws* sug. 1. The man who once walked in the ways

of religion, but has withdrawn from them. 2. The man who once fought manfully against the world, the devil, and the flesh; but has retreated from the battle, or joined the enemy. 3. The man who once belonged to the congregation of the saints, but is now removed from them, and is set down in the synagogue of Satan.

2. But who is the backslider in HEART? 1. Not he who was surprised and overcome by the power of temptation, and the weakness of his own heart. 2. But he who drinks down iniquity with greediness. 3. Who gives cheerful way to the bent of his own nature, and now delights in fulfilling the lusts of the flesh and of the mind. 4. Who loves sin as before he loved godliness.

3. What are his own ways? Folly, sin, disappointment, and death; with the apprehension of the wrath of God, and the sharp twings of a guilty conscience.

4. What is implied in being filled with his own ways? Having his soul saturated with folly, sin, and disappointment. At last ending here below in death, and then commencing an eternal existence where the fire is not quenched, and under the influence of that worm that never dieth. Alas, alas! who may abide when God doeth this?

And a good man shall be satisfied from himself. — 1. Who is the good man? (*bwf ज्ञया* ish tob.) 1. The man whose heart is right with God,

whose tongue corresponds to his heart, and whose actions correspond to both. 2. The man who is every thing that the sinner and backslider are not.

2. He shall be satisfied from himself—he shall have the testimony of his own conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, he has his conversation among men. 1750

3. He shall have God's Spirit to testify with his spirit that he is a child of God. He hath the witness in himself that he is born from above. The Spirit of God in his conscience, and the testimony of God in his Bible, show him that he belongs to the heavenly family. It is not from creeds or confessions of faith that he derives his satisfaction: he gets it from heaven, and it is sealed upon his heart.

14:15 The simple believes every word: but the prudent man looks well to his going.

vs. 15: Eager readiness to believe what others say, has ever proved mischievous. The whole world was thus ruined at first. The man who is spiritually wise, depends on the Savior alone for acceptance. He is watchful against the enemies of his salvation, by taking heed to God's word.

14:16 A wise man fears, and departs from evil: but the fool rages, and is confident.

vs. 16: Holy fear guards against every thing unholy.

Verse 16. A wise man feareth — He can never trust in himself, though he be satisfied from himself. He knows that his sufficiency is of GOD; and he has that fear that causes him to depart from evil, which is a guardian to the love he feels. Love renders him cautious; the other makes him confident. His caution leads him from sin; his confidence leads him to God.

14:17 He that is soon angry deals foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated.

vs. 17: An angry man is to be pitied as well as blamed; but the revengeful is more hateful.

Verse 17. He that is soon angry — *μyπα rxq* ketsar appayim, “short of nostrils:” because, when a man is angry, his nose is contracted, and drawn up towards his eyes.

Dealeth foolishly — He has no time for reflection; he is hurried on by his passions, speaks like a fool, and acts like a madman.

14:18 The simple inherit folly: but the prudent are crowned with knowledge.

vs. 18: Sin is the shame of sinners; but wisdom is the honor of the wise.

14:19 The evil bow before the good; and the wicked at the gates of the righteous.

vs. 19: Even bad men acknowledge the excellencies of God's people.

Verse 19. The evil bow before the good — They are almost constrained to show them respect; and the wicked, who have wasted their substance with riotous living, bow before the gates of the righteous-of benevolent men-begging a morsel of bread.

14:20 The poor is hated even of his own neighbor: but the rich hath many friends.

vs. 20: Friendship in the world is governed by self-interest. It is good to have God our Friend; he will not desert us. Verse 20. But the rich hath many friends. — Many who speak to him the language of friendship; but if they profess friendship because he is rich, there is not one real friend among them. There is a fine saying of Cicero on this subject: “They are like swallows, who fly off during the winter, and quit our cold climates; and do not return till the warm season: but as soon as the winter sets in, they are all off again.” So Horace: —1751

“As long as thou art prosperous, thou shalt have many friends: but who of them will regard thee when thou hast lost thy wealth?”

14:21 He that despiss his neighbor sinns: but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he.

vs. 21: To despise a man for his employment or appearance is a sin.

Verse 21. He that despiseth his neighbor sinneth — To despise a man because he has some natural blemish is unjust, cruel, and wicked. He is not the author of his own imperfections; they did not occur through his fault or folly; and if he could, he would not retain them. It is, therefore, unjust and wicked to despise him for what is not his fault, but his misfortune.

But he that hath mercy on the poor — Who reproaches no man for his poverty or scanty intellect, but divides his bread with the hungry—happy is he; the blessing of God, and of them that were ready to perish, shall come upon him.

14:22 Do they not err that devise evil? but mercy and truth shall be to them that devise good.

vs. 22: How wisely those consult their own interest, who not only do good, but devise it!

14:23 In all labor there is profit: but the talk of the lips tends only to penury.

vs. 23: Labor of the head, or of the hand, will turn to some good account. But if men’s religion runs all out in talk and noise, they will come to nothing.

Verse 23. In all labor there is profit — If a man work at his trade, he gains by it; if he cultivate the earth, it will yield an increase; and in proportion as he labors, so will be his profit: but he who talks much labors little. And a man words is seldom a man of deeds. Less talk and more work, is one of our own ancient advices.

“TO every careful thinker there is a gain” (**Proverbs 14:23, LXX.**), saith the proverb; and Christ implied more than this, when He said, “He that seeketh findeth.” (Matthew 7:8) Wherefore it does not occur to me any more to wonder how Philip followed Christ. Andrew was persuaded when he had heard from John, and Peter the same from Andrew, but Philip not having learned anything from any but Christ who said to him only this, “Follow Me,” straightway obeyed, and went not back, but even became a preacher to others.

St. John Chrysostom: *Homilies on St. John, 20.*

14:24 The crown of the wise is their riches: but the foolishness of fools is folly.

vs. 24: The riches of men of wisdom and piety enlarge their usefulness

Verse 24. But the foolishness of fools is folly. — The Targum reads, The honor of fools is folly. The fool, from his foolishness, produces acts of folly. This appears to be the meaning.

14:25 A true witness delivers souls: but a deceitful witness speaks lies.

vs. 25: An upright man will venture the displeasure of the greatest, to bring truth to light.

14:26 In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge.

Verse 26. In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence — From this, and from genuine Christian experience, we find that the fear of God is highly consistent with the strongest confidence in his mercy and goodness.

14:26

“A man,” as it is written, “that is in sorrow laboreth for himself and does violence to his own destruction.” For our destruction is delight in this present life, and to speak more definitely, the performance of our own likes and desires, as, if a man withdraws these from his soul and mortifies them, he straightway does glorious and valuable violence to his own destruction, provided that he refuses to it the pleasantest of its wishes which the Divine word often rebukes by the prophet, saying: “For in the days of your fast your own will is found;” and again: “If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, to do thy will on My holy day, and glorify him, while thou dost not thy own ways, and thy own will is not found, to speak a word.”

St. John Cassian: *Conference 24:26.*

14:26 “

Fear seems to be allied to cowardice: seems to be the character of the weak, not the strong. But see what saith the Scripture, “The fear of the Lord is the hope of strength.” Let us then fear, that we may not fear; that is, let us fear

prudently, that we may not fear vainly. The holy Martyrs on the occasion of whose solemnity this lesson was read out of the Gospel, in fearing, feared not; because in fearing God, they did not regard men.

St. Augustine: Sermons on N.T. Lessons, 15:1.

14:27 The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.

vs. 26,27: Those who fear the Lord so as to obey and serve him, have a strong ground of confidence, and will be preserved. Let us seek to this Fountain of life, that we may escape the snares of death.

Verse 27. The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life — **μyyj rwqm** mekor chaiyim, the vein of lives. Another allusion to the great aorta which carries the blood from the heart to all the extremities of the body. Of this phrase, and the tree of lives, Solomon is particularly fond. See on chap. 4:23; 10:12.

14:28 In the multitude of people is the king's honor: but in the want of people is the destruction of the prince.

vs. 28: Let all that wish well to the kingdom of Christ, do what they can, that many may be added to his church.

Verse 28. In the multitude of people — It is the interest of every state to promote marriage by every means that is just and prudent; and to discourage, disgrace, and debase celibacy; to render bachelors incapable, 1752

after a given age, of all public employments: and to banish nunneries and monasteries from all parts of their dominions; — they have ever, from their invention, contributed more to vice than virtue; and are positively point blank against the law of God.

14:29 He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalts folly.

vs. 29: A mild, patient man is one that learns of Christ, who is Wisdom itself. Unbridled passion is folly made known.

Verse 29. That is hasty of spirit — **jwr rxq** ketsar ruach, “the short of spirit;” one that is easily irritated; and, being in a passion, he is agitated so as to be literally short of breath. Here put in opposition to **μyπα ûra** erech appayim, long of nostrils; see on ver. 17; and of the same import with St. Paul’s makroymia, longsuffering, longmindedness. See on Ephesians 4:2.

If one look at a furious child, does he not laugh at him? “The poor-spirited” (it is said) “is mightily simple.” (Proverbs 14:29) The simple then is a child: and “he who is long-suffering” (it is said) “is abundant in wisdom.” This “abundant wisdom” then let us follow after, that we may attain to the good things promised us in Christ Jesus our Lord, with whom to the Father together with the Holy Ghost, be glory, power, honor, now and for ever and world without end. Amen.

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on Hebrews, 22.

Seest thou not the trees too, the more they are shaken by the winds, so much the more do they become stronger and firmer? We then, if we be long-suffering, shall also become strong. For it is said, “a man who is long-suffering abounds in wisdom, but he that is of a little soul is strongly foolish.” (Proverbs 14:29) Seest thou how great is his commendation of the one, seest thou how great his censure of the other? “Strongly foolish,” i.e. very [foolish]. Let us not then be faint-hearted one towards another: for this does not rise from enmity, but from having a small soul. As if the soul be strong, it will endure all things easily, and nothing will be able to sink it, but will lead it into tranquil havens.

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on Hebrews, 19.

14:29

For that long-suffering is wisdom we are taught by very clear passages of Scripture: for “a man who is long-suffering is great in prudence; but a coward is very foolish.”

St. John Cassian: Conference 16:27.

14:29

For everybody knows that patience gets its name from the passions and endurance, and so it is clear that no one can be called patient but one who bears without annoyance all the indignities offered to him, and so it is not without reason that he is praised by Solomon: “Better is the patient man than the strong, and he who restrains his anger than he who takes a city;” (Prov. 16:32), and again: “For a long-suffering man is mighty in prudence, but a faint-hearted man is very foolish.”

St. John Cassian: Conference 18:13.

14:30 A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones.

vs. 30: An upright, contented, and benevolent mind, tends to health.

Verse 30. A sound heart is the life of the flesh — A healthy state of the blood, and a proper circulation of that stream of life, is the grand cause, in the hand of God, of health and longevity. If the heart be diseased, life cannot be long continued.

14:30

The envious are to be told that, while they consume themselves with this inward plague, they destiny whatever good they seem to have within them. Whence it is written, Soundness of heart is the life of the flesh, but envy the rottenness of the bones (Proverbs 14:30). For what is signified by the flesh but certain weak and tender actions, and what by the bones but brave ones? And for the most part it comes to pass that some, with innocence of heart, in some of their actions seem weak; but others, though performing some stout deeds before human eyes, still pine away inwardly with the pestilence of envy towards what is good in others. Wherefore it is well said, Soundness of heart is the life of the flesh; because, if innocence of mind is kept, even such things as are weak outwardly are in time strengthened. And rightly it is there added, Envy is the rottenness of the bones; because through the vice of spite what seems strong to human eyes perishes in the eyes of God. For the rotting of the bones through envy means that certain even strong things utterly perish.

Fr. Gregory (the Great), Pastoral Rule, 10.

14:30 LXX

And the Lord in the Gospel called Himself this, when He said: “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.”

St. Ambrose: Letter, 63:46.

14:31 He that oppresses the poor reproachs his Maker: but he that honors him hath mercy on the poor.

vs. 31: To oppress the poor is to reproach our Creator.

Verse 31. He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker — Because the poor, or comparatively poor, are, in the order of God, a part of the inhabitants of the earth; and every man who loves God will show mercy to the poor, for with this God is peculiarly delighted. The poor have we ever with us, for the excitement and exercise of those benevolent, compassionate, and merciful feelings, without which men had been but little better than brutes.

14:32 The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death.

vs. 32: The wicked man has his soul forced from him; he dies in his sins, under the guilt and power of them. But godly men, though they have pain and some dread of death, have the blessed hope, which God, who cannot lie, has given them.

Verse 32. The wicked is driven away in his wickedness — He does not leave life cheerfully. Poor soul! Thou hast no hope in the other world, and thou leavest the present with the utmost regret! Thou wilt not go off; but God will drive thee.

But the righteous hath hope in his death. — He rejoiceth to depart and be with Christ: to him death is gain; he is not reluctant to go—he flies at the call of God.

14:33 Wisdom rests in the heart of him that hath understanding: but that which is in the midst of fools is made known.

vs. 33: Wisdom possesses the heart, and thus regulates the affection and tempers.

14:34 Righteousness exalts a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.

vs. 34: Piety and holiness always promote industry, sobriety, and honesty.

Verse 34. But sin is a reproach to any people. — I am satisfied this is not the sense of the original, *tafj μymal dsjw vechesed leummim chattath*; which would be better rendered, And mercy is a sin-offering for the people. The Vulgate has, “sin makes the people wretched.” *elassonousi de fulav amartiai*; “But sins lessen the tribes.” — Septuagint. So also the Syriac and Arabic. The plain meaning of the original seems to be, A national disposition to mercy appears in the sight of God as a continual sin-offering. Not that it atones for the sin of the people; but, as a sin-offering is pleasing in the sight of the God of mercy, so is a merciful disposition in a nation. This view of the verse is consistent with the purest doctrines of free grace. And what is the true sense of the words, we should take at all hazards and consequences: we shall never trench upon a sound creed by a literal interpretation of God’s words. No nation has more of this spirit than the British nation. It is true, we have too many sanguinary laws; but the spirit of the people is widely different.

If any one will contend for the common version, he has my consent; and I readily agree in the saying, Sin is the reproach of any people. It is the curse and scandal of man. Though I think what I have given is the true meaning of the text.

TO BRUNICHILD, QUEEN OF THE FRANKS

Gregory to Brunichild, etc.

Since it is written, Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin maketh peoples miserable (Proverbs 14:34), a kingdom is then believed to be stable when a fault that is known of is quickly amended.

Fr. Gregory (the Great): Book 11, Epistle 69.

14:35 The king's favor is toward a wise servant: but his wrath is against him that causes shame.

vs. 35: The great King who reigns over heaven and earth, will reward faithful servants who honor his gospel by the proper discharge of the duties of their stations: he despises not the services of the lowest.

Verse 35. The king's favor is toward a wise servant — The king should have an intelligent man for his minister; a man of deep sense, sound judgment, and of a feeling, merciful disposition. He who has not the former will plunge the nation into difficulties; and he who has not the latter will embark her in disastrous wars. Most wars are occasioned by bad ministers, men of blood, who cannot be happy but in endeavoring to unchain the spirit of discord. Let every humane heart pray, Lord, scatter thou the people who delight in war! Amen-so be it. Selah

CHAPTER 15

The course of the wicked man is an abomination to God, neither is there any offering he can make to God that can be accepted, as long as the heart is resolved to go on in sin. The upright man is regarded as the friend of God, whose prayer is God's delight, and to whom He is very near.

The fruits of a right and holy life listed here are all by-products and experiences of those whose "life is hid with Christ in God."

The soft answer. Useful correction. Stability of the righteous. The contented mind. The slothful man. The fool. The covetous. The impious. The wicked opposed to the righteous; to the diligent; and to the man who fears the Lord.

15:1 A soft answer turns away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.

Vs. 1: A right cause will be better pleaded with meekness than with passion. Nothing stirs up anger like grievous words.

Verse 1. A soft answer — Gentleness will often disarm the most furious, where positive derangement has not taken place; one angry word will always beget another, for the disposition of one spirit always begets its own likeness in another: thus kindness produces kindness, and rage produces rage. Universal experience confirms this proverb.

15:1LXX

For nothing clouds the purity of the reason, and the perspicuity of the mental vision so much as undisciplined wrath, rushing along with violent impetuosity. "For wrath," says one, "destroys even the prudent." For the eye of the soul being darkened as in some nocturnal battle is not able to distinguish friends from foes, nor the honorable from the unworthy, but handles them all in turn in the same way; even if some harm must be suffered, readily enduring everything, in order to satisfy the pleasure of the soul. For the fire of wrath is a kind of pleasure, and tyrannizes over the soul more harshly than pleasure, completely upsetting its healthy organization. For it easily impels men to arrogance, and unseasonable enmities, and unreasonable hatred, and it continually makes them ready to commit wanton and vain offenses; and forces them to say and do many other things of that kind, the soul being swept along by the rush of passion, and having nothing on which to fasten its strength and resist so great an impulse.

St. John Chrysostom: On the Priesthood, Book 3,14.

15:1

For as long as this remains in our hearts, and blinds with its hurtful darkness the eye of the soul, we can neither acquire right judgment and discretion, nor gain the insight which springs from an honest gaze, or ripeness of counsel, nor can we be partakers of life, or retentive of righteousness, or even have the capacity for spiritual and true light: "for," says one, "mine eye is disturbed by reason of anger" (Ps. 30 [31]:10). Nor can we become partakers of wisdom, even though we are considered wise by universal consent, for "anger rests in the bosom of fools" (Eccl. 7:10 LXX). Nor can we even attain immortal life, although we are accounted prudent in the opinion of everybody, for "anger destroys even the prudent" (Luke 12:20). Nor shall we be able with clear judgment of heart to secure the controlling power of righteousness, even though we are reckoned perfect and holy in the estimation of all men, for "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God" (James 1:20). Nor can we by any possibility acquire that esteem and honor which is so frequently seen even in worldlings, even though we are thought noble and honorable through the privileges of birth, because "an angry man is dishonored" (Prov. 11:25 LXX). Nor again can we secure any ripeness of counsel, even though we appear to be weighty, and endowed with the utmost knowledge; because "an angry man acts without counsel" (Prov. 14:17 LXX). Nor can we be free from dangerous disturbances, nor be without sin, even though no sort of disturbances be brought upon us by others; because "a passionate man engenders quarrels, but an angry man digs up sins" (Prov. 39:22 LXX).

St. John Cassian: The Institutes, book 8, 1.

15:2 The tongue of the wise uses knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools pours out foolishness.

vs. 2: He that has knowledge, is to use it aright, for the good of others.

Verse 2. Useth knowledge aright — This is very difficult to know: — when to speak, and when to be silent; what to speak, and what to leave unspoken; the manner that is best and most suitable to the occasion, the subject, the circumstances, and the persons. All these are difficulties, often even to the wisest men. Even wise counsel may be foolishly given.

15:3 The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.

vs. 3: Secret sins, services, and sorrows, are under God's eye. This speaks comfort to saints, and terror to sinners.

Verse 3. The eyes of the Lord are in every place — He not only sees all things, by his omnipresence, but his providence is everywhere. And if the consideration that his eye is in every place, have a tendency to appal those whose hearts are not right before him, and who seek for privacy, that they may commit iniquity; yet the other consideration, that his providence is everywhere, has a great tendency to encourage the upright, and all who may be in perilous or distressing circumstances.

15:3

God has foreseen all, He has neglected nothing. His eye, which never sleeps, watches over all. He is present everywhere and gives to each being the means of preservation. If God has not left the sea urchin outside His providence, is He without care for you?

St. Basil the Great: The Hexameron 7:5

15:4 A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit.

vs. 4: A good tongue is healing to wounded consciences, by comforting them; to sin-sick souls, by convincing them; and it reconciles parties at variance.

Verse 4. A wholesome tongue is a tree of life — Here again is an allusion to the paradisiacal tree, מַיִם חַיִּים *ets chaiyim*, “the tree of lives.”

15:5 A fool despiss his father’s instruction: but he that regards reproof is prudent.

vs. 5: If instruction is despised, reprove men rather than suffer them to go on undisturbed in the way to ruin.

15:6 In the house of the righteous is much treasure: but in the revenues of the wicked is trouble.

vs. 6: The wealth of worldly men increases their fears and suspicions, adds strength to their passions, and renders the fear of death more distressing.

15:7 The lips of the wise disperse knowledge: but the heart of the foolish does not so.

vs. 7: We use knowledge aright when we disperse it; but the heart of the foolish has nothing to disperse that is good.

15:8 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight.

Verse 8. The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination — Even the most sedulous attendance on the ordinances of God, and performance of the ceremonies of religion, is an abomination to the Lord, if the heart be not right with him, and the observance do not flow from a principle of pure devotion. No religious acts will do in place of holiness to the Lord.

The prayer of the upright is his delight. — What a motive to be upright; and what a motive to the upright to pray! But who is the upright? The man who is weary of sin, and sincerely desires the salvation of God; as well as he who has already received a measure of that salvation. Hence it is said in the next verse, “He loveth him that followeth after righteousness.”

15:8

“For the sacrifices of the wicked are abomination to the LORD; but the prayers of the upright are acceptable before Him,” (Prov. 15:8) since “righteousness is more acceptable before God than sacrifice.” Such also as the following we find in Isaiah: “To what purpose to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? saith the LORD;” and the whole section (Isa. 1:11 etc.). “Break every bond of wickedness; for this is the sacrifice that is acceptable to the Lord, a contrite heart that seeks its Maker” (Isa. 58:6). “Deceitful balances are abomination before God; but a just balance is acceptable to Him” (Prov. 11:1).

St. Clement of Alexandria: Stromata 2:13.

For it is written, The vows of the righteous are his delight (Proverbs 15:8). For indeed in the judgment of Almighty God it is not what is given, but by whom it is given, that is regarded.

For hence it is that it is written, The Lord had respect unto Abel and to his gifts, but unto Cain and to his gifts he had not respect (Genesis 4:4, 5). To wit, being about to say that the Lord had respect to the gifts, he was careful to premise that He had respect unto Abel. Thus it is plainly shewn that the offerer was not acceptable by reason of the gifts, but the gifts were so by reason of the offerer. You shew, therefore, how acceptable your offering is, seeing that, being about to give gold, you have first given gifts of souls by the conversion of the nation subject to you.

Fr. Gregory (the Great): Book 9, Epistle 122.

15:9 The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the LORD: but he loves him that follows after righteousness.

vs. 8, 9: The wicked put other things in the stead of Christ's atonement, or in the place of holy obedience. Praying graces are his gift, and the work of his Spirit, with which he is well pleased. **15:10 Correction is grievous unto him that forsaks the way: and he that hats reproof shall die.**

vs. 10: He that hates reproof shall perish in his sins, since he would not be parted from them.

15:11 Hell and destruction are before the LORD: how much more then the hearts of the children of men?

vs. 11: There is nothing that can be hid from the eyes of God, not even man's thoughts.

Verse 11. Hell and destruction sheol vaabaddon. Hades, the invisible world, the place of separate spirits till the resurrection: and Abaddon, the place of torment; are ever under the eye and control of the Lord.

15:12 A scorner loves not one that reproveth him: neither will he go unto the wise.

vs. 12: A scorner cannot bear to reflect seriously within his own heart.

15:13 A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.

vs. 13: A gloomy, impatient, unthankful spirit, springing from pride and undue attachment to worldly objects, renders a man uneasy to himself and others.

Verse 13. By sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken. — Every kind of sorrow worketh death, but that which is the offspring of true repentance. This alone is healthful to the soul. The indulgence of a disposition to sighing tends to destroy life. Every deep sigh throws off a portion of the vital energy.

15:14 The heart of him that hath understanding seeks knowledge: but the mouth of fools feeds on foolishness.

vs. 14: A wise man seeks to gain more wisdom, growing in grace and in the knowledge of Christ. But a carnal mind rests contented, flattering itself.

15:14

“For the right heart seeketh knowledge.” “For he that seeketh the Lord shall find knowledge with righteousness; and they who have sought it rightly have found peace.” “And I will know,” it is said, “not the speech of those which are puffed up, but the power.” In rebuke of those who are wise in appearance, and think themselves wise, but are not in reality wise, he writes: “For the kingdom of God is not in word” (1 Cor. 4:19,20). It is not in that which is not true, but which is only probable according to opinion; but he said “in power,” for the truth alone is powerful. And again: “If any man thinketh that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.” For truth is never mere opinion. But the “supposition of knowledge inflates,” and fills with pride; “but charity edifieth,” which deals not in supposition, but in truth. Whence it is said, “If any man loves, he is known” (1 Cor. 8:1,2,3).

St. Clement of Alexandria: Stromata 1:11.

15:15 All the days of the afflicted are evil: but he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast.

vs. 15: Some are much in affliction, and of a sorrowful spirit. Such are to be pitied, prayed for, and comforted. And others serve God with gladness of heart, and it prompts their obedience, yet they should rejoice with trembling.

Verse 16. Better is little with the fear of the Lord — Because where the fear of God is, there are moderation and contentment of spirit.

15:16 Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith.

15:17 Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.

vs. 16,17: Believers often have enough when worldly eyes see little; the Lord is with them, without the cares, troubles, and temptations which are with the wealth of the wicked.

Verse 17. Better is a dinner of herbs — Great numbers of indigent Hindoos subsist wholly on herbs, fried in oil, and mixed with their rice.

15:17

It is sweet, then, to seek not for money but for grace. It is true that this evil has long ago entered into human hearts, so that money stands in the place of honor, and the minds of men are filled with admiration for wealth. Thus love of money sinks in and as it were dries up every kindly duty; so, that men consider everything a loss which is spent beyond the usual amount. But even here the holy Scriptures have been on the watch against love of money, that it might prove no cause of hindrance, saying: “Better is hospitality, even though it consisteth only of herbs.” And again: “Better is bread in pleasantness with peace.” For the Scriptures teach us not to be wasteful, but liberal.

St. Ambrose: St. Ambrose: Duties of the Clergy, 2:11 (108).

In these two things, then, we have the advantage, in freedom, and in honor; which have nothing equal to them in regard of pleasure. For I at least would prefer a crust with freedom, to thousands of dainties with slavery. For, saith one, "Better is an entertainment of herbs with love and kindness, than an ox from the stall with hatred." (Proverbs 15:17.) For whatsoever those may say, they who are present must needs praise it, or give offense; assuming thus the rank of parasites, or rather, being worse than they. For parasites indeed, even though it be with shame and insult, have yet liberty of speech: but ye have not even this. But your meanness is indeed as great, (for ye fear and crouch,) but not so your honor. Surely then that table is deprived of every pleasure, but this is replete with all delight of soul.

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on Colossians, 1.

15:18 A wrathful man stirs up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeases strife.

vs. 18: He that is slow to anger, not only prevents strife, but appeases it, if kindled.

15:19 The way of the slothful man is as an hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous is made plain.

vs. 19: Those who have no heart to their work, pretend that they cannot do their work without hardship and danger. And thus many live always in doubt about their state, because always in neglect of some duty.

Verse 19. The way of the slothful man is as a hedge of thorns — Because he is slothful, he imagines ten thousand difficulties in the way which cannot be surmounted; but they are all the creatures of his own imagination, and that imagination is formed by his sloth.

15:19

Forasmuch as they are idle and do no work, they pry into those things which ought not to be inquired into, and by means of plausible words make merchandise of the name of Christ. These are men from whom the divine apostle kept aloof, because of the multitude of their evil deeds; as it is written: "Thorns sprout in the hands of the idle;" and, "The ways of the idle are full of thorns."

Epistle 1 of the Blessed Clement concerning Virginity, 10.

15:20 A wise son makes a glad father: but a foolish man despises his mother.

Respecting Your Parents

If you come from a home background that left painful memories of childhood, you may find it hard to think kindly toward your parents. Yet proverbs urged us as children to respect our parents, faulty though they may be. We need not like or approve of everything our parents did (and do), but only a fool despises his parents (Prov. 15:20).

It is important to add that the Bible sees parenting as a partnership between both the father and the mother, in which both are committed to each other and to the child's welfare. That is the ideal, and a child tends to thrive in that kind of home. But whether or not our parents have come even close to fulfilling their biblical responsibilities, they deserve a measure of respect and affirmation.

Proverbs includes a number of principles about how we and our parents ought to relate:

WE have life through the union of father and mother (Prove. 4:3; 23:25).

As children, we have a significant impact on how our parents view their lives and evaluate their significance (10:1; 15:20; 17:25; 23:24).

How we treat our parents displays our values and attitudes (19:26).

Disrespect for our parents can have terrible implications for our own lives (20:20).

As our parents grow older, we should give them the gifts of listening and caring (23:22)

By pursuing wisdom, we not only benefit ourselves but can bring great joy to our parents (23:25; 29:3).

By pursuing evil and folly, we can be a destructive force in our parents' lives (28:24; 29:15).

We will suffer greatly if we show no respect for our parents (30:11, 17).

Which of this principles do you need to apply right now? What gifts can you give to your parents in light of their parenting of you? Can you think of ways in which they were good for you? Have you thanked them?

vs. 20: Those who treat an aged mother or a father with contempt or neglect, show their own folly.

15:21 Folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom: but a man of understanding walks uprightly.

vs. 21: Such as are truly wise, study that their thoughts, words, and actions should be regular, sincere, and holy.

15:22 Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counselors they are established.

Effective Planning Calls for Counsel

Plans created in isolation tend to be less effective than they could be. That is why wise planning encourages participation and input from a variety of people (Prov. 15:22).

Oftentimes, however, in the rush to get something done, decision makers make the mistake of bypassing or ignoring advice. That invariably leads to problems-sometimes catastrophic-because hasty planning is rarely effective. Too many details fail through the cracks. By seeking the counsel of others, leaders can decrease the possibility overlooking crucial factors in their decisions.

Another reason for including rather than excluding others in the decision-making process is that sooner or later others must carry out the plans that are laid. To the extent that they are involved in formulating those plans, the implementers will tend to support the decisions that are made.

vs. 22: If men will not take time and pains to deliberate, they are not likely to bring any thing to pass.

Verse 22. But in the multitude of counsellors — See note on chap. 11:14. But $\mu yx[wy br$ rob yoatsim might be translated, chief or master of the council, the prime minister.

15:23 A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!

vs. 23: Wisdom is needed to suit our discourse to the occasions.

15:24 The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath.

vs. 24: A good man sets his affection on things above; his way leads directly thither.

Verse 24. The way of life is above to the wise — There is a treble antithesis here: 1. The way of the wise, and that of the fool. 2. The one is above, the other below. 3. The one is of life, the other is of death. 1756

15:25 The LORD will destroy the house of the proud: but he will establish the border of the widow.

vs. 25: Pride is the ruin of multitudes. But those who are in affliction God will support.

Verse 25. The house of the proud — Families of this description are seldom continued long. The Lord hates pride; and those that will not be humble he will destroy.

15:26 The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD: but the words of the pure are pleasant words.

vs. 26: The thoughts of wicked men offend Him who knows the heart.

15:27 He that is greedy of gain troubles his own house; but he that hates gifts shall live.

vs. 27: The covetous man lets none of his family have rest or enjoyment. And greediness of gain often tempts to projects that bring ruin.

Verse 27. He that is greedy of gain — He who will be rich; troubleth his own house-he is a torment to himself and his family by his avariciousness and penury, and a curse to those with whom he deals.

But he that hateth gifts — Whatever is given to pervert judgment.

15:27

Sometimes too by the virtue of compassion and faith the stains of sin are removed, according to this passage: “By compassion and faith sins are purged away.”

St. John Cassian: Conference 20:8.

15:28 The heart of the righteous studies to answer: but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things.

vs. 28: A good man is proved to be a wise man by this; he governs his tongue well.

Verse 28. The heart of the righteous studieth to answer — His tongue never runs before his wit, he never speaks rashly, and never unadvisedly; because he studies-ponders, his thoughts and his words.

15:28

Neither hath sin any place in common with the praise of God; for the sinner has a mouth speaking perverse things, as the Proverb saith, ‘The mouth of the wicked answereth evil things.’ For how is it possible for us to praise God with an impure mouth? since things which are contrary to each other cannot coexist. For what communion has righteousness with iniquity? or, what fellowship is there between light and darkness? So exclaims Paul, a minister of the Gospel (2 Cor. 6:14).

St. Athanasius of Alexandria: Paschal Letters, 7:4.

15:29 The LORD is far from the wicked: but he hears the prayer of the righteous.

vs. 29: God sets himself at a distance from those who set him at defiance.

Verse 29. The Lord is far from the wicked — He is neither near to hear, nor near to help.

15:30 The light of the eyes rejoices the heart: and a good report makes the bones fat.

vs. 30: How delightful to the humbled soul to hear the good report of salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ!

Verse 30. The light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart — Nature and art are continually placing before our view a multitude of the most resplendent images, each of which is calculated to give pleasure. The man who has a correct judgment, and an accurate eye, may not only amuse, but instruct himself endlessly, by the beauties of nature and art.

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15:31 *The ear that hears the reproof of life abides among the wise.*

vs. 31: Faithful, friendly reproofs help spiritual life, and lead to eternal life.

Verse 31. The ear that heareth the reproof — That receives it gratefully and obeys it. “Advice is for them that will take it,” so says one of our own old proverbs; and the meaning here is nearly the same.

15:32 *He that refuses instruction despises his own soul: but he that hears reproof gets understanding.*

vs. 32: Sinners undervalue their own souls; therefore they prefer the body before the soul, and wrong the soul to please the body.

Verse 32. Despiseth his own soul — That is constructively; for if the instruction lead to the preservation of life and soul, he that neglects or despises it throws all as much in the way of danger as if he actually hated himself.

15:33 *The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom; and before honor is humility.*

vs. 33: The fear of the Lord will dispose us to search the Scriptures with reverence; and it will cause us to follow the leadings of the Holy Spirit. While we humbly place all our dependence on the grace of God, we are exalted in the righteousness of Christ.

Verse 33. The fear of the Lord — See note on chap. 1:7. Much is spoken concerning this fear; 1. It is the beginning of wisdom. 2. It is also the beginning of knowledge. And, 3. It is the instruction of wisdom. Wisdom derives its most important lessons from the fear of God. He who fears God much, is well taught.

And before honor is humility. — That is, few persons ever arrive at honor who are not humble; and those who from low life have risen to places of trust and confidence, have been remarkable for humility. We may rest assured that the providence of God will never elevate a proud man; such God beholds afar off. He may get into places of trust and profit, but God will oust him, and the people will curse him, and curse his memory. So will it ever be with bad ministers and advisers of the crown.

15:33

Let the humble hear, Unto whom shall I have respect, but to him that is humble and quiet, and that trembleth at my words (Isaiah 66:2)? Let the haughty hear, Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled (Ibid.). Let the humble hear, Humility goeth before glory; let the haughty hear, The spirit is exalted before a fall (Proverbs 15:33; 16:18). Let the humble hear, Unto whom shall I have respect, but to him that is humble and quiet, and that trembleth at my words (Isaiah 66:2)? Let the haughty hear, Why is earth and ashes proud (Ecclus. 10:9)?

Fr. Gregory (the Great), Pastoral Rule, 17.

15:33

For what does it profit a man to gain the ornaments of heavenly eloquence and the most precious beauty of the Scriptures if by clinging to filthy deeds and thoughts he destroys it by burying it in the foulest ground, or defiles it by the dirty wallowing of his own lusts?

St. John Cassian: Conference 14:16.

CHAPTER 16

The safest way in which to travel is to travel upright, a way which God makes plain to those who desired to walk in it. We should take heed of deceiving ourselves by resting in that which seems right, but is not really so.

God makes no man wicked, but He made those whom He foreknew would be wicked of their own choice, because He knew how to get glory to Himself and honor upon them (Rom. 9:22) by the display of His grace in Christ Jesus.

Man prepares, but God governs. God has made all things for himself; he hates pride. The judgments of God. The administration of kings; their justice, anger, and clemency. God has made all in weight, measure, and due proportion. Necessity produces industry. The patient man. The lot is under the direction of the Lord.

16:1 The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD.

Vs. 1: The renewing grace of God alone prepares the heart for every good work. This teaches us that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think or speak any thing wise and good.

Verse 1. The preparations of the heart in man — The Hebrew is **bl ykr[m µdal** leadam maarchey leb, which is, literally, “To man are the dispositions of the heart; but from the Lord is the answer of the tongue.” Man proposes his wishes; but God answers as he thinks proper. The former is the free offspring of the heart of man; the latter, the free volition of God. Man may think as he pleases, and ask as he lists; but God will give, or not give, as he thinks proper. This I believe to be the meaning of this shamefully tortured passage, so often vexed by critics, their doubts, and indecisions. God help them! for they seldom have the faculty of making any subject plainer! The text does not say that the “preparations,” rather dispositions or arrangements, **ykr[m** maarchey “of the heart,” as well as “the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord;” though it is generally understood so; but it states that the dispositions or schemes of the heart (are) man’s; but the answer of the tongue (is) the Lord’s. And so the principal versions have understood it.

VULGATE. “It is the part of man to prepare his soul: it is the prerogative of the Lord to govern the tongue.” *min bar nash taritha delibba; umin yeya mamlala delishana.* —

CHALDEE. “From the son of man is the counsel of the heart; and from the Lord is the word of the tongue.” The SYRIAC is the same. *kardia androv logzesyw dikaia, ina upo tou yeou diorywyh ta diabhmata auth.* — SEPTUAGINT. “The heart of man deviseth righteous things, that its goings may be directed by God.”

The ARABIC takes great latitude: “All the works of an humble man are clean before the Lord; and the wicked shall perish in an evil day.” “Of a man fit to maken redy the inwitt: and of the Lorde to governe the tunge”. — Old MS. Bible.

“A man maye well purpose a thinge in his harte: but the answere of the tonge cometh of the Lorde.

— COVERDALE.

MATTHEW’S Bible, 1549, and BECKE’S Bible of the same date, and CARDMARDEN’S of 1566, follow Coverdale. The Bible printed by R. Barker, at Cambridge, 4to., 1615, commonly called the Breeches Bible, reads the text thus: — “The preparations of the hart are in man; but the answere of the tongue is of the Lord.” So that it appears that our first, and all our ancient versions, understood the text in the same way; and this, independently of critical torture, is the genuine meaning of the Hebrew text. That very valuable version published in Italian, at Geneva, fol. 1562, translates thus: *Le dispositioni del cuore sono de l’huomo, ma la risposta del la lingua e dal Signore.* “The dispositions of the heart are of man; but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord.”

The modern European versions, as far as I have seen, are the same. And when the word dispositions, arrangements, schemes, is understood to be the proper meaning of the Hebrew term, as shown above, the sense is perfectly sound; for there may be a thousand schemes and arrangements made in the heart of man which he may earnestly wish God to bring to full effect, that are neither for his good nor God’s glory; and therefore it is his interest that God has the answer in his own power. At the same time, there is no intimation here that man can prepare his own heart to wait upon, or pray unto the Lord; or that from the human heart any thing good can come, without Divine influence; but simply that he may have many schemes and projects which he may beg God to accomplish, that are not of God, but from himself. Hence our own proverb: “Man proposes, but God disposes.” I have entered the more particularly into the consideration of this text, because some are very strenuous in the support of our vicious reading, from a supposition that the other defends the heterodox opinion of man’s sufficiency to think any thing as of himself. But while they deserve due credit for their orthodox caution, they will see that no such imputation can fairly lie against the plain grammatical translation of the Hebrew text.

16:1

But assuredly, as to what is written, “The preparation of the heart is man’s part, and the answer of the tongue is from the Lord,” they are misled by an imperfect understanding, so as to think that to prepare the heart — that is, to begin good — pertains to man without the aid of God’s grace.

St. Augustine: Against Two Letters of the Pelagians, 2:19 (9).

For even if the man were hurt (by our forbearance), would it not be our duty to obey? When God orders anything, let us not make a contrary law. “A submissive answer,” we read, turneth away wrath” (Proverbs 16:1): not an answer of opposition. If it profits thee, it profits him also: but if it hurts thee who art to set him right, how much more will it hurt him? “Physician, heal thyself.” Hath one spoken ill of thee? Commend him thou. Hath he reviled thee? Praise him thou. Hath he plotted against thee? Do him a kindness. Requite him with the contrary things, if at least thou at all carest for his salvation and wish not thou to revenge thine own suffering. And yet, you will say, though he has often met with long-suffering from me he has become worse. This is not thine affair, but his. Wilt thou learn what wrongs God suffered? They threw down His altars, and slew His prophets (1 Kings 19:10), yet He endured it all. Could He not have launched a thunderbolt from above? Nay, when He had sent His prophets, and they killed them, then He sent His Son (Matthew 21:37), when they wrought greater impieties, then He sent them greater benefits.

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on Acts, 31.

16:1

THE FREEDOM OF THE WILL IS ALSO THE GIFT OF GOD, FOR GOD WORKETH IN US BOTH TO WILL AND TO DO

Now as, undoubtedly, if a man is of the age to use his reason, he cannot believe, hope, love, unless he will to do so, nor obtain the prize of the high calling of God unless he voluntarily run for it; in what sense is it “not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy,” except that, as it is written, “the preparation of the heart is from the Lord?” Otherwise, if it is said, “It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy,” because it is of both, that is, both of the will of man and of the mercy of God, so that we are to understand the saying, “It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy,” as if it meant the will of man alone is not sufficient, if the mercy of God go not with it, — then it will follow that the mercy of God alone is not sufficient, if the will of man go not with it; and therefore, if we may rightly say, “it is not of man that willeth, but of God that showeth mercy,” because the will of man by itself is not enough, why may we not also rightly put it in the converse way: “It is not of God that showeth mercy, but of man that willeth,” because the mercy of God by itself does not suffice?

St. Augustine: Enchiridion, 33.

16:2 All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weighs the spirits.

vs. 2: Ignorance, pride, and self-flattery render us partial judges respecting our own conduct.

16:3 Commit your works unto the LORD, and your thoughts shall be established.

vs. 3: Roll the burden of thy care upon God, and leave it with him, by faith and dependence on him.

Verse 3. Commit thy works unto the Lord — See that what thou doest is commanded; and then begin, continue, and end all in his name. And thy thoughts shall be established—these schemes or arrangements, though formed in the heart, are agreeable to the Divine will, and therefore shall be established. His thoughts—his meditations—are right; and he begins and ends his work in the Lord; and therefore all issues well.

16:4 The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.

vs. 4: God makes use of the wicked to execute righteous vengeance on each other; and he will be glorified by their destruction at last.

Verse 4. The Lord hath made all things for himself — He has so framed and executed every part of his creation, that it manifests his wisdom, power, goodness, and truth.

Even the wicked for the day of evil.

The whole verse is translated by the Chaldee thus: “All the works of the LORD are for those who obey him; and the wicked is reserved for the evil day.”

As h[r]raah literally signifies to feed, it has been conjectured that the clause might be read, yea, even the wicked he feeds by the day, or daily.

If we take the words as they stand in our present version, they mean no more than what is expressed by the Chaldee and Spriac: and as far as we can learn from their present confused state, by the Septuagint and Arabic, that “the

wicked are reserved for the day of punishment.” Coverdale has given, as he generally does, a good sense: “The Lorde dotll all thinges for his owne sake; yea, and when he kepeth the ungodly for the daye of wrath.” He does not make the wicked or ungodly man; but when man has made himself such, even then God bears with him. But if he repent not, when the measure of his iniquity is filled up, he shall fall under the wrath of God his Maker.

16:4

Abbot Chaeremon’s statement that faults can be overcome in three ways

THEN the blessed CHAEREMON: There are, said he, three things which enable men to control their faults; viz., either the fear of hell or of laws even now imposed; or the hope and desire of the kingdom of heaven; or a liking for goodness itself and the love of virtue. For then we read that the fear of evil loathes contamination: “The fear of the Lord hateth evil.” Hope also shuts out the assaults of all faults: for “all who hope in Him shall not fail.” (Ps. 33:23). Love also fears no destruction from sins, for “love never faileth”(1 Peter 4:8).

St. John Cassian: Conference 11:6.

16:4

For, as Solomon says, “The Lord hath made all things for Himself.” For under cover of His own goodness He bestows all the fullness of good things on the worthy and the unworthy because He cannot be wearied by wrongs, nor be moved by passions at the sins of men, as He ever remains perfect goodness and unchangeable in His nature.

St. John Cassian: Conference 11:6.

16:5 Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished.

vs. 5: Though sinners strengthen themselves and one another, they shall not escape God’s judgments. Though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished. — The day of wrath shall come on the wicked, whatever means he may take to avoid it. See chap. 11:21.

Because nothing so alienates men from the loving-kindness of God, and gives them over to the fire of the pit, as the tyranny of pride. For when this is present with us, our whole life becomes impure, even though we fulfill temperance, chastity, fasting, prayer, almsgiving, anything. For, “Every one,” saith the wise man, “that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord.” (Proverbs 16:5) Let us then restrain this swelling of the soul, let us cut up by the roots this lump of pride, if at least we would wish to be clean, and to escape the punishment appointed for the devil.

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on John, 9.

16:5 LXX

And because, as Scripture says, “every on, who exalts his heart is unclean before God,” he who is puffed up with swelling pride of heart is given over to most shameful confusion to be deluded by it, that when thus humbled he may know that he is unclean through impurity of the flesh and knowledge of impure desires, — a thing which he had refused to recognize in the pride of his heart; and also that the shameful infection of the flesh may disclose the hidden impurity of the heart, which he contracted through the sin of pride, and that through the patent pollution of his body he may be proved to be impure, who did not formerly see that he had become unclean through the pride of his spirit.

St. John Cassian: The Institutes, book 12, 21.

16:5 LXX

Again, I will ask you another thing also. Which is higher? He who acts as a priest to God and offers sacrifice? or he who is somewhere far removed from confidence towards Him? And what manner of sacrifice doth the lowly man offer? one may say. Hear David saying, “The sacrifice of God is a contrite spirit; a contrite and humbled heart God will not despise.” (Ps. 51:17 LXX) Seest thou the purity of this man? Behold also the uncleanness of the other; for “every one that is proud in heart is unclean before God.”

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on Matthew, 7:7.

Is another proud? Let him hear that “God resisteth the proud” (James 4:6); and, “Pride is the beginning of sin” (Ecclus. 10:14) and, “Every one that hath a high heart, is impure before the Lord.” (Proverbs 16:5.) And in the histories, the devil, and all the rest. In a word, since it is impossible to recount all, let each choose out from the Divine Scriptures the remedies for his own hurts.

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on Acts, 29.

16:5 LXX

The first movement is called beginning. “To do right is the beginning of the good way.” Just actions are truly the first steps towards a happy life. Again, we call “beginning” the essential and first part from which a thing proceeds, such as the foundation of a house, the keel of a vessel; it is in this sense that it is said, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,” that is to say that piety is, as it were, the groundwork and foundation of perfection. Art is also the beginning of the works of artists, the skill of Bezaleel began the adornment of the tabernacle. Often even the good which is the final cause is the beginning of actions. Thus the approbation of God is the beginning of almsgiving, and the end laid up for us in the promises the beginning of all virtuous efforts.

St. Basil the Great: The Hexameron 1:5

16:5 LXX

If I was not humbly minded” (Ps. 130:1,2); and again, “He that worketh pride shall not dwell in the midst of my house” (Ps. 101:1,2); yet, as he knew how hard is that watchfulness even for those that are perfect, he did not so presume on his own efforts, but prayed to God and implored His help, that he might escape unwounded by the darts of this foe, saying, “Let not the foot of pride come to me (Ps. 136:1,2),” for he feared and dreaded falling into that which is said of the proud (James 4:6), viz., “God resisteth the proud;” and again: “Every one that exalteth his heart is unclean before the Lord.”

St. John Cassian: The Institutes, book 12, 6.

16:5

For hence it is written, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble (James 4:6). Hence, again, it is said, Whoso exalteth his heart is unclean before God (Proverbs 16:5). Hence, against the man that is proud it is written, Why is earth and ashes proud (Ecclus. 10:9)? Hence the Truth in person says, Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased (Luke 14:11).

Fr. Gregory (the Great), Book 5, Epistle 18.

16:6 By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil.

vs. 6: By the mercy and truth of God in Christ Jesus, the sins of believers are taken away, and the power of sin is broken. Verse 6. By mercy and truth iniquity is purged — This may be misunderstood, as if a man, by showing mercy and acting according to truth, could atone for his own iniquity. The Hebrew text is not ambiguous; “By mercy and truth he shall atone for iniquity.” He-God, by his mercy, in sending his son Jesus into the world, — “shall make an atonement for iniquity” according to his truth—the word which he declared by his holy prophets since the world began. Or, if we retain the present version, and follow the points in [rpky](#) yecuppar, reading “iniquity is purged” or “atoned for,” the sense is unexceptionable, as we refer the mercy and the truth to GOD. But what an awful comment is that of Don Calmet, in which he expresses, not only his own opinion, but the staple doctrine of his own Church, the Romish! The reader shall have his own words: “L’iniquite se rachete par la misericorde et la verite.’ On expie ses pechez par des oeuvres de misericorde envers le prochein; par la clemence, par la douceur, par compassion, par les aumones: et par la verite-par la fidelity, la bonne foi, la droiture, requite dans le commerce. Voyez Proverbs 3:3, 14:22, 20:28.” “Iniquity is redeemed by mercy and truth.’ We expiate our sins by works of mercy towards our neighbor; by clemency, by kindness, by compassion, and by alms: and by truth-by fidelity, by trustworthiness, by uprightness, by equity in commerce.” If this be so, why was Jesus incarnated? Why his agony and bloody sweat, his cross and passion, his death and burial, his resurrection and ascension? Was it only to supply a sufficient portion of merit for those who had neglected to make a fund for themselves? Is the guilt of sin so small in the sight of Divine justice, that a man can atone for it by manifesting good dispositions towards his neighbors, by giving some alms, and not doing those things for which he might be hanged? Why then did God make such a mighty matter of the redemption of the world? Why send his Son at all? An angel would have been more than sufficient; yea, even a sinner who had been converted by his own compassion, alms-deeds, etc., would have been sufficient. And is not this the very doctrine of this most awfully fallen and corrupt Church? Has she not provided a fund of merit in her saints, of what was more than requisite for themselves that it might be given, or sold out, to those who had not enough of their own? Now such is the doctrine of the Romish Church-grossly absurd, and destructively iniquitous! And because men cannot believe this, cannot believe these monstrosities, that Church will burn them to ashes. Ruthless Church! degenerated, fallen, corrupt, and corrupting! once a praise now a curse, in the earth. Thank the blessed God, whose blood alone can expiate sin, that he has a Church upon the earth; and that the Romish is not the Catholic Church; and that it has not that political power by which it would subdue all things to itself.

And after prayer thus intense, there is need of much almsgiving: for this it is which especially gives strength to the medicine of repentance. And as there is a medicine among the physicians' helps which receives many herbs, but one is the essential, so also in case of repentance this is the essential herb, yea, it may be everything. For hear what the Divine Scripture says, "Give alms, and all things shall be clean." (Luke 11:41) And again, "By almsgiving and acts of faithfulness sins are purged away." (**Proverbs 16:6**) And, "Water will quench a flaming fire, and alms will do away with great sins." (Ecclus. 3:30).

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on John, 9.

16:7 When a man's ways please the LORD, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.

vs. 7: He that has all hearts in his hand, can make a man's enemies to be at peace with him.

Verse 7. When a man's ways please the Lord — God is the guardian and defense of all that fear and love him; and it is truly astonishing to see how wondrously God works in their behalf, raising them up friends, and turning their enemies into friends.

16:8 Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right.

vs. 8: A small estate, honestly come by, will turn to better account than a great estate ill-gotten.

16:8 LXX

That no one is dashed to the ground by a sudden fall

BUT we must not imagine that anyone slips and comes to grief by a sudden fall, but that he falls by a hopeless collapse either from being deceived by beginning his training badly, or from the good qualities of his soul failing through a long course of carelessness of mind, and so his faults gaining ground upon him little by little. For "loss goeth before destruction, and an evil thought before a fall," just as no house ever fails to the ground by a sudden collapse, but only when there is some flaw of long standing in the foundation, or when by long continued neglect of its inmates, what was at first only a little drip finds its way through, and so the protecting walls are by degrees ruined, and in consequence of long standing neglect the gap becomes larger, and break away, and in time the drenching storm and rain pours in like a river: for "by slothfulness a building is cast down, and through the weakness of hands the house shall drop through," (Eccl. 10:18). And that the same thing happens spiritually to the soul the same Solomon thus tells us in other words, when he says: "water dripping drives a man out of the house. on a stormy day." (Prov. 27:15 LXX).

St. John Cassian: Conference 6:17.

16:9 A man's heart devises his way: but the LORD directs his steps.

Shared Responsibility

There is an interesting tension in the relation between God and his people. On the one hand, we human beings are fully responsible and accountable for planning, organizing, and directing our lives. Yet on the other hand, we need to be fully aware that God is accomplishing His purposes in, through, and sometimes despite our plans and efforts (Prov. 16:9).

Scripture often affirms this shared responsibility between us as human beings and God as the sovereign Lord of the universe. For example, the New Testament exhorts us to "work out" our salvation—that is, to make responsible choices on a day-to-day basis in light of our eternal salvation; yet it adds that God is at work in us 'both to will and to do for His good pleasure' (Phil. 2:12-13).

Are you fulfilling your part of your relationship with God? Are you making wise choices based on what He has said in the Bible? Are trusting Him to fulfill His part?

vs. 9: If men make God's glory their end, and his will their rule, he will direct their steps by his Spirit and grace.

10. Let kings and judges of the earth be just, and rule in the fear of God.

Verse 9. A man's heart deviseth his way — This is precisely the same sentiment as that contained in the first verse, on the true meaning of which so much has been already said.

16:10 A divine sentence is in the lips of the king: his mouth transgresses not in judgment.

Verse 10. A divine sentence — **usq** kesem, "divination," as the margin

has it. Is the meaning as follows? Though divination were applied to a righteous king's lips, to induce him to punish the innocent and spare the guilty, yet would not his lips transgress in judgment; so firmly attached is he to God, and so much is he under the Divine care and influence. Whatever judgment such a one pronounces, it may be considered as a decision from God.

16:11 A just weight and balance are the LORD's: all the weights of the bag are his work.

vs. 11: To observe justice in dealings between man and man is God's appointment.

Verse 11. All the weights of the bag are his — Alluding, probably, to the standard weights laid up in a bag in the sanctuary, and to which all weights in common use in the land were to be referred, in order to ascertain whether they were just: but some think the allusion is to the weights carried about by merchants in their girdles, by which they weigh the money, silver and gold, that they take in exchange for their merchandise. As the Chinese take no coin but gold and silver by weight, they carry about with them a sort of small steelyard, by which they weigh those metals taken in exchange.

16:12 It is an abomination to kings to commit wickedness: for the throne is established by righteousness.

vs. 12: The ruler that uses his power aright, will find that to be his best security.

Verse 12. It is an abomination to kings, etc. — In all these verses the wise man refers to monarchical government rightly administered. And the proverbs on this subject are all plain.

16:13 Righteous lips are the delight of kings; and they love him that speaks right.

vs. 13: Put those in power who know how to speak to the purpose.

16:14 The wrath of a king is as messengers of death: but a wise man will pacify it.

16:15 In the light of the king's countenance is life; and his favor is as a cloud of the latter rain.

vs. 14, 15: Those are fools, who, to obtain the favor of an earthly prince, throw themselves out of God's favor.

16:16 How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!

vs. 16: There is joy and satisfaction of spirit, only in getting wisdom.

Verse 16. How much better-to get wisdom than gold? — Who believes this, though spoken by the wisest of men, under Divine inspiration?

16:17 The highway of the upright is to depart from evil: he that keeps his way preserves his soul.

vs. 17: A sincerely religious man keeps at a distance from every appearance of evil. Happy is the man that walks in Christ, and is led by the Spirit of Christ.

Verse 17. The highway of the upright — The upright man is ever departing from evil; this is his common road: and by keeping on in this way, his soul is preserved.

dictates; and therefore his speeches are all speeches of wisdom.

16:18 Pride goes before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

vs. 18: When men defy God's judgments, and think themselves far from them, it is a sign they are at the door. Let us not fear the pride of others, but fear pride in ourselves.

Verse 18. Pride goeth before destruction — Here pride is personified: it walks along, and has destruction in its train.

And a haughty spirit before a fall. — Another personification. A haughty spirit marches on, and ruin comes after.

In this verse we find the following Masoretic note in most Hebrew Bibles.

rpsh **yxj** chatsi hassepher: "the middle of the book." This verse is the

middle verse; and the first clause makes the middle of the words of the book of Proverbs.

16:19 Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.

16:20 He that handles a matter wisely shall find good: and whoso trusts in the LORD, happy is he.

vs. 19: Humility, though it exposes to contempt in the world, is much better than high-spiritedness, which makes God an enemy. He that understands God's word shall find good.

16:21 The wise in heart shall be called prudent: and the sweetness of the lips increases learning.

vs. 21: The man whose wisdom dwells in his heart, will be found more truly prudent than many who possess shining talents.

16:22 Understanding is a wellspring of life unto him that hath it: but the instruction of fools is folly.

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vs. 22: As waters to a thirsty land, so is a wise man to his friends and neighbors.

Verse 22. Understanding is a well-spring of life — **μyyj rwqm** mekor

chaiyim; another allusion to the artery that carries the blood from the heart to distribute it to all the extremities of the body.

16:23 The heart of the wise teaches his mouth, and adds learning to his lips.

vs. 23: The wise man's self-knowledge, always suggests something proper to be spoken to others. The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth — He has a wise heart; he speaks as it **16:24 Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.**

vs. 24: The word of God cures the diseases that weaken our souls.

Verse 24. Pleasant words are as a honey-comb — The honey of which is sweeter than that which has been expressed from it, and has a much finer flavour before it has come in contact with the atmospheric air.

16:25 *There is a way that seems right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.*

vs. 25: This is caution to all, to take heed of deceiving themselves as to their souls.

Verse 25. There is a way that seemeth right — This whole verse is precisely the same as that chap. 14:12.

16:25

The Psalmist knows then where a greater victory may be obtained, and where “the Father which seeth in secret will reward.” (Matt. 6:6) Lest then he repay them that recompense evil, he overcomes his anger rather than another man, being instructed too by those writings, wherein it is written, “Better is he that overcometh his anger, than he that taketh a city.” “If I have repaid them that recompense me evil, may I therefore fall by my enemies empty.”

St. Augustine: On the Psalms, 7:3.

16:26 *He that labors labors for himself; for his mouth craves it of him.*

vs. 26: We must labor for the meat which endureth to everlasting life, or we must perish.

Verse 26. He that laboreth — No thanks to a man for his labor and industry; if he do not work he must starve.

16:27 *An ungodly man diggs up evil: and in his lips there is as a burning fire.*

Verse 27. An ungodly man diggeth up evil — How will the following suit? 1764

“Wealth, the incitement to all evil, is digged up out the earth.”

A wicked man labors as much to bring about an evil purpose, as the quarryman does to dig up stones.

In his lips—a burning fire. His words are as inflammable, in producing strife and contention among his neighbors, as fire is in igniting dry stubble.

16:28 *A froward man sows strife: and a whisperer separates chief friends.*

vs. 27,28: Ungodly men bestow more pains to do mischief than would be needful to do good. The whisperer separates friends: what a hateful, but how common a character!

16:29 *A violent man entices his neighbor, and leads him into the way that is not good.*

16:30 *He shuts his eyes to devise froward things: moving his lips he brings evil to pass.*

vs. 29,30: Some do all the mischief they can by force and violence, and are blind to the result.

Verse 30. He shuts his eyes to devise, etc. — He meditates deeply upon ways and means to commit sin. He shuts his eyes that he may shut out all other ideas, that his whole soul may be in this.

16:31 *The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way o*
th a city. — It is much easier to subdue an enemy without than one within. There have been many kings who had conquered nations, and yet were slaves to their own passions. Alexander, who conquered the world, was a slave to intemperate anger, and in a fit of it slew Clytus, the best and most intimate of all his friends, and one whom he loved beyond all others.

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The spirit of this maxim is so self-evident, that most nations have formed similar proverbs.

“By virtue’s precepts to control The furious passions of the soul, Is over wider realms to reign, Unenvied monarch, than if Spain You could to distant Libya join, And both the Carthages were thine.”

“He is more of a hero who has conquered himself, than he who has taken the best fortified city.” Beyond this self-conquest the highest courage can not extend; nor did their philosophy teach any thing more sublime.

16:32

We ought therefore to take care that we do not get into a flurry, before reason prepares our minds. For oftentimes anger or distress or fear of death almost deprives the soul of life, and beats it down by a sudden blow.

St. Ambrose: Duties of the Clergy, 1:21 (97).

16:32

Better is the patient than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh cities (Proverbs 16:32). For victory over cities is a less thing, because that which is subdued is without; but a far greater thing is that which is conquered by patience, since the mind itself is by itself overcome, and subjects itself to itself, when patience compels it to bridle itself within. Let the impatient hear what the Truth says to His elect; In your patience ye shall possess your souls (Luke 21:19). For we are so wonderfully made that reason possesses the soul, and the soul the body.

Fr. Gregory (the Great), Pastoral Rule, 9

16:33 The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.

vs. 33: All the disposal of Providence concerning our affairs, we must look upon to be the determining what we referred to God; and we must be reconciled to them accordingly. Blessed are those that give themselves up to the will of God; for he knows what is good for them.

Verse 33. The lot is cast into the lap — On the lot, see the note on Numbers 26:55. How far it may be proper now to put difficult matters to the lot, after earnest prayer and supplication, I cannot say. Formerly, it was both lawful and efficient; for after it was solemnly cast, the decision was taken as coming immediately from the Lord. It is still practiced, and its use is allowed even by writers on civil law. But those who need most to have recourse to the lot are those who have not piety to pray nor faith to trust to God for a positive decision. The lot should never be resorted to in indifferent matters; they should be those of the greatest importance, in which it appears impossible for human prudence or foresight to determine. In such cases the lot is an appeal to God, and he disposes of it according to his goodness, mercy, and truth. The result, therefore, cannot be fortuitous.

16

Wisdom pronounces anger a wretched thing, because “it will destroy the wise.” And now He bids us “love our enemies, bless them that curse us, and pray for them that despitefully use us.” And He says: “If any one strike thee on the one cheek, turn to him the other also; and if any one take away thy coat, hinder him not from taking thy cloak also” (Matt. 5:40).

St. Clement of Alexandria: Instructor 3:12.

CHAPTER 17

About the most satisfactory substitute for wisdom is silence. Discretion of speech is better than fluency of speech.

Contentment. The wise servant. The Lord tries the heart. Children a crown to their parents. We should hide our neighbour's faults. The poor should not be despised. Litigations and quarrels to be avoided. Wealth is useless to a fool. The good friend. A fool may pass for a wise man when he holds his peace.

17:1 Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices with strife.

Vs. 1: These words recommend family love and peace, as needful for the comfort of human life.

Verse 1. Better is a dry morsel — Peace and contentment, and especially domestic peace, are beyond all other blessings.

A house full of sacrifices — A Hindoo priest, who officiates at a festival, sometimes receives so many offerings that his house is filled with them, so that many of them are damaged before they can be used. — Ward.

17:2 A wise servant shall have rule over a son that causes shame, and shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren.

vs. 2: The wise servant is more deserving, and more likely to appear one of the family, than a profligate son.

17:3 The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold: but the LORD tries the hearts.

vs. 3: God tries the heart by affliction. He thus has often shown the sin remaining in the heart of the believer. The fining pot is for silver — When silver is mixed, or suspected to be mixed, with base metal, it must be subjected to such a test as the cupel to purify it. And gold also must be purified by the action of the fire. So God tries hearts. He sends afflictions which penetrate the soul, and give a man to see his state, so that he may apply to the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, to destroy what cannot stand the fire, to separate and burn up all the dross.

17:3 LXX

On the fact that those men are more wretched who are possessed by sins than those who are possessed by devils

But we know that even saintly men have been given over in the flesh to Satan and to great afflictions for some very slight faults, since the Divine mercy will not suffer the very least spot or stain to be found in them on the day of judgment, and purges away in this world every spot of their filth, as the prophet, or rather God Himself says, in order that He may commit them to eternity as gold or silver refined and needing no penal purification. "And," says He, "I will clean purge away thy dross, and I will take away all thy tin; and after this thou shall be called the city of the just, a faithful city." And again: "Like as silver and gold are tried in the furnace, so the Lord chooseth the hearts;" And again: "The fire tries gold and silver; but man is tried in the furnace of humiliation;" and this also: "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." (Isa. 1:25, 26; Prov. 17:3 LXX; Eccles. 2:5; Heb. 12:6).

St. John Cassian: Conference 7:25.

17:4 A wicked doer gives heed to false lips; and a liar gives ear to a naughty tongue.

vs. 4: Flatterers, especially false teachers, are welcome to those that live in sin. A wicked doer giveth heed — An evil heart is disposed and ever ready to receive evil; and liars delight in lies.

17:5 Whoso mocks the poor reproachs his Maker: and he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished.

vs. 5: Those that laugh at poverty, treat God's providence and precepts with contempt. He that is glad at calamity — He who is pleased to hear of the misfortune of another will, in the course of God's just government, have his own multiplied.

17:6 Children's children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers.

vs. 6: It is an honor to children to have wise and godly parents continued to them, even after they are grown up and settled in the world.

17:6

It becomes us who truly follow the Scripture to enjoy ourselves temperately, as in Paradise. We must regard the woman's crown to be her husband, and the husband's crown to be marriage; and the flowers of marriage the children of both, which the divine husbandman plucks from meadows of flesh. "Children's children are the crown of old men." And the glory of children is their fathers, it is said; and our glory is the Father of all; and the crown of the whole church is Christ.

St. Clement of Alexandria: Instructor 2:9.

17:6 LXX

THAT THE KNOWLEDGE OF TERRESTRIAL AND CELESTIAL THINGS DOES NOT GIVE HAPPINESS, BUT THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD ONLY.

Doth, then, O Lord God of truth, whosoever knoweth those things therefore please Thee? For unhappy is the man who knoweth all those things, but knoweth Thee not; but happy is he who knoweth Thee, though these he may not know. But he who knoweth both Thee and them is not the happier on account of them, but is happy on account of Thee only, if knowing Thee he glorify Thee as God, and gives thanks, and becomes not vain in his thoughts. But as he is happier who knows how to possess a tree, and for the use thereof renders thanks to Thee, although he may not know how many cubits high it is, or how wide it spreads, than he that measures it and counts all its branches, and neither owns it nor knows or loves its Creator; so a just man, whose is the entire world of wealth, and who, as having nothing, yet possesseth all things by cleaving unto Thee, to whom all things are subservient, though he know not even the circles of the Great Bear, yet it is foolish to doubt but that he may verily be better than he who can measure the heavens, and number the stars, and weigh the elements, but is forgetful of Thee, “who hast set in order all things in number, weight, and measure.”

St. Augustine: Confession, 5:4 (7).

17:6 LXX

You have then that recompense of an hundredfold brought out by the greatness of the value, and the difference of the character that cannot be estimated. For if for a fixed weight of brass or iron or some still commoner metal, one had given in exchange the same weight only in gold, he would appear to have given much more than an hundredfold. And so when for the scorn of delights and earthly affections there is made a recompense of spiritual joy and the gladness of a most precious love, even if the actual amount be the same, yet it is an hundred times better and grander. And to make this plainer by frequent repetition: I used formerly to have a wife in the lustful passion of desire: I now have one in honorable sanctification and the true love of Christ. The woman is but one, but the value of the love has increased an hundredfold. But if instead of distrusting anger and wrath you have regard to constant gentleness and patience, instead of the stress of anxiety and trouble, peace and freedom from care, instead of the fruitless and criminal vexation of this world the salutary fruits of sorrow, instead of the vanity of temporal joy the richness of spiritual delights, you will see in the change of these feelings a recompense of an hundredfold. And if we compare with the short-lived and fleeting pleasure of each sin the benefits of the opposite virtues the increased delights will prove that these are an hundred times better.

St. John Cassian: Conference 24:26.

17:7 Excellent speech becomes not a fool: much less do lying lips a prince.

vs. 7: A fool, in Solomon’s Proverbs, signifies a wicked man, whom excellencies speech does not become, because his conversation contradicts it. Excellent speech becometh not a fool — This proverb is suitable to those who affect, in public speaking, fine language, which neither comports with their ordinary conversation, nor with their education. Often fine words are injudiciously brought in, and are as unbecoming and irrelevant as a cart wheel among clockwork.

17:8 A gift is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it: whithersoever it turns, it prospers.

vs. 8: Those who set their hearts upon money, will do any thing for it. What influence should the gifts of God have on our hearts! A gift is as a precious stone — It both enriches and ornaments. In the latter clause there is an evident allusion to cut stones. Whithersoever you turn them, they reflect the light, are brilliant and beautiful.

17:9 He that covers a transgression seeks love; but he that repeats a matter separates very friends.

vs. 9: The way to preserve peace is to make the best of every thing; not to notice what has been said or done against ourselves.

17:10 A reproof enters more into a wise man than an hundred stripes into a fool.

vs. 10: A gentle reproof will enter, not only into the head, but into the heart of a wise man.

Verse 10. A reproof entereth more — Though the rod, judiciously applied, is a great instrument of knowledge, yet it is of no use where incurable dulness or want of intellect, prevails. Besides, there are generous dispositions on which counsel will work more than stripes.

17:11 An evil man seeks only rebellion: therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him.

vs. 11: Satan, and the messengers of Satan, shall be let loose upon an evil man.

17:12 Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly.

Verse 12. Let a bear robbed of her whelps — At which times such animals are peculiarly fierce. See the note on 2 Samuel 17:8. Let us watch over our own passions, and avoid the company of furious men.

17:13 Whoso rewards evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house.

Here is a most awful warning. As many persons are guilty of the sin of ingratitude, and of paying kindness with unkindness, and good with evil, it is no wonder we find so much wretchedness among men; for God's word cannot fail; evil shall not depart from the houses and families of such persons. To render evil for good is devilish. He that does so, brings a curse upon his family.

17:14 The beginning of strife is as when one lets out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with.

vs. 14: What danger there is in the beginning of strife! Resist its earliest display; and leave it off, if it were possible, before you begin. The beginning of strife is as when one lets out water. As soon as the smallest breach is made in the dike or dam, the water begins to press from all parts towards the breach; the resistance becomes too great to be successfully opposed, so that dikes and all are speedily swept away. Such is the beginning of contentions, quarrels, lawsuits, etc.

Leave off contention, before it be meddled with. — As you see what an altercation must lead to, therefore do not begin it. Before it be mingled together, [1gth] hithgalla, before the spirits of the contending parties come into conflict—are joined together in battle, and begin to deal out mutual reflections and reproaches. When you see that the dispute is likely to take this turn, leave it off immediately.

17:14

Whence it is well said through Solomon, He that letteth out water is a well-spring of strifes (Proverbs 17:14). For to let out water is to let loose the tongue to a flux of speech. Wherefore, on the other hand, in a good sense it is said again, The words of a man's mouth are as deep water (Ibid. 18:4). He therefore who letteth out water is the wellspring of strifes, because he who curbs not his tongue dissipates concord. Hence on the other hand it is written, He that imposes silence on a foal allays enmities (Ibid. 26:10). Moreover, that any one who gives himself to much speaking cannot keep the straight way of righteousness is testified by the Prophet, who says, A man full of words shall not be guided aright upon the earth (Psalm 139:12). Hence also Solomon says again, In the multitude of words there shall not want sin (Proverbs 10:19). Hence Isaiah says, The culture of righteousness is silence (Isaiah 32:17), indicating, to wit, that the righteousness of the mind is desolated when there is no stint of immoderate speaking.

Fr. Gregory (the Great), Pastoral Rule, 14.

17:15 He that justifies the wicked, and he that condemns the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD.

vs. 15: It is an offense to God to acquit the guilty, or to condemn those who are not guilty. **17:16 Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?**

vs. 16: Man's neglect of God's favor and his own interest is very absurd.

17:17 A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

vs. 17: No change of outward circumstances should abate our affection for our friends or relatives. But no friend, except Christ, deserves unlimited confidence. In Him this text did receive, and still receives its most glorious fulfillment. A friend loveth at all times — Equally in adversity as in prosperity. And a brother, according to the ties and interests of consanguinity, is born to support and comfort a brother in distress.

“And let us consider one another,” he says, “to provoke unto love and to good works.” He knew that this also arises from “gathering together.” For as “iron sharpeneth iron” (Proverbs 17:17), so also association increases love. For if a stone rubbed against a stone sends forth fire, how much more soul mingled with soul!

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on Hebrews, 19.

17:18 A man void of understanding strikes hands, and becomes surety in the presence of his friend.

vs. 18: Let not any wrong their families. Yet Christ's becoming Surety for men, was a glorious display of Divine wisdom; for he was able to discharge the bond.

Verse 18. Striketh hands — Striking each other's hands, or shaking hands, was anciently the form in concluding a contract. See notes on chap. 6:1.

17:19 He loves transgression that loves strife: and he that exalts his gate seeks destruction.

vs. 19: If we would keep a clear conscience and a quiet mind, we must shun all excitements to anger. And a man who affects a style of living above his means, goes the way to ruin.

Verse 19. He that exalteth his gate — In different parts of Palestine they are obliged to have the doors of their courts and houses very low, not more than three feet high, to prevent the Arabs, who scarcely ever leave the backs of their horses, from riding into the courts and houses, and spoiling their goods. He, then, who, through pride and ostentation, made a high gate, exposed himself to destruction; and is said here to seek it, because he must know that this would be a necessary consequence of exalting his gate. But although the above is a fact, yet possibly gate is here taken for the mouth; and the exalting of the gate may mean proud boasting and arrogant speaking, such as has a tendency to kindle and maintain strife. And this interpretation seems to agree better with the scope of the context than the above.

17:20 He that hath a froward heart finds no good: and he that hath a perverse tongue falls into mischief.

vs. 20: There is nothing got by ill designs. And many have paid dear for an unbridled tongue.

17:21 He that begets a fool does it to his sorrow: and the father of a fool hath no joy.

vs. 21: This speaks very plainly what many wise and good men feel very strongly, how grievous it is to have a foolish, wicked child.

17:22 A merry heart does good like a medicine: but a broken spirit dries the bones.

vs. 22: It is great mercy that God gives us leave to be cheerful, and cause to be cheerful, if by his grace he gives us hearts to be cheerful.

Verse 22. A merry heart doeth good like a medicine — Instead of **hhg** gehah, a medicine, it appears that the Chaldee and Syriac had read in their copies **hwg** gevah, the body, as they translate in this way. This makes the apposition here more complete: “A merry heart doeth good to the body; but a broken spirit drieth the bones.” Nothing has such a direct tendency to ruin health and waste out life as grief, anxiety, fretfulness, bad tempers, etc. All these work death.

17:23 A wicked man takes a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment.

vs. 23: The wicked are ready to part with their money, though loved, that they may not suffer for their crimes. A gift out of the bosom — Out of his purse; as in their bosoms, above their girdles, the Asiatics carry their purses. I have often observed this.

17:24 Wisdom is before him that hath understanding; but the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth.

vs. 24: The prudent man keeps the word of God continually in view. But the foolish man cannot fix his thoughts, nor pursue any purpose with steadiness.

Verse 24. Are in the ends of the earth. — Wisdom is within the sight and reach at every man: but he whose desires are scattered abroad, who is always aiming at impossible things, or is of an unsteady disposition, is not likely to find it.

17:25 A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him.

vs. 25: Wicked children despise the authority of their father, and the tenderness of their mother.

17:26 Also to punish the just is not good, nor to strike princes for equity.

Verse 26. Nor to strike princes for equity. — To fall out with the ruler of the people, and to take off his head under pretense of his not being a just or equitable governor, is unjust. To kill a king on the ground of justice is a most dreadful omen to any land. Where was it ever done, that it promoted the public prosperity? No experiment of this kind has ever yet succeeded, howsoever worthless the king might be.

vs. 26: It is very wrong to find fault for doing what is duty.

17:27 He that has knowledge spares his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit.

17:27

He asks of wisdom, who seeks to know what is the will of God. And he will show himself prudent who is sparing of his words on that which he has come to learn. If one inquires about wisdom, desiring to learn something about wisdom, while another asks nothing of wisdom, as not only wishing to learn nothing about wisdom himself, but even keeping back his neighbors from so doing, the former certainly is deemed to be more prudent than the latter.

From the Commentary of St. Hippolytus on Proverbs

17:28 Even a fool, when he holds his peace, is counted wise: and he that shuts his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.

vs. 27,28: A man may show himself to be a wise man, by the good temper of his mind, and by the good government of his tongue. He is careful when he does speak, to speak to the purpose. God knows his heart, and the folly that is bound there; therefore he cannot be deceived in his judgment as men may be.

Verse 28. Even a fool — He is counted wise as to that particular. He may know that he cannot speak well, and he has sense enough to keep from speaking. He is, as to that particular, a wise fool. A man may be golden-mouthed and silver-tongued in eloquence; but to know when and where to speak and to be silent, is better than diamonds. But who that thinks he can speak well can refrain from speaking? His tongue has no rest.

17:28 LXX

It belongs to the understanding to discern the distinctions and the drift of questions; and it is a main part of knowledge to understand how ignorant you are. Wherefore it is said that “if a fool asks questions, it will be accounted wisdom” [28 LXX], because, although one who asks questions is ignorant of the answer to the question raised, yet as he wisely asks, and learns what he does not know, this very fact will be counted as wisdom in him, because he wisely discovers what he was ignorant of.

St. John Cassian: Conference 4:9.

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on Hebrews, 9.

CHAPTER 18

the only zone of safety is the name of the Lord which is the strong tower in which one find rest and be fortified against the evil one, if they will but come into it by faith in God's Word.

Christ is the true friend to all believers, who sticks closer than a brother. To Him therefore let us show ourselves friends.

The man who separates himself and seeks wisdom. The fool and the wicked man. Deep wisdom. Contention of fools. The talebearer and the slothful. The name of the Lord. Pride and presumption because of riches. Hastiness of spirit. The wounded spirit. The influence of gifts. The lot. The offended brother. The influence of the tongue. A wife a good from God. The true friend.

18:1 Through desire a man, having separated himself, seeks and intermeddles with all wisdom.

Vs: 1: 1 If we would get knowledge and grace, we must try all methods of improving ourselves.

Through desire a man, having separated himself — The original is difficult and obscure. The Vulgate, Septuagint, and Arabic, read as follows: "He who wishes to break with his friend, and seeks occasions or pretenses shall at all times be worthy of blame."

Coverdale thus: "Who so hath pleasure to sowe discorde, piketh a quarrel in every thinge."

Bible by Barker, 1615: "Fro the desire thereof he will separate himself to seeke it, and occupie himself in all wisdom." Which has in the margin the following note: "He that loveth wisdom will separate himself from all impediments, and give himself wholly to seek it."

The nearest translation to the words is perhaps the following: "He who is separated shall seek the desired thing, (i.e., the object of his desire,) and shall intermeddle (mingle himself) with all realities or all essential knowledge." He finds that he can make little progress in the investigation of Divine and natural things, if he have much to do with secular or trifling matters: he therefore separates himself as well from unprofitable pursuits as from frivolous company, and then enters into the spirit of his pursuit; is not satisfied with superficial observances, but examines the substance and essence, as far as possible, of those things which have been the objects of his desire. This appears to me the best meaning: the reader may judge for himself.

18:2 A fool hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover itself.

Talk Is Cheap!

But that his heart may discover itself. — It is a fact that most vain and foolish people are never satisfied in company, but in showing their own nonsense and emptiness. But this verse may be understood as confirming the view already given of the preceding, and may be translated thus: "But a fool doth not delight in understanding, though it should even manifest itself:"

The separated person seeks understanding in every hidden thing, and feels his toil well repaid when he finds it, even after the most painful and expensive search: the other regards it not, though its secret springs should be laid open to him without toil or expense.

Some people have a comment to make on virtually every subject. They never say, "I don't know," or just listen to in order to learn something. They just spout off their uninformed opinions to any willing listener. Proverbs calls persons fools (Prov. 18:2).

Talk is cheap partly because it is easily available. The Book of Proverbs offers some principles to help us evaluate the worth of our words:

.Sometimes the wisest course is to keep quiet. We need to weigh our thoughts and words carefully if we intend to be helpful (11:12; 17:27-28).

.The one thing we never want to talk about is a confidence with which we have been entrusted (11:13).

.If we know how to use words, we can accomplish noble ends—for example, defusing a heated situation (15:1-2).

.We need to watch what we say. Our mouths can get us in deep trouble (18:6-7).

.If we give our opinion on a matter before hearing the facts, we will tend to bring shame on ourselves (18:13).

.Talk is cheap, but easy talk can be expensive. Saying the wrong thing at the wrong time can lead to unfortunate consequences (18:21).

For which are you known—lots of talk and self-important opinions, or the ability to listen and words of wisdom? To find out, you may want to ask others for an honest opinion. Another way is to ask yourself when the last time was someone came to you and asked you for your counsel. It may seem risky and even painful to learn the

truth about yourself in this area, but you will be much better off if you know your errors and can change them (12:1; 15:32).

vs. 2: Those make nothing to purpose, of learning or religion, whose only design is to have something to make a show with.

For nothing makes a person so shameless, as sin. "And yet on the contrary," say you, "it puts to shame." Yes; him who condemns himself but him that is past blushing, it renders even more reckless: for desperation makes daring. For "the wicked," saith the Scripture, "when he is come into the depths of evils, despiseth." (Proverbs 18:3.) But he that is shameless, will also be reckless, and he that is reckless, will be daring. See in what way gentleness is destroyed, when evil thoughts gnaw at it.

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on Acts, 17.

Seest thou that sin produces unbelief? For as unbelief brings forth an evil life, so also a soul, "when it is come into a depth of evils, becometh contemptuous" (Proverbs 18:3), and having become contemptuous it endures not even to believe, in order thereby to free itself from fear. For "they said" (one says), "The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard." (Psalm 94:7) And again, "Our lips are our own: who is Lord over us?" (Psalm 12:4); and again "Wherefore hath the wicked man provoked God to wrath?" (Psalm 10:13);

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on Hebrews, 6.

Hast thou indulged to excess? Thou hast increased the inclination to self-indulgence. "When a wicked man cometh into the depth of vice, then he despises." (Proverbs 18:3.) As, then, when a man cometh into the depth of iniquity, he turns a despiser; so when he cometh into the depth of goodness, he quickens his exertions. For as the one runs riot in despair, so the second, under a sense of the multitude of good things, exerts himself the more, fearing lest he should lose the whole.

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on Philipians, 8.

18:3 When the wicked comes, then comes also contempt, and with ignominy reproach.

When the wicked cometh, etc. would it not be better to read this verse thus? "When the wicked cometh contempt cometh; and with ignominy cometh reproach." A wicked man is despised even by the wicked. He who falls under ignominy falls under reproach. As soon as sin entered, shame followed.

18:3

"When a sinner shall have come into the depth of evil things, he despiseth." For it is one thing to long for, another thing to fight against righteousness: one thing from evil to desire to be delivered, another thing one's evil doings to defend rather than to confess: both kinds nevertheless the Grace of Christ leadeth forth in strength. With what strength, but that wherewith against sin even unto blood they are to strive?

St. Augustine: On the Psalms, 68:7.

18:3

"When the wicked hath reached the depth of evils, he despiseth." Now consider, brethren, what sort of deep that is, where God is despised. When each man seeth himself overwhelmed with daily sins, pressed down by heaps and weights, so to speak, of iniquities: if it be said unto him, Pray unto God, he laughs. In what manner?

St. Augustine: On the Psalms, 130:1.

18:3

Therefore in a certain place saith the Scripture (hear this abyss), "The sinner when he cometh unto the depth of sin despiseth." See, "Thy Judgments are like the great abyss." But yet not art thou a mountain; not yet art thou in the abyss; fly from the abyss, tend towards the mountains; but yet remain not on the mountains. "For thy help cometh from the Lord, which made Heaven and earth."

St. Augustine: On the Psalms, 36:9.

18:3 For he is deeper in the deep, who is not satisfied with being a sinner, unless instead of confessing he even defends his sins. But he who has already "cried out of the deep," hath already lifted up his head in order that he might "cry out of the deep," has been heard already, and has been "brought out of the horrible pit, and out of the mire and clay."

St. Augustine: On the Psalms, 40:3..

18:3 So that the tree of life would seem to have been in the terrestrial Paradise what the wisdom of God is in the spiritual, of which it is written, "She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her."

St. Augustine: City of God, 13:20.

18:4 The words of a man's mouth are as deep waters, and the wellspring of wisdom as a flowing brook.

vs. 4: The well-spring of wisdom in the heart of a believer, continually supplies words of wisdom. The words of a man's mouth — That is, the wise sayings of a wise man are like deep waters; howsoever much you pump or draw off, you do not appear to lessen them.

The well-spring of wisdom — Where there is a sound understanding, and a deep, well-informed mind, its wisdom and its counsels are an incessant stream, **hmkj rwqm** mekor chochmah, “the vein of wisdom,” ever throwing out its healthy streams: but **μyyj rwqm** mekor chaiyim, “the vein of LIVES,” is the reading of eight of Kennicott's and De Rossi's MSS., and is countenanced by the Septuagint, **phgh zwhv**, “the fountain of life.” And so the Arabic, [A]. This is the more likely to be the true reading, because the figure of the heart propelling the blood through the great aorta, to send it to all parts of the animal system, is a favourite with Solomon, as it was with his father, David. See the note on Psalm 36:9; Proverbs 10:11, etc.

18:5 It is not good to accept the person of the wicked, to overthrow the righteous in judgment.

The merits of a cause must be looked to, not the person. To accept the person of the wicked We must not, in judicial cases, pay any attention to a man's riches, influence, friends, offices, etc., but judge the case according to its own merits. But when the wicked rich man opposes and oppresses the poor righteous, then all those things should be utterly forgotten.

18:6 A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calls for strokes.

18:7 A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul.

vs. 6, 7: What mischief bad men do to themselves by their ungoverned tongues!

18:8 The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.

vs. 8: How base are those that sow contention! and what fatal effects may be expected from small beginnings of jealousy!

Verse 8. The words of a tale-bearer — **grn yrbd** dibrey nirgan, “the words of the whisperer,” the busy-body, the busy, meddling croaker. Verba bilinguis, “the words of the double-tongued.” — Vulgate. “The wordes of the twisel tunge”. — Old MS. Bible. “The words of a slanderer.” — Coverdale.

The words of a deceiver, the fair-spoken, deeply-malicious man, though they appear soft and gracious, are wounds deeply injurious.

The original word is **μymhltnk** kemithlahamim; they are as soft or simple, or undesigning. But Schultens gives another meaning. He observes that [A] lahamah in Arabic signifies to “swallow down quickly or greedily.” Such words are like dainties, eagerly swallowed, because inviting to the taste; like gingerbread, apparently gilded over, though with Dutch leaf, which is a preparation of copper; or sweetmeats powdered over with red candied seeds, which are thus formed by red lead; both deeply ruinous to the tender bowels of the poor little innocents, but, because of their sweetness and inviting color, greedily swallowed down. This makes a good reading, and agrees with the latter clause of the verse, “they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.”

18:9 He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster.

vs. 9: Omissions of duty, and in duty, are fatal to the soul, as well as commissions of sin. Verse 9. He also that is slothful — A slothful man neglects his work, and the materials go to ruin: the master, he destroys the materials. They are both destroyers.

18:9

For the human soul in this world is, as it were, in the condition of a ship ascending against the stream of a river: it is never suffered to stay in one place, since it will float back to the nethermost parts unless it strive for the uppermost. If then the strong hand of the worker carry not on to perfection the good things begun, the very slackness in working fights against what has been wrought. For hence it is that it is said through Solomon, He that is feeble and slack in work is brother to him that wastes his works (Proverbs 18:9). For in truth he who does not strenuously execute the good things he has begun imitates in the slackness of his negligence the hand of the destroyer. Hence it is said by the Angel to the Church of Sardis, Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die; for I find not thy works complete before my God (Revelation 3:2).

Fr. Gregory (the Great), Pastoral Rule, 34.

18:10 The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runns into it, and is safe.

I Verse 10. The name of the Lord is a strong tower — The name of the Lord may be taken for the Lord himself; he is a strong tower, a refuge, and place of complete safety, to all that trust in him. What a strong fortress is to the besieged, the like is God to his persecuted, tempted, afflicted followers.

vs. 10, 11: The Divine power, made known in and through our Lord Jesus Christ, forms a strong tower for the believer, who relies on the Lord. How deceitful the defense of the rich man, who has his portion and treasure in this world! It is a strong city and a high wall only in his own conceit; for it will fail when most in need. They will be exposed to the just wrath of that Judge whom they despised as a Savior.

8:11 *The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit.*

Verse 11. The rich man's wealth — See chap. 10:15.

18:12 *Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honor is humility.*

After the heart has been lifted up with pride, a fall comes. But honor shall be the reward of humility.

18:13 *He that answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame unto him. wounded spirit who can bear?*

vs. 13: Eagerness, with self-conceit, will expose to shame.

Verse 13. He that answereth a matter — This is a common case; before a man can tell out his story, another will begin his. Before a man has made

his response, the other wishes to confute piecemeal, though he has had his own speech already. This is foolishness to them. They are ill-bred. There are many also that give judgment before they hear the whole of the cause, and express an opinion before they hear the state of the case. How absurd, stupid, and foolish!

Verse 14. The spirit of a man will sustain — A man sustains the ills of his body, and the trials of life, by the strength and energy of his mind. But if the mind be scoundrel, if this be cast down, if slow-consuming care and grief have shot the dagger into the soul, what can then sustain the man? Nothing but the unseen God. Therefore, let the afflicted pray. A man's own spirit has, in general, sufficient fortitude to bear up under the unavoidable trials of life; but when the conscience is wounded by sin, and the soul is dying by iniquity, who can lift him up? God alone; for salvation is of the Lord.

vs. 14: Firmness of mind supports under many pains and trials. But when the conscience is tortured with remorse, no human fortitude can bear the misery; what then will hell be?

18:15 *The heart of the prudent gets knowledge; and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.*

vs. 15: We must get knowledge, not only into our heads, but into our hearts.

18:16 *A man's gift makes room for him, and brings him before great men.*

vs. 16: Blessed be the Lord, who makes us welcome to come to his throne, without money and without price. May his gifts make room for him in our souls.

Verse 16. A man's gift maketh room for him — It is, and ever has been, a base and degrading practice in Asiatic countries, to bring a gift or present to the great man into whose presence you come. Without this there is no audience, no favor, no justice. This arose from the circumstance that men must not approach the altar of God without an offering.

Potentates, wishing to be considered as petty gods, demanded a similar homage: —

“Believe me, gifts prevail much with both gods and men: even Jupiter himself is pleased with his own offerings.”

18:17 *He that is first in his own cause seems just; but his neighbor comes and searches him.*

vs. 17: It is well to listen to our enemies, that we may form a better judgment of ourselves.

Verse 17. He that is first in his own cause — Any man may, in the first instance, make out a fair tale, because he has the choice of circumstances and arguments. But when the neighbor cometh and searcheth him, he examines all, dissects all, swears and cross-questions every witness, and brings out truth and fact.

18:17 LXX

And all the more when I commend you, I know that ye cherish modesty of spirit; as it is written, “The righteous man is his own accuser;” and again, “Declare thou first thine iniquities, that thou mayest be justified (Isa. 43:26); and again, “When ye shall have done all things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants;” (Luke 22:10); “for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.” (Luke 16:15). For says [the Scripture], “God be merciful to me a sinner.” (Luke 18:13).

St. Ignatius: Epistle to the Magnesians, 12.

18:17

For “thou hast sinned,” we read, “do not add thereto any more, and the first instance.” Let us not then tarry for the accuser, but let us seize his place beforehand, and so let us make our judge more merciful by means of our candor.

St. John Chrysostom: Letter to the Fallen Theodore, Letter 1: 18.

18:17 LXX

Are they not, then, rather Christians in truth who condemn their own sin, than they who think to defend it? “The just is an accuser of himself in the beginning insolently accuses him of them, thinks nothing of it, and when with gentle equanimity of spirit he puts up with wrongs offered to him.

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St. John Cassian: Conference 18:11.

18:18 The lot causes contentions to cease, and parts between the mighty.

vs. 18: It was customary sometimes to refer matters to God, by casting lots, with solemn prayer. The profaning the lot, by using it in matters of diversion, or coveting what belongs to others, forms an objection to this now.

Verse 18. The lot causeth contentions to cease — See note on chap. 16:33.

This is friendship; thus “brother aided by brother becomes a fortified city.” (Proverbs 18:19) For not eating and drinking makes friendship: such friendship even robbers have and murderers. But if we are friends, if we truly care for one another, let us in these respects help one another. This leads us to a profitable friendship: let us hinder those things which lead away to hell.

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on Hebrews, 30.

18:19 A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle.

vs. 19: Great care must be taken to prevent quarrels among relations and those under obligations to each other. Wisdom and grace make it easy to forgive; but corruption makes it difficult.

Verse 19. A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city — Almost all the versions agree in the following reading: “A brother assisted by a brother, is like a fortified city; and their decisions are like the bars of a city.” Coverdale is both plain and terse: “The unities of brethren is stronger than a castell, and they that holde together are like the barre of a palace.” The fable of the dying father, his sons, and the bundle of faggots, illustrates this proverb. Unity among brethren makes them invincible; small things grow great by concord. If we take the words according to the common version, we see them express what, alas! we know to be too generally true: that when brothers fall out, it is with extreme difficulty that they can be reconciled. And fraternal enmities are generally strong and inveterate.

Then he adds the perfect thing, love. “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together,” which some (he says) do, and divide the assemblies. For “a brother helped by a brother is as a strong city.” (Proverbs 18:19, LXX.)

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on Hebrews, 19.

18:19

another. For if “Brother helped by brother is as a strong city;” far more so many bound together by the bonds of love would have entirely repulsed the plotting of the wicked demon. That indeed then Paul was bound up with the disciples, requires not even any demonstration further nor argument for us, since in truth even when in bonds he anxiously cared for them, and each day, he was also dying for them, burning with his longing.

St. John Chrysostom: Concerning Lowliness of Mind, 8.

18:19

If, however, any one should delude us with the pretense of repentance, God, who is not mocked, and who looks into man's heart, will judge of those things which we have imperfectly looked into, and the Lord will amend the sentence of His servants; while yet, dearest brother, we ought to remember that it is written, "A brother that helpeth a brother shall be exalted;" and that the apostle also has said, "Let all of you severally have regard to yourselves, lest ye also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal.6:1,2).

St. Cyprian: Epistle 51:18.

18:20 A man's belly shall be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth; and with the increase of his lips shall he be filled.

vs. 20: The belly is here put for the heart, as elsewhere; and what that is filled with, our satisfaction will be accordingly, and our inward peace.

Verse 20. With the fruit of his mouth — Our own words frequently shape our good or evil fortune in life.

18:21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.

Verse 21. Death and life are in the power of the tongue — This may apply to all men. Many have lost their lives by their tongue, and some have saved their lives by it: but it applies most forcibly to public pleaders; on many of their tongues hangs life or death.

18:21

Hath the tongue hands? But what is, in the hands of the tongue? In the power of the tongue. What is, in the power of the tongue? "Out of thy mouth thou shalt be justified, and out of thy mouth thou shalt be condemned." (Matt. 12:37)

St. Augustine: On the Psalms, 73:22.

18:21

Since in truth the tongue is the hand of them that pray, and by it we lay hold on the knees of God. Defile it not therefore, lest to thee also He say, "Though ye make many prayers, I will not hearken." (Isa. 1:15) Yea, and "in the power of the tongue are death and life;" and, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." (Matt. 12:37)

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on Matthew, 51:5.

18:21

Hear, for example, what he says who spoke the former words, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue." And Christ points to the same thing when he says, "By thy words thou shalt be condemned, and by thy words thou shalt be justified." For the tongue stands in the midst ready for use on either hand. "Thou art its master. Thus indeed a sword lies in the midst, and if thou use it against thine enemies, this organ becomes a means of safety for thee. But if thou thrust its stroke against thyself, not the nature of the iron, but thine own transgression becomes the cause of thy slaughter. Let us then take this view of the tongue. It is a sword lying in the midst; sharpen it for the purpose of accusing thine own sins.

St. John Chrysostom: Instructions to Catechumens, 1:4.

18:22 Whoso finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor of the LORD.

vs. 22: A good wife is a great blessing to a man, and it is a token of Divine favor.

Verse 22. Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing — Marriage, with all its troubles and embarrassments, is a blessing from God; and there are few cases where a wife of any sort is not better than none, because celibacy is an evil; for God himself hath said, "It is not good for man to be alone." None of the versions, except the Chaldee, are pleased with the naked simplicity of the Hebrew text, hence they all add good: "He that findeth a GOOD wife findeth a good thing;" and most people, who have not deeply considered the subject, think the assertion, without this qualification, is absurd. Some copies of the Targum, and apparently one of Kennicott's MSS., have the addition **hbwf** tobah, good; but this would be an authority

too slender to justify changing the Hebrew text; yet Houbigant, Kennicott, and other able critics argue for it. The Septuagint is not satisfied without an addition: "But he who puts away a good wife, puts away a good thing: and he that retains an adulteress, is a fool and wicked." In this addition the Vulgate, Syriac, and Arabic, agree with the Septuagint. The Hebrew text as it stands, teaches a general doctrine by a simple but general proposition: 1775

"He that findeth a wife findeth a good thing." So St. Paul: "Marriage is honorable in all." Had the world been left, in this respect, to the unbridled propensities of man, in what a horrible state would society have been-if indeed society could have existed, or civilization have taken place-if marriage had not obtained among men! As to good

wives and bad wives, they are relatively so, in general; and most of them that have been bad afterwards, have been good at first; and we well know the best things may deteriorate, and the world generally allows that where there are matrimonial contentions, there are faults on both sides.

18:23 The poor uses intreaties; but the rich answers roughly.

18:24 A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother.

vs. 24: Christ Jesus never will forsake those who trust in and love him. May we be such friends to others, for our Master's sake. Having loved his own, which were in the world, he loved them unto the end; and we are his friends if we do whatever he commands us, John 15:14.

Verse 24. A man that hath friends must show himself friendly — Love begets love; and love requires love as its recompense. If a man do not maintain a friendly carriage, he cannot expect to retain his friends. Friendship is a good plant; but it requires cultivation to make it grow.

There is a kind of factitious friendship in the world, that, to show one's self friendly in it, is very expensive, and in every way utterly unprofitable: it is maintained by expensive parties, feasts, etc., where the table groans with dainties, and where the conversation is either jejune and insipid, or calumnious; backbiting, talebearing, and scandal, being the general topics of the different squads in company.

There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. — In many cases the genuine friend has shown more attachment, and rendered greater benefits, than the natural brother. Some apply this to God; others to Christ; but the text has no such meaning.

But critics and commentators are not agreed on the translation of this verse. The original is condensed and obscure.

[[wrthl ꝑy[r ꜱwa ish

reim lehithroea, or lehithroeng, as some would read, who translate: A man of friends may ring again; i.e., he may boast and mightily exult: but there is a friend, **bha** oheb, a lover, that sticketh closer, **qbd** dabek, is glued or cemented, **jam** meach, beyond, or more than, a brother. The former will continue during prosperity, but the latter continues closely united to his friend, even in the most disastrous circumstances.

Hence that maxim of Cicero, so often repeated, and so well known:

“In doubtful times the genuine friend is known.”

A late commentator has translated the verse thus: —

The man that hath many friends is ready to be ruined: But there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

“A friend that delyteth in love, doth a man more friendship, and sticketh faster unto him, than a brother.”

“A man that hath friends ought to show himself friendly for a friend is nearer than a brother.”

“A man amyable to felowschip, more a freend schal ben thanne a brother.” — Old MS. Bible. The two last verses in this chapter, and the two first of the next, are wanting in the Septuagint and Arabic.

These are the principal varieties; out of them the reader may choose. I have already given my opinion.

WHAT KIND OF FRIEND ARE YOU?

Can you think of anyone who would describe you as a good friend? What would they say about you if they asked to talk about their relationship with you?

Scriptures says that good friendships are a great treasure. While some people play at friendships, a true friend “sticks closer than a brother” (Prov. 18:24). Elsewhere, the book of proverbs describes other characteristics of good friends and neighbors:

- . A good friend is one who make honest commitments and acknowledges quickly when those promises cannot be fulfilled (3:28-29; 6:1-5).

- . A good neighbor refuses to despose poor neighbors, but instead shows kindness toward them (19:7; 22:9).

- . A good and true friend forgives and then lets the matter rest. He does not keep bringing up past mistakes and failures (17:9; 14).

- . A good neighbor or friend is willing to share in one's adversity (17:17).

- . Good neighbors do not wear out their welcome by paying too many visits (25:17).

- . A good friend will sing one's praises to others (27:1-2).

- . Friends can sharpen one's thinking with good counsel (27:17; 28:23).

Use this list of friendship characteristics to measure your own value as a friend. Do you follow the kind of guidelines for friendships laid down by Proverbs? Also think about the people you value as friends. Do they know how much you appreciate them?

CHAPTER 19

If we keep God's Word, God's Word will keep us from all things that are really hurtful. Those who despise the ways of His Word are on the right road to ruin.

What is given to the poor out of love for Christ, God places to our account as lent to Him. Jesus said "Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, you have done it unto me." The worth of a poor upright man. Riches preserve friends. False witnesses. False friends. A king's wrath. The foolish son. The prudent wife. Slothfulness. Pity for the poor. The fear of the Lord. The spendthrift son. Obedience to parents.

19:1 Better is the poor that walks in his integrity, than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a fool.

Vs. 1: A poor man who fears God, is more honorable and happy, than a man without wisdom and grace, however rich or advanced in rank.

Verse 1. Better is the poor — The upright poor man is always to be preferred to the rich or self-sufficient fool.

19:2 Also, that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good; and he that hastes with his feet sins.

vs. 2: What good can the soul do, if without knowledge? And he sins who will not take time to ponder the path of his feet.

Verse 2. Also, that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good — Would it not be plainer, as it is more literal, to say, "Also, to be without knowledge, is not good for the soul?" The soul was made for God; and to be without his knowledge, to be unacquainted with him, is not only not good, but the greatest evil the soul can suffer, for it involves all other evils. The Chaldee and Syriac have: "He who knows not his own soul, it is not good to him." "Where no discretion is, there the soul is not well." — Coverdale.

And he that hasteth with his feet sinneth. — And this will be the case with him who is not Divinely instructed. A child does nothing cautiously, because it is uninstructed; a savage is also rash and precipitate, till experience instructs him. A man who has not the knowledge of God is incautious, rash, headstrong, and precipitate: and hence he sinneth—he is continually missing the mark, and wounding his own soul.

19:2

I have heard many saying, "The threats of a king are like the wrath of a lion;" being full of dejection and lamentation. What then should we say to such? That He who said, "The wolves and the lambs shall feed together; and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox," will be able to convert the lion into a mild lamb.

St. John Chrysostom: Concerning the Statues, 3:5.

19:3 The foolishness of man pervertes his way: and his heart frettes against the LORD.

vs. 3: Men run into troubles by their own folly, and then fret at the appointments of God.

Verse 3. The foolishness of man — Most men complain of cross providences, because they get into straits and difficulties through the perverseness of their ways; and thus they fret against God; whereas, in every instance, they are the causes of their own calamities. O how inconsistent is man!

19:3 LXX

But when in this way we have made the Lord's yoke heavy and hard to us, we at once complain in a blasphemous spirit of the hardness and roughness of the yoke itself or of Christ who lays it upon us, in accordance with this passage: "The folly of man corrupteth his ways, but he blames God in his heart;" (Prov. 19:3 LXX) and as Haggai the prophet says, when we say that "the way of the Lord is not right" the reply is aptly made to us by the Lord: "Is not My way right? Are not your ways rather crooked?" (Ezek. 18:25 LXX)

St. John Cassian: Conference 24:25.

19:4 Wealth makes many friends; but the poor is separated from his neighbor.

vs. 4: Here we may see how strong is men's love of money.

Verse 4. The poor is separated from his neighbor. — Because he has the "disease of all-shunned poverty." 1778

19:5 A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaks lies shall not escape.

vs. 5: Those that tell lies in discourse, are in a fair way to be guilty of bearing false-witness.

19:6 Many will intreat the favor of the prince: and every man is a friend to him that gives gifts.

vs. 6: We are without excuse if we do not love God with all our hearts. His gifts to us are past number, and all the gifts of men to us are fruits of his bounty.

19:7 All the brethren of the poor do hate him: how much more do his friends go far from him? he pursues them with words, yet they are wanting to him.

vs. 7: Christ was left by all his disciples; but the Father was with him. It encourages our faith that he had so large an experience of the sorrows of poverty.

Verse 7. Do hate him — They shun him as they do the person they hate. They neither hate him positively, nor love him: they disregard him; they will have nothing to do with him. *an̄* sana signifies not only to hate, but to show a less degree of love to one than another. So Jacob loved Rachel, but hated Leah—showed her less affection than he did to Rachel.

19:7 LXX

We ought not then to ascribe this wandering inclination of our heart either to human nature or to God its Creator. For it is a true statement of Scripture, that “God made man upright; but they themselves found out many thoughts” (Eccl. 7:29 LXX). The character of these then depends on us ourselves, for it says “a good thought comes near to those that know it, but a prudent man will find it.” For where anything is subject to our prudence and industry so that it can be found out, there if it is not found out, we ought certainly to set it down to our own laziness or carelessness and not to the fault of our nature.

St. John Cassian: Conference 7:4.

19:7

For even as God does not need our possessions, so do we need to offer something to God; as Solomon says: “He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord.” For God, who stands in need of nothing, takes our good works to Himself for this purpose, that He may grant us a recompense of His own good things, as our Lord says: “Come, ye blessed of My Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you. For I was an hungered, and ye gave Me to eat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in: naked, and ye clothed Me; sick, and ye visited Me; in prison, and ye came to Me.” (Matt. 25:34)

St. Irenaeus: Adv. Haer., 4:18:6.

19:8 He that gets wisdom loves his own soul: he that keeps understanding shall find good.

vs. 8: Those only love their souls aright that get true wisdom.

19:9 A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaks lies shall perish.

vs. 9: Lying is a damning, destroying sin.

19:10 Delight is not seemly for a fool; much less for a servant to have rule over princes.

vs. 10: A man that has not wisdom and grace, has no right or title to true joy. It is very unseemly for one who is a servant to sin, to oppress God’s free-men.

Verse 10. Delight is not seemly for a fool — *gwn*[t] taanug, splendid or

luxurious living, rank, equipage, etc. These sit ill on a fool, though he be by birth a lord.

For a servant to have rule over princes. — I pity the king who delivers himself into the hands of his own ministers. Such a one loses his character, and cannot be respected by his subjects, or rather their subjects. But it is still worse when a person of mean extraction is raised to the throne, or to any place of power; he is generally cruel and tyrannical.

Verse 11. It is his glory to pass over a transgression. — “No,” says what is termed a man of honor; “he must meet me as a gentleman; I must have his blood, let God say what he will.” O poor, dastardly coward! thou canst not bear the reproach of poor, flimsy, paltry fellows who ridicule thee, because thou hast refused to commit murder. Such laws should be put down by law; and the man that gives a challenge should be hanged, because he intends to commit murder.

19:11 The discretion of a man defers his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression.

vs. 11: He attains the most true glory who endeavors most steadily to overcome evil with good.

19:12 The king’s wrath is as the roaring of a lion; but his favor is as dew upon the grass.

vs. 12: Christ is a King, whose wrath against his enemies will be as the roaring of a lion, and his favor to his people as the refreshing dew.

Verse 12. The king’s wrath is as the roaring of a lion — There is nothing more dreadful than the roaring of this tyrant of the forest. At the sound of it all other animals tremble, flee away, and hide themselves. The king who is above law, and rules without law, and whose will is his own law, is like the lion. This is strongly descriptive of the character of Asiatic sovereigns.

19:13 A foolish son is the calamity of his father: and the contentions of a wife are a continual dropping.

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vs. 13: It shows the vanity of the world, that we are liable to the greatest griefs where we promise ourselves the greatest comfort.

Verse 13. The contentions of a wife are a continual dropping. — The man who has got such a wife is like a tenant who has got a cottage with a bad roof through every part of which the rain either drops or pours. He can neither sit, stand work, nor sleep, without being exposed to these droppings. God help the man who is in such a case, with house or wife!

19:14 House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife is from the LORD.

vs. 14: A discreet and virtuous wife is more valuable than house and riches.

Verse 14. A prudent wife is from the Lord. — One who has a good understanding, ishshah mascaleth; who avoids complaining, though she may often have cause for it.

Thus when a certain wise man saith, "It is by the Lord that a man is matched with a woman" (Proverbs 19:14, LXX.), he means this, God made marriage, and not that it is He that joineth together every man that cometh to be with a woman. For we see many that come to be with one another for evil, even by the law of marriage, and this we should not ascribe to God. But as He said Himself, "He which made them at the beginning, made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh." (Matthew 19:4, 5; Genesis 2:24.) And this is what that wise man meant to explain.

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on Romans, 23.

19:15 Slothfulness casts into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger.

vs. 15: A sluggish, slothful disposition makes men poor; it brings them to want. And this applies both to the present life and that which is to come. Into a deep sleep, the same into which

Adam was thrown, before Eve was taken from his side. Sloth renders a man utterly unconscious of all his interests. Though he has frequently felt hunger, yet he is regardless that his continual slothfulness must necessarily plunge him into more sufferings.

19:15

Whence it is plainly said through Solomon, Slothfulness casts into a deep sleep (Proverbs 19:15). For the slothful one is as it were awake in that he feels aright, though he grows torpid by doing nothing; but slothfulness is said to cast into a deep sleep, because by degrees even the wakefulness of right feeling is lost, when zeal for well-doing is discontinued. And in the same place it is rightly added, And a dissolute soul shall suffer hunger (Ibid.) For, because it braces not itself towards higher things, it lets itself run loose uncared for in lower desires; and, while not braced with the vigor of lofty aims, suffers the pangs of the hunger of low concupiscence, and, in that it neglects to bind itself up by discipline, it scatters itself the more abroad hungry in its craving after pleasures. Hence it is written again by the same Solomon, The idle man is wholly in desires (Proverbs 21:26). Hence in the preaching of the Truth Himself (Matthew 12:44, 45) the house is said indeed to be clean when one spirit has gone out; but, when empty, it is taken possession of by his returning with many more. For the most part the slothful, while he neglects to do things that are necessary, sets heron him some that are difficult, but is inconsiderately afraid of others; and so, as though finding something that he may reasonably fear, he satisfies himself that he has good reason for remaining torpid. To him it is rightly said through Solomon, The sluggard would not plough by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in summer, and it shall not be given unto him (Proverbs 20:4). For indeed the sluggard ploughs not by reason of the cold, when he finds an excuse for not doing the good things which he ought to do.

Fr. Gregory (the Great), Pastoral Rule, 15.

19:16 He that keeps the commandment keeps his own soul; but he that despises his ways shall die.

16: If we keep God's word, God's word will keep us from every thing really hurtful. We abuse the doctrine of free grace, if we think that it does away the necessity and advantage of obedience. Those that live at random must die. This truth is clearly taught in words enough to alarm the stoutest sinner.

19:17 He that hath pity upon the poor lends unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.

God has chosen the poor of this world, to be rich in faith, and heirs of his kingdom.

Verse 17. Lendeth unto the Lord — O what a word is this! God makes himself debtor for every thing that is given to the poor! Who would not advance much upon such credit? God will pay it again. And in no case has he ever forfeited his word.

LENDING TO THE LORD

have you ever struggled with yourself over whether you should give spare change to a homeless person? On the one hand, you don't want to encourage what may be irresponsible behavior, or feed someone's possible addiction to drugs or alcohol. What should you do?

Scripture does not make the decision for us, but it does throw a shaft of light on the problem. In some unspecified way, whatever charity we show to the poor will be repaid, not necessarily by the poor, but by the Lord (Prov. 19:17; compare Matt. 10:40-42). Somehow the Lord assumes the debt.

God is aware of what we do, and because of that we never really "waste" our charity, even if the person who receives it turns out to be deceptive. Somehow God makes it right. The poor person will have to answer for how he uses the resources God brings his way. Likewise, we must answer for how we have used the resources God has brought our way. God wants us to use at least part of those resources to assist the poor (see "From Deadbeat to Donor" at Eph. 4:28).

19:17

But these, on the other hand, prefer ignorance to wisdom, turning their wealth into stone, that is, into pearls and Indian emeralds.

St. Clement of Alexandria: Instructor 3:4.

But to the more imperfect, this is what we may say, Give of what you have unto the needy. Increase your substance. For, saith He, (Proverbs 19:17.) "He that giveth unto the poor, lendeth unto God." But if you are in a hurry and wait not for the time of recompense, think of those who lend money to men: for not even these desire to get their interest immediately; but they are anxious that the principal should remain a good long while in the hands of the borrower, provided only the repayment be secure and they have no mistrust of the borrower. Let this be done then in the present case also.

St. John Chrysostom: Commentary on 1 Corinthians 5:11.

DISCIPLINE

"Chasten your son while there is hope, and do not set your heart on his destruction" [18].

When parents keep under foolish tenderness, they do their best to render children a comfort to them, and happy in themselves.

Although Children are seen as a blessing, they tend toward evil if they are left to their own nature (Prov. 22:15). Therefore, parents are urged to disciple them, so that the children will not be condemned to death. The Proverbs gives special account for the discipline of the children:

- The purpose of discipline must be very clear, that they must grow in wisdom (Prov. 29:15), and attain strong character.
- That parents never be despair of their correction, but have hope in them [18].
- Rearing them with the rod, so that they might not loose their salvation (Prov. 23:14).
- Discipline is only one part of a much broader home environment required to set a child on the path toward wisdom, understanding, and humility (2:1-22; 4:3-9; 15:31-33).
- Correction demonstrates love, whereas lack of it is a form of hate (13:24).
- Discipline is intended to purge children to the inherent "foolishness" that the Bible says they have (22:15).

19:18 Chasten your son while there is hope, and let not your soul spare for his crying.

Verse 18. Let not thy soul spare for his crying. — This is a hard precept for a parent. Nothing affects the heart of a parent so much as a child's cries and tears. But it is better that the child may be caused to cry, when the correction may be healthful to his soul, than that the parent should cry afterwards, when the child is grown to man's estate, and his evil habits are sealed for life.

READING CHILDREN WITH THE ROD

A popular belief today is that people are basically good. An extension of this belief is that children come into the world as morally pure and pristine creatures who are then “socialized” into harmful, hurtful patterns by parents and society.

The book of Proverbs, along with the rest of the Bible, presents a very different picture of children and childrearing. Although children are seen as a blessing, they tend toward evil if left to their own nature (Prov. 22:15). For that reason, parents are urged to discipline their youngsters. Neglecting to do so amount to condemning a child to death (19:18).

Opinions vary as to the best way to discipline children. But disagreement about means must never lose sight of what Proverbs says are the ends involved—to bring a child into adulthood with strong character and the ability to make wise choices (29:15). Whatever the term “rod” means to as a parent, Proverbs encourages you to use discipline in raising your children (23:13).

Several principles of discipline are found in Proverbs:

- . A child needs far more than discipline. In fact, discipline is only one part of a much broader home environment required to set a child on the path toward wisdom, self-appreciation, understanding, and humility (2:1-22; 4:3-9; 15:31-33).

- . Punishment for wrongdoing is not only corrective but preventive in that it can steer a young person away from more powerful forms of evil and ultimate destruction (5:12-14; 23:14).

- . Correction demonstrates love, whereas lack of it is a form of hate (13;24).

- . Discipline is intended to purge children of the inherent “foolishness” that the Bible says they have (22:15).

Discipline is indispensable to healthy childrearing. But Proverbs also observes that there is no guarantee as to how a child will turn out. Many people see a promise in the Proverb, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6). But like much of the rest of Proverbs, this is not a promise so much as an observation about childrearing. Children may receive excellent discipline, yet still refuse the path shown them by their parents:

- . A child may grow up to be lazy, abusive, or immoral, and thus a cause of shame to his parents (10:5; 19:26; 29:3).

- . A child may turn out to be a scoffer who rejects instructions and rebuke, no matter how well intended or administered (13:1).

- . A child may grow up to despise his parents (15:20).

- . A child might rob his parents and not even see it as wrong (28:24).

- . A child may grow up to curse, mock, and scorn his parents (30:11, 17).

Giving this sobering reality. God calls us as parents to demonstrate lives of wisdom, truth, and service to our children, knowing that they may or may not choose to follow in that path. Ultimately, parent cannot force a child to honor either them or God; that is a choice that each of us makes. We as parents are simply called to do our best and leave the results to God.

19:19 A man of great wrath shall suffer punishment: for if you deliver him, yet you must do it again.

The spared and spoiled child is likely to become a man of great wrath.

Verse 19. A man of great wrath — He who is of an irritable, fiery disposition, will necessarily get himself into many broils; and he that is surety for him once is likely to be called on again and again for the same friendly office.

19:20 Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that you mayest be wise in your latter end.

Those that would be wise in their latter end, must be taught and ruled when young.

A SPIRITUAL RETIREMENT ACCOUNT

One of the most well known investments today is the individual retirement account (IRA). By investing tax-free money over several decades, one can amass a tidy sum by the time of retirement. One of the keys to this strategy is the principle of compounding: profits from the investment are reinvested so that what starts as a small balance grows at a steadily increasing rate.

Proverbs says that a spiritual IRA is available to us—the advice of wise counselors. By heeding their suggestions, we can arrive at our “latter days” with a wealth of wisdom (Prov. 19:20). For more of the value of seeking good advice, see “The wisdom of taking counsel” at Prov. 24:6.

19:21 There are many devices in a man’s heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.

What should we desire, but that all our purposes may agree with God’s holy will?

Verse 21. There are many devices, etc. — The same sentiment as in chap. 16:1, where see the note.

19:22 *The desire of a man is his kindness: and a poor man is better than a liar.*

It is far better to have a heart to do good, and want ability for it, than to have ability for it, and want a heart to it.

19:23 *The fear of the LORD tends to life: and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil.*

Those that live in the fear of God, shall get safety, satisfaction, and true and complete happiness.

19:23
Those, then, who suppose the law to be productive of agitating fear, are neither good at understanding the law, nor have they in reality comprehended it; for "the fear of the LORD causes life, but he who errs shall be afflicted with pangs which knowledge views not." Accordingly, Barnabas says mystically, "May God who rules the universe vouchsafe also to you wisdom, and understanding, and science, and knowledge of His statutes, and patience. Be therefore God-taught, seeking what the Lord seeks from you, that He may find you in the day of judgment lying in wait for these things." "Children of love and peace," he called them gnostically.

St. Clement of Alexandria: Stromata 2:18.

19:24 *A slothful man hides his hand in his bosom, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again.*

vs. 24: Indolence, when indulged, so grows upon people, that they have no heart to do the most needful things for themselves.

A slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom — Is too lazy to feed himself, If he dip his hand once in the dish, he is too lazy to put it in a second time. It is a strange case that a man, through his excessive slothfulness, would rather starve than put himself to the trouble to eat.

19:25 *Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware: and reprove one that hath understanding, and he will understand knowledge.*

A gentle rebuke goes farthest with a man of understanding

19:26 *He that wastes his father, and chases away his mother, is a son that causes shame, and brings reproach.*

The young man who wastes his father's substance, or makes his aged mother destitute, is hateful, and will come to disgrace.

Verse 26. He that wasteth his father — Destroys his substance by riotous or extravagant living, so as to embitter his latter end by poverty and affliction; and adds to this wickedness the expulsion of his aged widowed mother from the paternal house; is a son of shame—a most shameful man; and a son of reproach—one whose conduct cannot be sufficiently execrated. "Who tormentith the fader, and fleeth the modir, schenful schal ben, and unblisful". — Old MS. Bible. The common reading of the Vulgate is, et fugat matrem, and expels his mother; but the Old Bible was taken from a copy that had fugit matrem, shuns his mother, flees away from her, leaves her to affliction and penury. It is prostitution of the term to call such, man.

ARE YOU TREADING YOUR PARENTS WITH RESPECT?

Think about your relationship with your parents. Have you ever tried to divide them or set one against the other? Scripture says that showing disrespect for our parents is a shameful thing (Prov. 19:26) and urges us to honor them instead (Ex. 20:12). The Book of Proverbs warns us several times against mistreating our parents:

19:27 *Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causes to err from the words of knowledge.*

It is the wisdom of young men to dread hearing such talk as puts loose and evil principles into the mind.

19:28 *An ungodly witness scorns judgment: and the mouth of the wicked devours iniquity.*

Verse 27. Cease, my son — Hear nothing that would lead thee away from God and his truth.

Those are the worst of sinners, who are glad of an opportunity to sin.

19:29 *Judgments are prepared for scorners, and stripes for the back of fools.*

Verse 29. Stripes for the back of fools. — Profane and wicked men expose themselves to the punishments denounced against such by just laws. Avoid, therefore, both their company and their end. The unbelief of man shall not make God's threatenings of no effect. Christ himself, when bearing sins not his own, was not spared. Justice and judgment took hold of our blessed Surety; and will God spare obstinate sinners?

19

'The son that forsaketh the commandment of his father meditateth evil words .' But such meditation, because it is evil, the Holy Spirit blames in these words, and reproveth too in other terms, saying, 'Your hands are

polluted with blood, your fingers with sins; your lips have spoken lawlessness, and your tongue imagineth iniquity: no man speaketh right things, nor is there true judgment .’ (Isa. 59:3,4).

St. Athanasius of Alexandria: Paschal Letters, 7:5.

A certain one, at least, giving a model of a man has mentioned this, for "Man," saith he, "is a great thing; and a merciful man is an honorable thing." (**Proverbs 20:6. LXX.**) Greater is this gift than to raise the dead. For far greater is it to feed Christ when an hungered than to raise the dead by the name of Jesus: for in the former case You doest good to Christ, in the latter He to thee. And the reward surely comes by doing good, not by receiving good. For here indeed, in the case of miracles I mean, You art God's debtor. in that of almsgiving, You have God for a debtor.

St. John Chrysostom: Commentary on 2 Corinthians 8:6.

CHAPTER 20

Here in this imperfect state, no person can claim to be sinless, but the just man, walking by the rule of God's Word may have the comfort of a good conscience, and his children will fare the better for his sake.

This is a challenge to any man in the world to prove himself sinless. Only saints in heaven, who "have seen Him as He is" and been made like Him, can say it. Through the believer, through the work of the Sprit, is pure from the sins of many others, yet each one still has sins that easily beset him—sins of omission and sins of commission which they have to continually confess in order to maintain unbroken fellowship with Christ.

Against wine and strong drink. We should avoid contentions. The sluggard. The righteous man. Weights and measures. Tale-bearers. The wicked son. The wise king. The glory of young men. The beauty of old men. The benefit of correction.

20:1 Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.

It seems hard to believe that men of the greatest abilities, as well as the ignorant, should render themselves fools and madmen, merely for the taste or excitement produced by strong liquors.

Verse 1. Wine is a mocker — It deceives by its fragrance, intoxicates by its strength, and renders the intoxicated ridiculous.

Strong drink —shechar, any strong fermented liquor, whether of the vine, date, or palm species.

20:1

It is agreeable, therefore, to right reason, to drink on account of the cold of winter, till the numbness is dispelled from those who are subject to feel it; and on other occasions as a medicine for the intestines. For, as we are to use food to satisfy hunger, so also are we to use drink to satisfy thirst, taking the most careful precautions against a slip: "for the introduction of wine is perilous." And thus shall our soul be pure, and dry, and luminous; and the soul itself is wisest and best when dry.

St. Clement of Alexandria: Instructor 2:2.

20:1

He that eateth the Heavenly Bread, becomes Heavenly without doubt! Wine teaches us, in that it makes him that is familiar therewith like itself: for it hates much him that is fond of it, and is intoxicating and maddening, and a mocker to him!

St. Ephraim the Syrian: Hymns on the Nativity 3.

20:2 The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion: whoso provokes him to anger sinns against his own soul.

How formidable kings are to those who provoke them! how much more foolish then is it to provoke the King of kings!

Verse 2. The fear of a king — Almost the same with chap. 19:12, which see.

20:3 It is an honor for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling.

vs. 3: To engage in quarrels is the greatest folly that can be. Yield, and even give up just demands, for peace' sake.

Verse 3. It is an honoer for a man — The same sentiment as chap. 19:11.

20:4 The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing.

vs. 4: He who labors and endures hardship in his seed-time for eternity, will be properly diligent as to his earthly business.

Verse 4. The sluggard will not plough — For other parts of this character, see the preceding chapter. It is seldom that there is a season of very cold weather in Palestine; very cold days sometimes occur, with wind, rain, and sleet. They begin their ploughing in the latter end of September, and sow their early wheat by the middle of October. And this is often the case in England itself. The meaning of the proverb is: the slothful man, under the pretense of unfavorable weather, neglects cultivating his land till the proper time is elapsed.

20:5 Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out.

vs. 5: Though many capable of giving wise counsel are silent, yet something may be drawn from them, which will reward those who obtain it.

Verse 5. Counsel in the heart of man — Men of the deepest and most comprehensive minds are rarely apt, unsolicited, to join in any discourse, in which they might appear even to the greatest advantage; but a man of understanding will elicit this, by questions framed for the purpose, and thus pump up the salubrious waters from the deep and capacious well. The metaphor is fine and expressive.

20:6 Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?

vs. 6: It is hard to find those that have done, and will do more good than they speak, or care to hear spoken of. Verse 6. Most men will proclaim — “Many men merciful ben clepid: a feithful man forsoth, who schal finde?” Old MS. Bible.

“A great thing is man”; why? “and an honorable thing is a merciful man.” (**Proverbs 20:6, LXX.**) For this is the true character of man, to be merciful, yea rather the character of God, to show mercy.

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on Philippians, 1.

For let us consider what is man? The Heathens say that he is a rational animal, mortal, capable of intelligence and knowledge. But let us not take our definition from them, but whence? From the sacred writings. Where then has the Scripture given a definition of man? Hear its words. “There was a man perfect and upright, one that feared God, and eschewed evil.” (Job 1:2.) This was indeed a man! Again, another says, “Man is great, and the merciful man is precious.” (Proverbs 20:6, Sept.) Those who answer not to this description, though they partake of mind, and are never so capable of knowledge, the Scripture refuses to acknowledge them as men, but calls them dogs, and horses, and serpents, and foxes, and wolves, and if there be any animals more contemptible. If such then is man, he that liveth in pleasure is not a man; for how can he be, who never thinks of anything that he ought?

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on 1 Timothy, hom. 13.

20:7 The just man walks in his integrity: his children are blessed after him.

vs. 7: A good man is not liable to uneasiness in contriving what he shall do, or in reflecting on what he has done, as those who walk in deceit. And his family fare better for his sake.

20:7

That inheritance is placed in security which is kept under the guardianship of God. This is to provide for one’s dear pledges for the coming time; this is with paternal affection to take care for one’s future heirs, according to the faith of the Holy Scripture, which says: “I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed wanting bread. All the day long he is merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed.” And again: “He who walketh without reproach in his integrity shall leave blessed children after him.” Therefore you are an unfair and traitorous father, unless you faithfully consult for your children, unless you look forward to preserve them in religion and true piety. You who are careful rather for their earthly than for their heavenly estate, rather to commend your children to the devil than to Christ, are sinning twice, and allowing a double and twofold crime, both in not providing for your children the aid of God their Father, and in teaching your children to love their property more than Christ.

St. Cyprian: Treatise Viii On Works And Alms, 13.

20:8 A king that sitts in the throne of judgment scatters away all evil with his eyes.

vs. 8: If great men are good men, they may do much good, and prevent very much evil.

A king that sitteth in the throne of judgment — Kings should see to the administration of the laws, as well as of the state transactions, of their kingdom. In the British constitution there is a court for the king, called the King’s Bench, where he should sit, and where he is always supposed to be sitting. The eyes—the presence, of the monarch in such a place, scatter evil—he sees into the case himself, and gives right judgment, for he can have no self-interest. Corrupt judges, and falsifying counsellors, cannot stand before him; and the villain is too deeply struck with the majesty and state of the monarch, to face out iniquity before him.

20:9 Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?

vs. 9: Some can say, Through grace, we are cleaner than we have been; but it was the work of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 9. Who can say, I have made any heart clean — No man. But thousands can testify that the blood of Jesus Christ has cleansed them from all unrighteousness. And he is pure from his sin, who is justified freely through the redemption that is in Jesus.

20:8,9

“When, therefore, the righteous King shall sit upon His throne, . . . who will boast that he has a pure heart? or who will boldly say that he is pure from sin?” Except perhaps those who wish to boast of their own righteousness, and not glory in the mercy of the Judge Himself.

St. Augustine: On Man’s Perfection in Righteousness, 33.

Let us not therefore give up in despair; for to fall is not so grievous, as to lie where we have fallen; nor to be wounded so dreadful, as after wounds to refuse healing. “For who shall boast that he has his heart chaste? or who shall say confidently that he is pure from sin?” (Proverbs 20:9. Sept.) These things I say not to make you more negligent, but to prevent your despairing.

St. John Chrysostom: Commentary on 1 Corinthians 3:11.

20:9

Nor let any one so flatter himself with the notion of a pure and immaculate heart, as, in dependence on his own innocence, to think that the medicine needs not to be applied to his wounds; since it is written, ‘Who shall boast that he hath a clean heart, or who shall boast that he is pure from sins?’

St. Augustine: Against Two Letters of the Pelagians, 4:27 (10).

20:9

Nor let any one so flatter himself with the notion of a pure and immaculate heart, as, in dependence on his own innocence, to think that the medicine needs not to be applied to his wounds; since it is written, “Who shall boast that he hath a clean heart, or who shall boast that he is pure from sins?” And again, in his epistle, John lays it down, and says, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” But if no one can be without sin, and whoever should say that he is without fault is either proud or foolish, how needful, how kind is the divine mercy, which, knowing that there are still found some wounds in those that have been healed, even after their healing, has given wholesome remedies for the curing and healing of their wounds anew!

St. Cyprian: Treatise Viii On Works And Alms, 3.

20:9

What now shall I say concerning the very carefulness and watchfulness against sin? “Who shall boast that he hath a chaste heart? or who shall boast that he is clean from sin?” Holy virginity is indeed inviolate from the mother’s womb; but “no one,” saith he, “is clean in Thy sight, not even the infant whose life is of one day upon the earth.” (John 25:4).

St. Augustine: On Holy Virginity. 48.

20:9

How all the saints have confessed with truth that they were unclean and sinful

AND therefore with daily sighs all the saints grieve over this weakness of their nature and while they search into their shifting thoughts and the secrets and inmost recesses of their conscience, cry out in entreaty: “Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified;” and this: “Who will boast that he hath a chaste heart? or who will have confidence that he is pure from sin?” and again: “There is not a righteous man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not;” and this also: “Who knoweth his faults?”

St. John Cassian: Conference 23:16.

13:7; 12:9

And so it results that while they fancy that they can make larger profits by the instruction of others, they are actually deprived of their own improvement. For “There are who make themselves out rich though possessing nothing, and there are who humble themselves amid great riches;” and: “Better is a man who serves himself in a humble station than one who gains honor for himself and wanteth bread.”

St. John Cassian: Conference 24:13.

20:10 Divers weights, and divers measures, both of them are alike abomination to the LORD.

vs. 10: See the various deceits men use, of which the love of money is the root. The Lord will not bless what is thus gotten.

Verse 10. Divers weights and divers measures — “A peise and a peise;” — Old MS. Bible: from the French pois, weight. Hebrew: “A stone and a stone; an ephah and an ephah.” One the standard, the other below it; one to buy with, the other to sell by.

20:10,11

And therefore the blessed Apostle warns us to keep hold of the reins of discretion and not to be attracted by excess and swerve to either side, saying: “Your reasonable service.” (Rom. 12:1). And the giver of the law similarly forbids the same thing, saying: “Let the balance be just and the weights equal, the bushel just and the sextarius equal,” (Lev. 19:36), and Solomon also gives a like opinion on this matter: “Great and small weights and double measures are both unclean before the Lord, and one who uses them shall be hindered in his contrivances.” Further not only in the way in which we have said, but also in this must we strive not to have unfair weights in our hearts, nor double measures in the storehouse of our conscience, i.e., not to overwhelm those, to whom we are to preach the word of the Lord, with precepts that are too strict and heavier than we ourselves can bear, while we take for granted that for ourselves those things which have to do with the rule of strictness are to be softened by a freer allowance of relaxation. For when we do this, what is it but to weigh and measure the goods and fruits of the Lord’s commands in a double weight and measure? For if we dispense them in one way to ourselves and in another to our brethren, we are rightly blamed by the Lord because we have unfair balances and double measures, in accordance with the saying of Solomon which tells us that “A double weight is an abomination to the Lord, and a deceitful balance is not good in His sight.” In this way also we plainly incur the guilt of using a deceitful weight and a double measure, if out of the desire for the praise of men, we make a show before the brethren of greater strictness than what we practice in private in our own cells, trying to appear more abstinent and holier in the sight of men than in the sight of God, an evil which we should not only avoid but actually loathe. But meanwhile as we have wandered some way from the question before us, let us return to the point from which we started.

St. John Cassian: Conference 21:22.

20:11 Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.

vs. 11: Parents should observe their children, that they may manage them accordingly.

Even a child is known by his doings — That is, in general terms, the effect shows the nature of the cause. “A child is known by his conversation,” says Coverdale. A child is easily detected when he has done evil; he immediately begins to excuse and vindicate himself, and profess his innocence, almost before accusation takes place. Some think the words should be understood, every child will dissemble; this amounts nearly to the meaning given above, But probably the principal this intended by the wise man is, that we may easily learn from the child what the man will be. In general, they give indications of those trades and callings for which they are adapted by nature. And, on the whole, we cannot go by a surer guide in preparing our children for future life, than by observing their early propensities. The future engineer is seen in the little handicraftsman of two years old. Many children are crossed in these early propensities to a particular calling, to their great prejudice, and the loss of their parents, as they seldom settle at, or succeed in, the business to which they are tied, and to which nature has given them no tendency. These infantine predilections to particular callings, we should consider as indications of Divine Providence, and its calling of them to that work for which they are peculiarly fitted.

20:12 The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the LORD hath made even both of them.

vs. 12: All our powers and faculties are from God, and are to be employed for him.

Verse 12. The hearing ear and the seeing eye — Every good we possess comes from God; and we should neither use our eyes, nor our ears, nor any thing we possess, but in strict subserviency to his will.

20:13 Love not sleep, lest you come to poverty; open your eyes, and you shalt be satisfied with bread.

vs. 13: Those that indulge themselves, may expect to want necessaries, which should have been gotten by honest labor.

Verse 13. Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty — Sleep, indescribable in its nature, is an indescribable blessing; but how often is it turned into a curse! It is like food; a certain measure of it restores and invigorates exhausted nature; more than that oppresses and destroys life. A lover of sleep is a paltry, insignificant character.

20:14 It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasts.

vs. 14: Men use arts to get a good bargain, and to buy cheap; whereas a man ought to be ashamed of a fraud and a lie.

Verse 14. It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer — How apt are men to decry the goods they wish to purchase, in order that they may get them at a cheaper rate; and, when they have made their bargain and carried it off, boast to others at how much less than its value they have obtained it! Are such honest men? Is such knavery actionable? Can such be punished only in another world? St. Augustine tells us a pleasant story on this subject: A certain mountebank published, in the full theater, that at the next entertainment he would show to every man present what

was in his heart. The time came, and the concourse was immense; all waited, with deathlike silence, to hear what he would say to each. He stood up, and in a single sentence redeemed his pledge: —

You all wish to BUY CHEAP, and SELL DEAR.”

He was applauded; for every one felt it to be a description of his own heart, and was satisfied that all others were similar. “In quo dicto levissimi scenici omnes tamen conscientias invenerunt suas.”-DE TRINITATE, lib. xiii., c. 3; OPER. vol. vii., col. 930.

20:15 There is gold, and a multitude of rubies: but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel.

vs. 15: He that prefers true knowledge to riches, follows the ways of religion and happiness. If we really believed this truth, the word of God would be valued as it deserves, and the world would lose its tempting influence.

Verse 15. There is gold — Gold is valuable, silver is valuable, and so are jewels; but the teachings of sound knowledge are more valuable than all.

20:16 Take his garment that is surety for a stranger: and take a pledge of him for a strange woman.

vs. 16: Those ruin themselves who entangle themselves in rash suretiship. Also those who are in league with abandoned women. Place no confidence in either.

Verse 16. Take his garment that is surety for a stranger — I suppose the meaning to be, If a stranger or unknown person become surety in a case, 1784

greater caution should be used, and such security taken from this stranger as would prevent him from running away from his engagements.

20:17 Bread of deceit is sweet to a man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel.

vs. 17: Wealth gotten by fraud may be sweet, for the carnal mind takes pleasure in the success of wicked devices; but it will be bitter in the reflection.

Verse 17. Bread of deceit is sweet — Property acquired by falsehood, speculation, etc., without labor, is pleasant to the unprincipled, slothful man; but there is a curse in it, and the issue will prove it.

20:18 Every purpose is established by counsel: and with good advice make war.

vs. 18: Especially we need advice in spiritual warfare. The word and Spirit of God are the best counselors in every point.

Verse 18. With good advice make war, — Perhaps there is not a precept in this whole book so little regarded as this. Most of the wars that are undertaken are wars of injustice, ambition, aggrandizement, and caprice, which can have had no previous good counsel. A minister, who is perhaps neither a good nor a great man, counsels his king to make war; the cabinet must be brought into it, and a sufficient number out of the states of the kingdom gained over to support it. By and by, what was begun through caprice must be maintained through necessity. Places must be created, and offices must be filled with needy dependents, whose interest it may be to protract the war, till they get enough to pay their debts, and secure independence for life. And for these most important ends the blood of the country is spilled, and the treasures of the people exhausted! I have met with a fact precisely of this kind under the reign of Louis XIV.

20:19 He that goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flatters with his lips.

vs. 19: Those dearly buy their own praise, who put confidence in a man because he speaks fairly.

20:20 Whoso curses his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness.

vs. 20: An undutiful child will become very miserable. Never let him expect any peace or comfort.

Verse 20. Whoso curseth his father — Such persons were put to death under the law; see Exodus 21:17; Leviticus 20:9, and here it is said, Their lamp shall be put out-they shall have no posterity; God shall cut them off both root and branch.

20:21 An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning; but the end thereof shall not be blessed.

vs. 21: An estate suddenly raised, is often as suddenly ruined.

Verse 21. An inheritance-gotten hastily — Gotten by speculation; by lucky hits; not in the fair progressive way of traffic, in which money has its natural increase. All such inheritances are short-lived; God’s blessing is not in them, because they are not the produce of industry; and they lead to idleness, pride, fraud and knavery. A speculation in trade is a public nuisance and curse. How many honest men have been ruined by such!

20:22 Say not you, I will recompense evil; but wait on the LORD, and he shall save you.

vs. 22: Wait on the Lord, attend his pleasure, and he will protect thee.

Verse 22. I will recompense evil — Wait on the Lord; judgment is his, and his judgments are sure. In the mean time pray for the conversion of your enemy.

20:22

Whence it is plain and manifest, that not by our means, but for our sakes, all those things are happening which come down from the anger of God.

St. Cyprian: Treatise V, An Address To Demetrianus, 18.

20:23 Divers weights are an abomination unto the LORD; and a false balance is not good.

A bargain made by fraud will prove a losing bargain in the end.

20:23

And are they not proved to be an abomination' also 'unto the Lord,' as having 'diverse weights' with them, and with this estimating those other instances, and with that blaspheming the Lord?

St. Athanasius of Alexandria: Four Discourses Against the Arians, 1:6:19.

20:24 Man's goings are of the LORD; how can a man then understand his own way?

vs. 24: How can we form plans, and conduct business, independently of the Lord?

Verse 24. Man's goings are of the Lord — He, by his providence, governs all the great concerns of the world. Man often traverses these operations; 1785

but he does it to his own damage. An old writer quaintly says: "They who will carve for themselves shall cut their fingers."

20:25 It is a snare to the man who devours that which is holy, and after vows to make enquiry.

vs. 25: The evasions men often use with their own consciences show how false and deceitful man is.

Verse 25. Who devoureth that which is holy — It is a sin to take that which belongs to God, his worship, or his work, and devote it to one's own use.

And after vows to make inquiry. — That is, if a man be inwardly making a rash vow, the fitness or unfitness, the necessity, expediency, and propriety of the thing should be first carefully considered. But how foolish to make the vow first, and afterwards to inquire whether it was right in the sight of God to do it! This equally condemns all rash and inconsiderate conduct. My old MS. Bible translates, "Falling is of men often to voven to seyntis, and after, the vouw is agen brawen". Is it possible that Wiclif could have translated this verse thus? as it strongly countenances vows to and invocations of saints.

20:26 A wise king scatters the wicked, and brings the wheel over them.

vs. 26: Justice should crush the wicked, and separate them from the virtuous.

Verse 26. Bringeth the wheel over them. — He threshes them in his anger, as the wheel does the grain on the threshing-floor. Every one knows that grain was separated from its husks, in Palestine, by the feet of the oxen trampling among the sheaves, or bringing a rough-shod wheel over them. Asiatic kings often threshed their people, to bring out their property; but this is not what is intended here.

20:26

For there is in temporal things too a multiplication, which turns away from the unity of God. Hence "the corruptible body weigheth down the soul, and the earthy tabernacle presseth down the mind that museth upon many things." (Wisd. 9:15). But the righteous are multiplied "after the height of God," when "they shall go from strength to strength." (Ps. 84:7).

St. Augustine: On the Psalms, 12:9.

20:27 The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.

vs. 27: The rational soul and conscience are as a lamp within us, which should be used in examining our dispositions and motives with the revealed will of God.

Verse 27. The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord — God has given to every man a mind, which he so enlightens by his own Spirit, that the man knows how to distinguish good from evil; and conscience, which springs from this, searches the inmost recesses of the soul.

20:27

For [the Scripture] saith in a certain place, "The Spirit of the Lord is a candle searching the secret parts of the belly." Let us reflect how near He is, and that none of the thoughts or reasonings in which we engage are hid from Him.

St. Clement of Rome: the Epistle to the Corinthians, 21.

20:27

For the Scripture somewhere says, "The Spirit of the Lord is a lamp, searching the recesses of the belly." And the more of a Gnostic a man becomes by doing right, the nearer is the illuminating Spirit to him.

St. Clement of Alexandria: Stromata 4:18.

20:28 Mercy and truth preserve the king: and his throne is upholden by mercy.

vs. 28: Mercy and truth are the glories of God's throne.

Verse 28. Mercy and truth preserve the king — These are the brightest jewels in the royal crown; and those kings who are most governed by them have the stablest government.

20:29 The glory of young men is their strength: and the beauty of old men is the gray head.

vs. 29: Both young and old have their advantages; and let neither despise or envy the other.

Verse 29. The glory of young men is their strength — Scarcely any young man affects to be wise, learned, etc.; but all delight to show their strength and to be reputed strong. Agility, one evidence of strength, their particularly affect; and hence their various trials of strength and fleetness in public exercises. And the beauty of old men is the gray head. — They no longer affect strength and agility, but they affect wisdom, experience, prudent counsels, etc., and are fond of being reputed wise, and of having respect paid to their understanding and experience.

20:30 The blueness of a wound cleanses away evil: so do stripes the inward parts of the belly.

Verse 30. The blueness of a wound — *twrbj* chabburoth, from *rbj* chabar, to unite, to join together. Does it not refer to the cicatrice of a wound when, in its healing, the two lips are brought together? By this union the wound is healed; and by the previous discharge the lace-rated ends of fibres and blood-vessels are purged away. So stripes, though they hurt for the time, become the means of correcting and discharging the moral evil of the inmost soul, the vice of the heart, the easily-besetting sin.

In this chapter, verses fourteen to nineteen, inclusive, are wanting in the Septuagint and Arabic; and the tenth, eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth, come in after the twenty-second. It is difficult to account for these variations, unless they were occasioned by the change of leaves in MSS.

vs. 30: Severe rebukes sometimes do a great deal of good. But such is the corruption of nature, that men are loath to be rebuked for their sins. If God uses severe afflictions, to purify our hearts and fit us for his service, we have cause to be very thankful.

20:30

For the blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil, because the pain of scourges cleanses iniquities, whether meditated or perpetrated. But by the appellation of belly the mind is wont to be understood. For that the mind is called the belly is taught by that sentence in which it is written, The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord, which searcheth all the secret parts of the belly (Ibid. 27). As if to say, The illumination of Divine inspiration, when it comes into a man's mind, shews it to itself by illuminating it, whereas before the coming of the Holy Spirit it both could entertain bad thoughts and knew not how to estimate them. Then, the blueness of a wound cleanses away evil, and stripes in the secret parts of the belly, because when we are smitten outwardly, we are recalled, silent and afflicted, to memory of our sins, and bring back before our eyes all our past evil deeds, and through what we suffer outwardly we grieve inwardly the more for what we have done. Whence it comes to pass that in the midst of open wounds of the body the secret stripe in the belly cleanses us more fully, because a hidden wound of sorrow heals the iniquities of evil-doing.

Fr. Gregory (the Great), Pastoral Rule, 12.

21:26

For, having first mentioned bounty bestowed upon the poor, he would not call this mercy, but rather justice: for it is surely just that whosoever receive what is given by a common Lord should use it in common. Hence also Solomon says, Whoso is just will give and will not spare (Proverbs 21:26). They are to be admonished also anxiously to take note how of the fig-tree that had no fruit the rigorous husbandman complains that it even cumbered the ground.

Fr. Gregory (the Great), Pastoral Rule, 21.

CHAPTER 21

Those who follow after righteousness, shall find righteousness, honor and life.

The sacrifice which typified the great sacrifice of Christ, was a divine institution. Religious ceremonies based upon Christ's sacrifice are pleasing to God when offered in faith and repentance, but when not backed by true devotion, are an abomination.

The king's heart is in the hand of God. We should practice mercy and justice. The lying tongue. The quarrelsome woman. The punishment of the wicked. The uncharitable. The private gift. The happiness of the righteous. The wicked a ransom for the righteous. The treasures of the wise. He who guards his tongue. Desire of the sluggard. The false witness. Salvation is of the Lord.

21:1 *The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turns it whithersoever he will.*

The believer, perceiving that the Lord rules every heart as he sees fit, like the husbandman who turns the water through his grounds as he pleases, seeks to have his own heart, and the hearts of others, directed in his faith, fear, and love.

Verse 1. The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord — The Lord is the only ruler of princes. He alone can govern and direct their counsels. But there is an allusion here to the Eastern method of watering their lands. Several canals are dug from one stream; and by opening a particular sluice, the husbandman can direct a stream to whatever part he please: so the king's heart, wherever it turns; i.e., to whomsoever he is disposed to show favor. As the land is enriched with the streams employed in irrigation; so is the favourite of the king, by the royal bounty: and God can induce the king to give that bounty to whomsoever he will. See Harmer.

21:1

And when they had ridden a long time they came to the end of their journey, John thus fasting. And they brought him before the king, and said: Worshipful king, we bring to thee John, a God, not a man; for, from the hour in which we apprehended him, to the present, he has not tasted bread. At this Domitian being amazed, stretched out his mouth on account of the wonder, wishing to salute him with a kiss; but John bent down his head, and kissed his breast. And Domitian said: Why hast thou done this? Didst thou not think me worthy to kiss thee? And John said to him: It is right to adore the hand of God first of all, and in this way to kiss the mouth of the king; for it is written in the holy books, The heart of a king is in the hand of God.

Acts Of The Holy Apostle And Evangelist John The Theologian.

21:1

Great indeed is the help of the grace of God, so that He turns our heart in whatever direction He pleases.

St. Augustine: On the Grace of Christ, 24.

21:1

The Scripture says in the Proverbs of Solomon, "Even as the rush of water, so is the heart of a king in God's hand; He will turn it in whatever way He shall choose." Again, in the 104th Psalm, in reference to the Egyptians, one reads what God did to them: "And He turned their heart to hate His people, to deal subtly with His servants." (Ps. 105:25). Observe, likewise, what is written in the letters of the apostles.

St. Augustine: On Grace and Free Will, 42 (21).

21:2 *Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD ponders the hearts.*

We are partial in judging ourselves and our actions.

Verse 2. The Lord pondereth the hearts. — Every man feels strongly attached to his own opinions, modes of acting, etc.; and though he will not easily give up any thing to the judgment of a neighbor, whom he will naturally consider at least as fallible as himself, yet he should consider that the unerring eye of God is upon him; and he should endeavor to see that what he does is acceptable in the eye of his Maker and Judge.

21:3 *To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.*

. vs. 3: Many deceive themselves with a conceit that outward devotions will excuse **unrighteousness**.

Verse 3. To do justice and judgment — The words of Samuel to Saul. See note on 1 Samuel 15:23.

21:4 An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin.

vs. 4: Sin is the pride, the ambition, the glory, the joy, and the business of wicked men.

Verse 4. A high look — The evidence of pride, self-conceit, and vanity. A proud heart, from which the high look, etc., come.

And the ploughing — **rn** ner, lucerna, the lamp, the prosperity and

posterity of the wicked; is sin-it is evil in the seed, and evil in the root evil1788

in the branch, and evil in the fruit. They are full of sin themselves, and what they do is sinful.

21:5 The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness; but of every one that is hasty only to want.

vs. 5: The really diligent employ foresight as well as labor.

21:6 The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death.

vs. 6: While men seek wealth by unlawful practices, they seek death.

Verse 6. Of them that seek death — Instead of **yꝓqbm** mebakshey, “them

that seek,” several MSS., some ancient editions, with Symmachus, the Septuagint, Vulgate, and Arabic, have **yꝓqm** mokeshey, the snares. He

who gets treasures by a lying tongue, pursues vanity into the snares of death. Our common translation may be as good. But he who, by the snares of his tongue, endeavors to buy and sell to the best advantage, is pursuing what is empty in itself; and he is ensnared by death, while he is attempting to ensnare others.

21:6

So he receives who gives, and he gives who receives. “But the righteous pity and show mercy.” “But the mild shall be inhabitants of the earth, and the innocent shall be left in it. But the transgressors shall be extirpated from it.”

St. Clement of Alexandria: Stromata 2:19.

21:7 The robbery of the wicked shall destroy them; because they refuse to do judgment.

vs. 7: Injustice will return upon the sinner, and will destroy him here and for ever.

Verse 7. The robbery of the wicked — The wicked shall be terrified and ruined by the means they use to aggrandize themselves. And as they refuse to do judgment, they shall have judgment without mercy.

21:8 The way of man is froward and strange: but as for the pure, his work is right.

vs. 8: The way of mankind by nature is forward and strange

Wherefore we must cast out all wickedness from our souls, and never more contrive any deceit; for, saith one, “To the perverse God sendeth crooked paths” (Proverbs 21:8, LXX.);

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on St. John, 41.

21:9 It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house.

vs. 9: It is best to shun bitter contention by pouring out the heart before God. For by prudence and patience, with constant prayer, the cross may be removed.

Verse 9. In a corner of the housetop — A shed raised on the flat roof. — a wide house; **rbj tyb** beith chaber, “a house of fellowship;” what we

should call a lodging-house, or a house occupied by several families. This was usual in the East, as well as in the West. Some think a house of festivity is meant: hence my old MS. Bible has, “the hous and feste”.

21:10 The soul of the wicked desires evil: his neighbor finds no favor in his eyes.

vs. 10: The evil desires of a wicked man’s heart, lead to baseness in his conduct.

21:11 When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise: and when the wise is instructed, he receives knowledge.

vs. 11: The simple may be made wise by punishments on the wicked, and by instructions to those who are willing to be taught.

Verse 11. When the scorner is punished — When those who mock at religion, blaspheme against its Author, and endeavor to poison society, and disturb the peace of the community by their false doctrine, meet with that degree of punishment which their crimes, as far as they affect the public peace, deserve; then the simple, who were either led away, or in danger of being led away, by their pernicious doctrines, are made wise. And when those thus made wise are instructed in the important truths which have been decried by those unprincipled men, then they receive

knowledge; and one such public example is made a blessing to thousands. But only blasphemy against God and the Bible should be thus punished. Private opinion the state should not meddle with.

21:12 *The righteous man wisely considers the house of the wicked: but God overthrows the wicked for their wickedness.*

vs. 12: Good men envy not the prosperity of evil-doers; they see there is a curse on them.

Verse 12. The righteous man wisely considereth — This verse is understood as implying the pious concern of a righteous man, for a wicked family, whom he endeavors by his instructions to bring into the way of knowledge and peace. 1789

21:13 *Whoso stopps his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.*

vs. 13: Such as oppress the poor by beating down wages, such as will not relieve according to their ability those in distress, and those in authority who neglect to do justice, stop their ears at the cry of the poor. But doubtless care is to be used in the exercise of charity.

Verse 13. Whoso stoppeth his ears — See the conduct of the priest and Levite to the man who fell among thieves; and let every man learn from this, that he who shuts his ear against the cry of the poor, shall have the ear of God shut against his cry. The words are quite plain; there is no difficulty here.

21:13

For he shall not be able to deserve the mercy of the Lord, who himself shall not have been merciful; nor shall he obtain aught from the divine pity in his prayers, who shall not have been humane towards the poor man's prayer. And this also the Holy Spirit declares in the Psalms, and proves, saying, Blessed is he that considereth of the poor and needy; the Lord will deliver him in the evil day." (Ps. 41:1)

St. Cyprian: Treatise Viii On Works And Alms, 5.

Such were the offerings of Cornelius. For (it is said) "thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God." (Acts 10:4) Thou seest a most excellent union. Then are we heard, when we ourselves also hear the poor who come to us. "He" (it is said) "that stoppeth his ears that he may not hear the poor" (Proverbs 21:13), his prayer God will not hearken to. "Blessed is he that considereth the poor and needy: the Lord will deliver him in the evil day." (Psalm 40:1) But what day is evil except that one which is evil to sinners?

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on Hebrews, 11.

21:14 *A gift in secret pacifies anger: and a reward in the bosom strong wrath.*

vs. 14: If money can conquer the fury of the passions, shall reason, the fear of God, and the command of Christ, be too weak to bridle them?

21:15 *It is joy to the just to do judgment: but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity.*

vs. 15: There is true pleasure only in the practice of religion.

21:16 *The man that wanders out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead.*

vs. 16: Of all wanderers in the ways of sin, those are in the most dangerous condition who turn aside into the ways of darkness. Yet there is hope even for them in the all-sufficient Savior; but let them flee to him without delay

Verse 16. The man once enlightened, that wandereth out of the way of understanding, in which he had walked, shall remain-have a permanent residence-in the congregation of the dead; *μυαρι* rephaim, the lost; either separate spirits in general, or rather the assembly of separate spirits, which had fallen from primitive rectitude; and shall not be restored to the Divine favor; particularly those sinners who were destroyed by the deluge. This passage intimates that those called rephaim are in a state of conscious existence. It is difficult to assign the true meaning of the word in several places where it occurs: but it seems to mean the state of separate spirits, i.e., of those separated from their bodies, and awaiting the judgment of the great day: but the congregation may also include the fallen angels. My old MS. Bible translates, "The man that errith fro the wei of doctrine, in the felowschip of geantis schal wonnen".

21:17 *He that loves pleasure shall be a poor man: he that loves wine and oil shall not be rich.*

vs. 17: A life of worldly pleasure brings ruin on men

Verse 17. He that loveth pleasure — That follows gaming, fowling, hunting, coursing, etc., when he should be attending to the culture of the fields, shall be a poor man; and, I may safely add, shall be so deservedly poor, as to have none to pity him.

21:18 *The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous, and the transgressor for the upright.*

The righteous is often delivered out of trouble, and the wicked comes in his stead, and so seems as a ransom for him.

Verse 18. The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous — God often in his judgments cuts off the wicked, in order to prevent them from destroying the righteous. And in general, we find that the wicked fall into the traps and pits they have digged for the righteous.

21:19 It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman.

vs. 19: Unbridled passions spoil the comfort of all relations.

21:20 There is treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man spends it up.

vs. 20: The plenty obtained by prudence, industry, and frugality, is desirable. But the foolish misspend what they have upon their lusts.

21:20

Let the treasure to be desired rest upon your lips.

21:21 He that follows after righteousness and mercy finds life, righteousness, and honor.

vs. 21: True repentance and faith will lead him that relies on the mercy of God in Christ, to follow after righteousness and mercy in his own conduct.

21:22 A wise man scales the city of the mighty, and casts down the strength of the confidence thereof.

vs. 22: Those that have wisdom, often do great things, even against those confident of their strength.

5:22 What cords? The word is well known in holy Scripture, and elsewhere we find what “cords” signify. For “each one is holden with the cords of his sins,” saith Scripture. And Esaias saith openly, “Woe to them that draw sin like a long rope.” And why is it called a “cord”? Because every sinner who persevereth in his sins, addeth sin to sin; and when he ought by accusing his sins to amend, by defending he doubleth what by confession he might have removed, and often seeketh to fortify himself by other sins, on account of the sins he hath already committed...

St. Augustine: On the Psalms, 140:8.

Verse 22. A wise man scaleth the city of the mighty — Wisdom is in many respects preferable to strength, even in the case of defense. See what skill does in the fortification and reduction of strong places.

21:23 Whoso keeps his mouth and his tongue keeps his soul from troubles.

vs. 23: It is our great concern to keep our souls from being entangled and disquieted.

21:24 Proud and haughty scorner is his name, who deals in proud wrath.

vs. 24: Pride and haughtiness make men passionate; such continually deal in wrath, as if it were their trade to be angry.

21:25 The desire of the slothful kills him; for his hands refuse to labor.

Verse 25. The desire of the slothful killeth him — He desires to eat, drink, and be clothed: but as he does not labor, hence he dies with this desire in his heart, envying those who possess plenty through their labor and industry. Hence he is said to covet greedily all the day long, ver. 26, while the righteous, who has been laborious and diligent, has enough to eat, and some to spare.

21:26 He covets greedily all the day long: but the righteous gives and spares not.

vs. 25, 26: Here is the misery of the slothful; their hands refuse to labor in an honest calling, by which they might get an honest livelihood; yet their hearts cease not to covet riches, pleasures, and honors, which cannot be obtained without labor. But the righteous and industrious have their desires satisfied.

21:27 The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more, when he brings it with a wicked mind?

vs. 27: When holiness is pretended, but wickedness intended, that especially is an abomination.

Verse 27. When he bringeth it with a wicked mind? — If such a person even bring the sacrifices and offerings which God requires, they are an abomination to him, because the man is wicked; and if such offerings be imperfect in themselves, or of goods ill-gotten, or offered by constraint of custom, etc., they are doubly abominable.

21:28 A false witness shall perish: but the man that hears speaks constantly.

vs. 28: The doom of a false witness is certain.

21:28

But then, further, let those who are admonished be told how to give mercifully what they have, when they have learnt not to confound the good of mercy by throwing into it the wickedness of robbery. For they violently exact what they mercifully bestow. For it is one thing to shew mercy on account of our sins; another thing to sin on account of shewing mercy; which can no longer indeed be called mercy, since it cannot grow into sweet fruit, being embittered by the poison of its pestiferous root. For hence it is that the Lord through the prophet rejects even sacrifices themselves, saying, I the Lord love judgment, and I hate robbery in a whole burnt offering (Isaiah 61:8).

Hence again He has said, The sacrifices of the ungodly are abominable, which are offered of wickedness (Proverbs 21:28). Such persons also often withdraw from the indigent what they give to God.

Fr. Gregory (the Great), Pastoral Rule, 21.

21:29 A wicked man hardens his face: but as for the upright, he directs his way.

vs. 29: A wicked man bids defiance to the terrors of the law and the rebukes of Providence. But a good man asks, What does God require of me?

Verse 29. He directeth his way — Instead of *yky* yachin, he directeth,

upwards of fifty of Kennicott's and De Rossi's MSS., several ancient editions with some of the versions, read *yby* yabin, he understands; and

because he understands his way, he is able to direct himself in walking in it.

21:30 There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD.

21:31 The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the LORD.

vs. 30, 31: Means are to be used, but, after all, our safety and salvation are only of the Lord. In our spiritual warfare we must arm ourselves with the whole armor of God; but our strength must be in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

Verse 31. The horse is prepared against the day of battle — Horses were not used among the Jews before the time of Solomon. There was a Divine command against them, Deuteronomy 17:16; but Solomon transgressed it; see 1 Kings 10:29. But he here allows that a horse is a vain thing for safety; and that however strong and well appointed cavalry may be, still safety, escape, and victory, are of the Lord. Among the ancient Asiatics, the horse was used only for war; oxen labored in the plough and cart, the ass and the camel carried backloads; and mules and asses served for riding. We often give the credit of a victory to man, when they who consider the circumstances see that it came from God.

21:31

We ought then always to sing with the blessed David: "My strength and my praise is" not my free will, but "the Lord, and He is become my salvation." (Ps. 117:14) And the teacher of the Gentiles was not ignorant of this when he declared that he was made capable of the ministry of the New Testament not by his own merits or efforts but by the mercy of God. "Not" says he, "that we are capable of thinking anything of ourselves as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God, which can be put in less good Latin but more forcibly, "our capability is of God," and then there follows: "Who also made us capable ministers of the New Testament" (2 Cor. 3:5,6).

St. John Cassian: Conference 3:15.

21:31

It was, in truth, good for them that my good should come from them, though, indeed, it was not from them, but by them; for from Thee, O God, are all good things, and from my God is all my safety? This is what I have since discovered, as Thou hast declared Thyself to me by the blessings both within me and without me which Thou hast bestowed upon me. For at that time I knew how to suck, to be satisfied when comfortable, and to cry when in pain — nothing beyond.

St. Augustine: Confession, 1:6 (7).

CHAPTER 22

Those who walk humbly with God in obedience to the commands of His Word and in submission to the disposals of His providence, shall find true riches, honor, comfort and long life in this world, and eternal life at last. A good reputation. The rich and the poor. The idle. Good habits formed in infancy. Injustice and its effects. The providence of God. The lewd woman. The necessity of timely correction. Exhortation to wisdom. Rob not the poor. Be not the companion of the froward. Avoid suretyship. Be honest. The industrious shall be favored.

22:1 A GOOD name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold.

Verse 1. A good name — **שֵׁם** shem, a name, put for reputation, credit, fame. Used nearly in the same way that we use it: “He has got a name;” “his name stands high;” for “He is a man of credit and reputation.” **אֲבִי** toba, kalon, [A] hamood, and bonum, are added by the Chaldee, Septuagint, Arabiac, and Vulgate, all signifying good or excellent. Is rather to be chosen than great riches — Because character will support a man in many circumstances; and there are many rich men that have no name: but the word of the man of character will go farther than all their riches. We should be more careful to do that by which we may get and keep a good name, than to raise or add unto a great estate.

Others again injure not the wife or property, but the reputation of their neighbor, and this too is unrighteousness. For “a good name is better than great riches.” (Proverbs 22:1.) But some say that this also is said of Paul about doctrines. Still there is nothing to prevent its having been said of both. But what it is “to hold the truth in unrighteousness,” learn from the sequel.

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on Romans, 3.

22:2 The rich and poor meet together: the LORD is the maker of them all.

vs. 2: Divine Providence has so ordered it, that some are rich, and others poor, but all are guilty before God; and at the throne of God’s grace the poor are as welcome as the rich.

Verse 2. The rich and poor meet together — **רִשְׁוֹן** ashir the opulent, whether in money, land, or property; **רָשׁוּן** rash, the man that is destitute of these, and lives by his labor, whether a handicraftsman, or one that tills the ground. In the order of God, the rich and the poor live together, and are mutually helpful to each other. Without the poor, the rich could not be supplied with the articles which they consume; for the poor include all the laboring classes of society: and without the rich, the poor could get no vent for the produce of their laborer, nor, in many cases, labor itself. The poor have more time to labor than the mere necessities of life require; their extra time is employed in providing a multitude of things which are called the superfluities of life, and which the rich especially consume. All the poor man’s time is thus employed; and he is paid for his extra labor by the rich. The rich should not despise the poor, without whom he can neither have his comforts, nor maintain his state. The poor should not envy the rich, without whom he could neither get employment, nor the necessities of life.

The Lord is the Maker of them all. — Both the states are in the order of God’s providence and both are equally important in his sight. Merely considered as men, God loves the simple artificer or laborer as much as he does the king; though the office of the latter, because of its entering into the plan of his government of the world, is of infinitely greater consequence than the trade of the poor artificer. Neither should despise the other; neither should envy the other. Both are useful; both important; both absolutely necessary to each other’s welfare and support; and both are accountable to God for the manner in which they acquit themselves in those duties of life which God has respectively assigned them. The abject poor—those who are destitute of health and the means of life—God in effect lays at the rich man’s door, that by his superfluities they may be supported. How wise is that ordinance which has made the rich and the poor! Pity it were not better understood!

22:2

Let us look, again, at the fact that in the Old Testament we find the words, “I make the rich man and the poor man,” whereas Jesus calls the poor blessed. Well, in that saying Jesus did; not refer to those who are poor simply in worldly substance, but to those who are poor in spirit, that is to say, who are not inflamed with pride, but have the gentle and lowly dispositions of humility, not thinking of themselves more than they ought to think.

Archelaus: Disputation with Manes, 42.

22:2

God made both the rich and poor. Scripture says, “The rich and the poor meet together, the Lord is the Maker of them both.” The rich and the poor meet together. In what way, except in this present life? The rich and the poor are born alike. Ye meet one another as ye walk on the way together. Do not thou oppress, nor thou defraud. The one

hath need, the other hath plenty. But “the Lord is the Maker of them both.” By him who hath, He helpeth him that needeth; by him who hath not, He proveth him that hath. We have heard, we have spoken; let us fear, let us take heed, let us pray, let us attain.

St. Augustine: Sermons on N.T. Lessons, 35:7.

22:2

Let the humble not bear testimony to himself, but leave witness to be borne to him by another.

St. Clement of Rome: the Epistle to the Corinthians, 38.

22:3 *A prudent man foresees the evil, and hides himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.*

vs. 3: Faith foresees the evil coming upon sinners, and looks to Jesus Christ as the sure refuge from the storm. A prudent man foreseeth the evil — God in mercy has denied man the knowledge of futurity; but in its place he has given him hope and prudence. By hope he is continually expecting and anticipating good; by prudence he derives and employs means to secure it. His experience shows him that there are many natural evils in a current state, the course of which he can neither stem nor divert: prudence shows him beforehand the means he may use to step out of their way, and hide himself. The simple—the inexperienced, headstrong, giddy, and foolish—rush on in the career of hope, without prudence to regulate, chastise, and guide it; thus they commit many faults, make many miscarriages, and suffer often in consequence; and the commission of crimes leads to punishment.

22:3

God does, however, exercise a providence over all things, and therefore He also gives counsel; and when giving counsel, He is present with those who attend to moral discipline.

St. Irenaeus: Adv. Haer., 3:25:1.

22:4 *By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches, and honor, and life.*

vs. 4: Where the fear of God is, there will be humility. And much is to be enjoyed by it; spiritual riches, and eternal life at last.

22:4

“My son, honor thou God and the king.” And say I, Honor thou God indeed, as the Author and Lord of all things, but the bishop as the high-priest, who bears the image of God — of God. inasmuch as he is a ruler, and of Christ, in his capacity of a priest. After Him, we must also honor the king. For there is no one superior to God, or even like to Him, among all the beings that exist. Nor is there any one in the Church greater than the bishop, who ministers as a priest to God for the salvation of the whole world. Nor, again, is there any one among rulers to be compared with the king, who secures peace and good order to those over whom he rules.

St. Ignatius: Epistle to the Smyrneans, 9.

22:5 *Thorns and snares are in the way of the froward: he that does keep his soul shall be far from them.*

vs. 5: The way of sin is vexatious and dangerous. But the way of duty is safe and easy.

Verse 5. Thorns and snares — Various difficulties, trials, and sufferings.

22:6 *Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*

vs. 6: Train children, not in the way they would go, that of their corrupt hearts, but in the way they should go; in which, if you love them, you would have them go. As soon as possible every child should be led to the knowledge of the Savior.

Verse 6. Train up a child in the way he should go — The Hebrew of this clause is curious: [wkrd yp l\[r\[nl ûnj](#) chanoch lannaar al pi darco,

“Initiate the child at the opening (the mouth) of his path.” When he comes to the opening of the way of life, being able to walk alone, and to choose; stop at this entrance, and begin a series of instructions, how he is to conduct himself in every step he takes. Show him the duties, the dangers, and the blessings of the path; give him directions how to perform the

1793 duties, how to escape the dangers, and how to secure the blessings, which all lie before him. Fix these on his mind by daily inculcation, till their impression is become indelible; then lead him to practice by slow and almost imperceptible degrees, till each indelible impression becomes a strongly radicated habit. Beg incessantly the blessing of God on all this teaching and discipline; and then you have obeyed the injunction of the wisest of men. Nor is there any likelihood that such impressions shall ever be effaced, or that such habits shall ever be destroyed.

[ûnj](#) chanac, which we translate train up or initiate, signifies also dedicate;

and is often used for the consecrating any thing, house, or person, to the service of God. Dedicate, therefore, in the first instance, your child to God; and nurse, teach, and discipline him as God's child, whom he has intrusted to your care. These things observed, and illustrated by your own conduct, the child (you have God's word for it) will never depart from the path of life. Coverdale translates the passage thus: "Yf thou teachest a childe what waye he shoulde go, he shall not leave it when he is olde." Coverdale's Bible, for generally giving the true sense of a passage, and in elegant language for the time, has no equal in any of the translations which have followed since. HORACE'S maxim is nearly like that of Solomon: —

"The docile colt is form'd with gentle skill To move obedient to his rider's will. In the loud hall the hound is taught to bay The buckskin trail'd, then challenges his prey Through the wild woods. Thus, in your hour of youth From pure instruction quaff the words of truth: The odours of the wine that first shall stain The virgin vessel, it shall long retain." FRANCIS.

22:7 *The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.*

vs. 7: This shows how important it is for every man to keep out of debt. As to the things of this life, there is a difference between the rich and the poor; but let the poor remember, it is the Lord that made the difference. The rich ruieth over the poor — So it is in the order of God, and may be a blessing to both.

22:7

For it is a sure sign of a mind that is cold and proud, if it receives with disdain and carelessness the medicine of the words of salvation, although it be offered with the zeal of excessive persistence. For "a soul that is full jeers at honeycomb: but to a soul that is in want even little things appear sweet." And so if these things have been carefully taken in and stored up in the recesses of the soul and stamped with the seal of silence, afterwards like some sweet scented wine that maketh glad the heart of man, they will, when mellowed by the antiquity of the thoughts and by long-standing patience, be brought forth from the jar of your heart with great fragrance, and like some perennial fountain will flow abundantly from the veins of experience and irrigating channels of virtue and will pour forth copious streams as if from some deep well in your heart.

St. John Cassian: Conference 14:13.

22:8 *He that sows iniquity shall reap vanity: and the rod of his anger shall fail.*

vs. 8: The power which many abuse, will soon fail them.

Verse 8. He that soweth iniquity — The crop must be according to the seed. If a man sow thistle seed, is it likely he shall reap wheat? If he sow to the flesh, shall he not of the flesh reap destruction?

22:9 *He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he gives of his bread to the poor.*

vs. 9: He that seeks to relieve the wants and miseries of others shall be blessed.

Verse 9. A bountiful eye — One that disposes him to help all that he sees to be in want; the bountiful eye means the bountiful heart; for the heart looks through the eye. The merciful heart, even when the hand has little or nothing to give, shall be blessed of the Lord.

22:10 *Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease.*

vs. 10: Profane scoffers and revilers disturb the peace.

22:11 *He that loves pureness of heart, for the grace of his lips the king shall be his friend.*

vs. 11: God will be the Friend of a man in whose spirit there is no guile; this honor have all the saints.

Verse 11. He that loveth pureness of heart — Who aims to be what God would have him to be—the King of kings shall be his Friend. There is no class of men that value uprightness more than kings; as none stand so much in need of it in their servants.

22:12 *The eyes of the LORD preserve knowledge, and he overthrows the words of the transgressor.*

vs. 12: God turns the counsels and designs of treacherous men to their own confusion.

Verse 12. The eyes of the Lord-(the Divine providence) preserve knowledge — This providence has been wonderfully manifested in preserving the sacred oracles, and in preserving many ancient authors, which have been of great use to the civil interests of man.

22:13 *The slothful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets.*

vs. 13: The slothful man talks of a lion without, but considers not his real danger from the devil, that roaring lion within, and from his own slothfulness, which kills him.

Verse 13. The slothful man saith, There is a lion without — But why does he say so? Because he is a slothful man. Remove his slothfulness, and these imaginary difficulties and dangers will be no more. He will not go abroad to

work in the fields, because he thinks there is a lion in the way, he will not go out into the town for employment, as he fears to be assassinated in the streets! From both these circumstances he seeks total cessation from activity.

22:14 The mouth of strange women is a deep pit: he that is abhorred of the LORD shall fall therein.

Verse 14. The mouth of strange women is a deep pit — In chap. 23:27, he says, A whore is a DEEP DITCH:, and a strange woman is a NARROW PIT. The allusions in these three places are too plain to be misunderstood. Virgil's hell has been adduced in illustration: —

“O glorious prince of brave Anchises' line! Great godlike hero! sprung from seed divine, Smooth lies the road to Pluto's gloomy shade; And hell's black gates for ever stand display'd: But 'tis a long unconquerable pain, To climb to these ethereal realms again. The choice-selected few, whom favoring Jove, Or their own virtue, rais'd to heaven above, From these dark realms emerged again to day; The mighty sons of gods, and only they.

vs. 14: The vile sin of licentiousness commonly besots the mind beyond recovery.

22:15 Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.

vs. 15: Sin is foolishness, it is in the heart, there is an inward unequaled to sin: children bring it into the world with them; and it cleaves close to the soul. We all need to be corrected by our heavenly Father.

22:16 He that oppresses the poor to increase his riches, and he that gives to the rich, shall surely come to want.

Verse 16. He that oppressteth the poor — He who, in order to obtain the favor of the rich and great, either robs or cheats the poor, to make those men presents; or gives in presents to them, for the sake of honor and reputation, what he should have given to the poor, shall surely come to want.

vs. 16: We are but stewards, and must distribute what God entrusts to our care, according to his will.

22:17 Bow down your ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply your heart unto my knowledge.

Verse 17. Bow down thine ear — From this to the end of ver. 21 are contained, not proverbs, but directions how to profit by that which wisdom has already delivered; the nature of the instruction, and the end for which it was given.

I shall give a paraphrase of this very important passage: —

I. Solomon addresses his pupils on the use of his past teachings. See on ver. 6.

1. The wise man speaks; and all his words, not merely his sentiments, are to be carefully heard.
2. He speaks knowledge-gives doctrines true in themselves, and confirmed by observation and experience.
3. These are to be heard with humility and deep attention: “Bow down thine ear.”
4. They must not only be heard, but meditated and pondered: “Apply thine heart to my knowledge.” 1796

22:18 For it is a pleasant thing if you keep them within you; they shall withal be fitted in your lips.

Verse 18. For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee—

II. The pleasure and profit which may be derived from an attentive hearing.

1. They should be laid up in the heart-stored, treasured up within thee.
2. This will yield high satisfaction and happiness to the soul: “For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee.”
3. The man who thus attends to the teachings of wisdom shall gain an experimental knowledge of them, so as to be able to speak of them suitably, pertinently and persuasively. “They shall withal be fitted in thy lips.”

22:19 That your trust may be in the LORD, I have made known to you this day, even to you.

Verse 19. That thy trust may be in the Lord, I have made known, etc.—

III. The END for which the wise man gives these instructions: —

1. “That thy trust may be in the Lord.” That thou mayest acknowledge HIM as the Fountain of all good; and refer every thing to him.
2. That this end may be accomplished, the instructions are specific and particular: “I have made known to thee, even to thee.”
3. And this has not only been done in times past, “I have made known:” but even in the present, “I have made known this day!”

IV. An appeal is made to the person himself relative to the matter and importance of the teaching.

1. “Have I not written to thee excellent things;” **μυτρίτε** shalishim, literally threefold, thrice, in three different ways; which some think refers to his three books: — 1. Canticles. 2. Koheleth, or Ecclesiastes. And 3. Proverbs.

Others, understanding it of the voice of Divine wisdom, suppose the three grand divisions of the sacred oracles are intended; viz., 1. The Law; 2. The Prophets; and 3. The Hagiographa. And others interpret it of the three grand intellectual sciences: — 1. Morality, or Ethics. 2. Natural Philosophy, or Physics. 3. Theology, or the science of Divine things as 1797

reported in the Scriptures. But Solomon's books of Natural Philosophy are lost.

And lastly, some of the rabbins and some Christians find in these shalishim the three senses of Scripture: 1. Literal; 2. Figurative; and 3. Allegorical.

After all, as we know the term thrice was used as the term seven, a certain number for an uncertain, (see Amos 1:11; 2 Corinthians 12:8,) it may mean no more here than, I have written to thee often. But perhaps it is safer to apply it to the Scriptures, and the excellent doctrines they contain: for

שלשום shalishim signifies also excellent, princely things; things which

become a king to speak. Indeed, it would not be difficult to prove that there is not one important art or science which is not alluded to in the Holy Scriptures, and used to illustrate and inculcate heavenly truths.

2. These excellent, princely, or threefold teachings, consist of two grand parts: 1. COUNSELS, תוֹצְאוֹת moetsoth, from יָצָא yaats, to give

advice, counsel, or information. These (1) show thee what thou shouldst know; and (2) advise thee what thou shouldst do. 2. KNOWLEDGE, יָדָע daath, from יָדַע yada, to perceive, or feel by means of the senses and internal perception; viz., what should be felt, experienced, known to be true by mental perception, and by their influence on the heart and affections.

V. All this is done to give the pupil the fullest satisfaction, and most plenary evidence concerning the truths of God.

22:20 Have not I written to you excellent things in counsels and knowledge,

22:20 LXX But of spiritual knowledge there are three kinds, tropological, allegorical, anagogical, of which we read as follows in Proverbs: "But do you describe these things to yourself in three ways according to the largeness of your heart."

St. John Cassian: Conference 14:8.

22:21 That I might make you know the certainty of the words of truth; that you mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto you?

vs. 17-21: To these words, to this knowledge, the ear must be bowed down, and the heart applied by faith and love. To live a life of delight in God and dependence on him, is the foundation of all practical religion. The way to know the certainty of the word of truth, is to make conscience of our duty.

Verse 21. That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth—

1. These are words or doctrines of truth: 1. They are true in themselves. 2. Come from the God of truth. 3. Are truly fulfilled to all that believe.

2. These words of truth are certain, כֹּשֶׁת koshet, they are not of

dubious or difficult interpretation; they point directly to the great end for which God gave them; they promise, and they are fulfilled. He who pleads them by faith, receives their accomplishment in the spirit and power of Divine love. The Scriptures, as far as they 1798

concern the salvation of the soul, are to be experimentally understood; and, by this experimental knowledge, every believer has the witness in himself, and knows the certainty of the words of truth.

VI. What we know ourselves to be true, and of infinite importance to the welfare of men in general, we should carefully proclaim and witness, that they also may believe.

That thou mightest answer the words of truth — 1. When the doctrine of salvation is preached, there will be many inquirers. What is this doctrine? Have any persons received these blessings—the remission of sins, witness of the Holy Spirit, purification of the heart, etc., etc.? Who are they? What are the collateral arguments that prove these things, and show us that you have not misapprehended the meaning of these Scriptures? 2. Inquiries of this kind should meet with the speediest and most distinct answers; and the doctrines of truth should be supported and illustrated with the words of truth. "That thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee."

22:22 Rob not the poor, because he is poor: neither oppress the afflicted in the gate:

vs. 22, 23: He that robs and oppresses the poor, does so at his peril. And if men will not appear for them, God will.

Verse 22. Neither oppress the afflicted in the gate — In judgment let the poor have a fair hearing; and let him not be borne down because he is poor. The reader has often seen that courts of justice were held at the gates of cities in the East.

22:23 For the LORD will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them.

Verse 23. For the Lord will plead their cause — Wo therefore to them that oppress them, for they will have God, not the poor, to deal with.

22:24 Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man you shalt not go:

Verse 24. Make no friendship with an angry man — Spirit has a wonderful and unaccountable influence upon spirit. From those with whom we associate we acquire habits, and learn their ways, imbibe their spirit, show their tempers and walk in their steps. We cannot be too choice of our company, for we may soon learn ways that will be a snare to our soul.

Verse 26. That strike hands — See on the parallel texts in the margin.

Verse 27. If thou hast nothing to pay — Should any man give security for more than he is worth? If he does, is it not a fraud on the very face of the transaction? 1800

Here we find the owners of both fields bringing each his garland and libation to the honor of this god. They sung its praises, put on its top a chaplet of flowers, poured out the libation before it; and the inhabitants of the country held a festival in its honor. It was, in short, celebrated as the preserver of the bounds and territorial rights of tribes, cities, and whole kingdoms; and without its testimony and evidence, every field would have been a subject of litigation.

22:25 Lest you learn his ways, and get a snare to your soul.

vs. 24, 25: Our corrupt hearts have so much tinder in them, that it is dangerous to have to do with those that throw about the sparks of their passion.

22:26 Be not you one of them that strike hands, or of them that are sureties for debts.

Verse 26. That strike hands — See on the parallel texts in the margin.

22:27 If you hast nothing to pay, why should he take away your bed from under you?

vs. 26, 27: Every man ought to be just to himself, and his family; those are not so, who, by folly or other carelessness, waste what they have.

Verse 27. If thou hast nothing to pay — Should any man give security for more than he is worth? If he does, is it not a fraud on the very face of the transaction? 1800

Here we find the owners of both fields bringing each his garland and libation to the honor of this god. They sung its praises, put on its top a chaplet of flowers, poured out the libation before it; and the inhabitants of the country held a festival in its honor. It was, in short, celebrated as the preserver of the bounds and territorial rights of tribes, cities, and whole kingdoms; and without its testimony and evidence, every field would have been a subject of litigation.

22:28 Remove not the ancient landmark, which your fathers have set.

vs. 28: We are taught not to trespass on another man's right. And it is hard to find a truly industrious man. Such a man will rise. See you a man diligent in the business of religion? He is likely to excellencies. Let us then be diligent in God's work.

22:28

(That no bishop should presume in anything pertaining to another's parish, and of the transference of bishops.)

Let no one, again, trespass upon the boundaries of another, nor presume to judge or excommunicate one belonging to another's parish; because such judgment or ordination, or excommunication or condemnation, shall neither be ratified nor have any virtue; since no one shall be bound by the decision of another judge than his own, neither shall he be condemned by such. Whence also the Lord speaks to this effect: "Pass not the ancient landmarks which thy fathers have set:"

The Epistles Of Pope Callistus, 12:3.

22:28

For they were not afraid of God, who says, 'Remove not the eternal boundaries which thy fathers placed,' and 'He that speaketh against father or mother, let him die the death:' they were not in awe of their fathers, who enjoined that they who hold the opposite of their confession should be anathema.

St. Athanasius of Alexandria: Ad Afros, 1.

22:29 See you a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.

Verse 29. He shalt not stand before mean men. dark or obscure persons; men of no repute. “Na he schal ben before un-noble men”. — Old MS. Bible. “Not amonge the symple people.” — Coverdale.

The general meaning of the proverb is, “Every diligent, active man, shall be at once independent and respectable.”

CHAPTER 23

The indulgence of the appetites is a sin that easily besets us. We should apprehend ourselves to be in danger when in the presence of luxury, gluttony and sensuality, and should restrain ourselves from such gratification, lest our hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and that day come upon us unawares.

Sobriety in eating and drinking, especially at the tables of the great. Have no fellowship with the covetous. Remove not the ancient landmark. Children should receive due correction. Avoid the company of wine-bibbers. Obedience to parents. Avoid lewd connections. The effect of an unfeeling conscience.

23:1 *When you sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before you:*

Vs. 1-3: God's restraints of the appetite only say, Do thyself no harm.

Verse 1. When thou sittest to eat with a ruler — When invited to the table of thy betters, eat moderately. Do not appear as if half starved at home. Eat not of delicacies to which thou art not accustomed; they are deceitful meat; they please, but they do not profit. They are pleasant to the sight, the taste, and the smell; but they are injurious to health. These are prudential cautions; and should be carefully observed by all who would avoid the conduct of a clown, and desire to pass for a well-bred man.

23:1,2

For what is the table of the ruler, but that from which we take the body and blood of Him who laid down His life for us? And what is it to sit thereat, but to approach in humility? And what is it to consider intelligently what is set before thee, but worthily to reflect on the magnitude of the favor? And what is it, so to put to thy hand, as knowing that thou art bound to make similar preparations, but as I have already said, that, as Christ laid down His life for us, so we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren? For as the Apostle Peter also says, "Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow His steps." (1Peter 2:21). This is to make similar preparations.

23:2 *And put a knife to your throat, if you be a man given to appetite.*

Verse 2. Put a knife to thy throat — Repress thy appetite, and do not be incontinent of speech. Eat, drink, and converse, under a check.

23:3 *Be not desirous of his dainties: for they are deceitful meat.*

vs. 4,5: Be not of those that will be rich. The things of this world are not happiness and a portion for a soul; those that hold them ever so fast, cannot hold them always, cannot hold them long.

23:3

"Desire not," says the Scripture, "rich men's dainties;" for they belong to a false and base life. They partake of luxurious dishes, which a little after go to the dunghill. But we who seek the heavenly bread must role the belly, which is beneath heaven, and much more the things which are agreeable to it, which "God shall destroy," (1 Cor. 6:13) says the apostle, justly execrating gluttonous desires.

St. Clement of Alexandria: Instructor Instructor 2:1.

23:4 *Labor not to be rich: cease from your own wisdom.*

Verse 4. Labour not to be rich — Let not this be thy object. Labour to provide things honest in the sight of God and all men; and if thou get wealth, do not forget the poor, else God's curse will be a canker even in thy gold.

Cease from thine own wisdom. — *ûtnyb* binathecha, thy own

understanding or prudence. The world says, "Get rich if thou canst, and how thou canst." Rem, si possis, recte; si non, quocunque modo rem; "Get a fortune honestly if thou canst; but if not, get one at all events." This is the devil's counsel, and well it is followed; but Solomon says, and God says, "Cease from thine own counsel." Thou hast an immortal soul, and shalt shortly appear before God. Lay up treasure for heaven, and be rich towards God.

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23:5 *Wilt you set your eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.*

vs. 6-8: Do not make thyself burdensome to any, especially those not sincere. When we are called by God to his feast, and to let our souls delight themselves, Isaiah 25:6; 55:2, we may safely partake of the Bread of life.

23:6 *Eat you not the bread of him that hath an evil eye, neither desire you his dainty meats:*

Verse 6. Of him that hath an evil eye — Never eat with a covetous or stingy man; if he entertains you at his own expense, he grudges every morsel you put in your mouth. This is well marked by the wise man in the next verse: "Eat and drink, saith he: but his heart is not with thee."

23:7 *For as he thinks in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to you; but his heart is not with you.*

23:8 *The morsel which you hast eaten shalt you vomit up, and lose your sweet words.*

Verse 8. The morsel which thou hast eaten — On reflection thou wilt even blame thyself for having accepted his invitation.

23:9 *Speak not in the ears of a fool: for he will despise the wisdom of your words.*

vs. 9: It is our duty to take all fit occasions to speak of Divine things; but if what a wise man says will not be heard, let him hold his peace. vs. 10,11: The fatherless are taken under God's special protection. He is their Redeemer, who will take their part; and he is mighty, almighty.

23:9

Assuredly it would be both a vain and ineffectual labor to offer light to a blind man, discourse to a deaf one, or wisdom to a brute; since neither can a brute apprehend, nor can a blind man admit the light, nor can a deaf man hear.

St. Cyprian: Treatise V, An Address To Demetrianus, 1.

23:10 *Remove not the old landmark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless:*

Verse 10. Remove not the old landmark — See the preceding chapter, ver. 28.

Enter not into the fields of the fatherless — Take nothing that belongs to an orphan. The heaviest curse of God will fall upon them that do so.

23:11 *For their redeemer is mighty; he shall plead their cause with you.*

Verse 11. Ifor their redeemer is mighty — μ lag goalam, their kinsman.

The word means the person who has a right, being next in blood, to redeem a field or estate, alienated from the family, to avenge the blood of a murdered relative, by slaying the murderer; and to take to wife a brother's widow, who had died childless, in order to preserve the family. The strength here mentioned refers to the justness of his claim, the extent of his influence, and the powerful abettors of such a cause. But in reference to the orphans here mentioned, they having no kinsman, God takes up, vindicates, and avenges their cause.

12-16: Here is a parent instructing his child to give his mind to the Scriptures. Here is a parent correcting his child: accompanied with prayer, and blessed of God, it may prove a means of preventing his destruction. Here is a parent encouraging his child, telling him what would be for his good. And what a comfort it would be, if herein he answered his expectation!

23:12 *Apply your heart unto instruction, and your ears to the words of knowledge.*

23:13 *Withhold not correction from the child: for if you beatest him with the rod, he shall not die.*

23:14 *You shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.*

Verse 14. Thou shalt beat him with the rod — A proper correction of children was a favourite point of discipline with Solomon. We have already seen how forcibly he speaks on this subject. See the notes on the places referred to in the margin.

23:14

As the proverb has it, 'Thou shalt beat him with the rod and shalt deliver his soul from hell.' The flesh is smitten that the soul from hell.' The flesh is smitten that the soul may be healed; sin is put to death that righteousness may live. In another passage it is argued that death is not evil [3]. Deaths come from God. Yet death is not absolutely and evil, except in the case of death of the sinner, in which case departure from this world is a beginning of the punishment of hell.

St. Basil the Great: Homily 9 On "God is Not the Author of Evil."

23:15 *My son, if your heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine.*

23:16 *Yea, my reins shall rejoice, when your lips speak right things.*

vs. 17,18: The believer's expectation shall not be disappointed; the end of his trials, and of the **sinner's prosperity, is at hand.**

23:17 *Let not your heart envy sinners: but be you in the fear of the LORD all the day long.*

23:18 *For surely there is an end; and your expectation shall not be cut off.*

Verse 18. Surely there is an end — *tyrja* עַי yesh acharith, there is another life; "and thy expectation" of the enjoyment of a blessed immortality "shall not be cut off." The Old MS. Bible reads thus: "For thou schalt hab hop in the last: and thin abiiding schal not ben taken awei". "For the ende is not yet come; and thy patient abydinge shal not be in vayne." — COVERDALE.

Vs. 19-28: The gracious Savior who purchased pardon and peace for his people, with all the affection of a tender parent, counsels us to hear and be wise, and is ready to guide our hearts in his way. Here we have an earnest call to young people, to attend to the advice of their godly parents. If the heart be guided, the steps will be guided. Buy the truth, and sell it not; be willing to part with any thing for it. Do not part with it for pleasures, honors, riches, or any thing in this world. The heart is what the great God requires. We must not think to divide the heart between God and the world; he will have all or none. Look to the rule of God's word, the conduct of his providence, and the good examples of his people. Particular cautions are given against sins most destructive to wisdom and grace in the soul. It is really a shame to make a God of the belly. Drunkenness stupefies men, and then all goes to ruin. Licentiousness takes away the heart that should be given to God. Take heed of any approaches toward this sin, it is very hard to retreat from it. It bewitches men to their ruin.

23:19 Hear you, my son, and be wise, and guide your heart in the way.

Verse 20. Be not among winebibbers — There is much of this chapter spent in giving directions concerning eating, drinking, and entertainments in general. First, the pupil is directed relative to the manner in which he is to conduct himself in his visits to the tables of the rich and great. 2. Relative to the covetous and his intercourse with them. And 3. To public entertainments, where there were generally riot and debauch. The reasons, says Calmet, which induced the wise man to give these directions were, 1. The useless expense. 2. The loss of time. 3. The danger from bad company. And 4. The danger of contracting irregular habits, and of being induced to lead a voluptuous and effeminate life.

23:20 Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh:

23:21 For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags.

23:21

“And the drunkard,” he says, “shall be clothed in rags, and be ashamed of his drunkenness in the presence of onlookers.” For the wounds of the sinner are the rents of the garment of the flesh, the holes made by lusts, through which the shame of the soul within is seen — namely sin, by reason of which it will not be easy to save the garment, that has been torn away all round, that has rotted away in many lusts, and has been rent asunder from salvation.

Instructor 2:2.

23:22 Hearken unto your father that begat you, and despise not your mother when she is old.

Verse 22. Despise not thy mother when she is old. — A very necessary caution, as very old women are generally helpless, useless, and burdensome: yet these circumstances do not at all lessen the child's duty. And this duty is strengthened by the Divine command here given.

23:23 Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.

Verse 23. Buy the truth — Acquire the knowledge of God at all events; and in order to do this, too much pains, industry, and labor cannot be expended.

And sell it not — When once acquired, let no consideration deprive thee of it. Cleave to and guard it, even at the risk of thy life. Coverdale translates: “Labour for to get the treuth; sell not away wissdome.”

23:24 The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begett a wise child shall have joy of him.

23:24

Fathers, “bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;” (Eph. 4:4) and teach them the holy Scriptures, and also trades, that they may not indulge in idleness. Now [the Scripture] says, “A righteous father educates [his children] well; his heart shall rejoice in a wise son.” Masters, be gentle towards your servants, as holy Job has taught you; for there is one nature, and one family of mankind.

St. Ignatius: Epistle to the Philadelphians, 4.

23:25 Your father and your mother shall be glad, and she that bare you shall rejoice.

23:26 My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways.

Verse 26. My son, give me thine heart — This is the speech of God to every human soul; give thy affections to God, so as to love him with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength.

And let thine eyes observe my ways. — Be obedient to me in all things. My son, thou believest that I AM, and that I AM the Fountain of all good. Give me thy heart; it is I alone who can make thee happy. Observe my ways—follow me; do what is right in my sight. This exhortation contains three words: BELIEVE LOVE, OBEY! This is the sum of God's counsels to every child of man.

23:27 For a whore is a deep ditch; and a strange woman is a narrow pit.

Verse 27. For a whore is a deep ditch — See on chap. 22:14.

For he who gives to harlots is ridiculous and shameful, and will have many quarrels, and brief pleasure; or rather, not even brief, because, give what he will to the women his mistresses, they will not thank him for it; for, "The house of a stranger is a cask with holes." (Proverbs 23:27, LXX.)

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on St. John, 87.

23:28 She also lies in wait as for a prey, and increases the transgressors among men.

Verse 28. Increaseth the transgressors among men. — More iniquity springs from this one source of evil, than from any other cause in the whole system of sin. Women and strong drink cause many millions to transgress.

Vs. 29-35: Solomon warns against drunkenness. Those that would be kept from sin, must keep from all the beginnings of it, and fear coming within reach of its allurements. Foresee the punishment, what it will at last end in, if repentance prevent not. It makes men quarrel. Drunkards willfully make woe and sorrow for themselves. It makes men impure and insolent. The tongue grows unruly; the heart utters things contrary to reason, religion, and common civility. It stupefies and besots men. They are in danger of death, of damnation; as much exposed as if they slept upon the top of a mast, yet feel secure. They fear no peril when the terrors of the Lord are before them; they feel no pain when the judgments of God are actually upon them. So lost is a drunkard to virtue and honor, so wretchedly is his conscience seared, that he is not ashamed to say, I will seek it again. With good reason we were bid to stop before the beginning. Who that has common sense would contract a habit, or sell himself to a sin, which tends to such guilt and misery, and exposes a man every day to the danger of dying insensible, and awaking in hell? Wisdom seems in these chapters to take up the discourse as at the beginning of the book. They must be considered as the words of Christ to the sinner.

23:29 Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes?

Verse 29. Who hath wo? — I believe Solomon refers here to the natural effects of drunkenness. And perhaps *ywa oi*, which we translate wo, and 1804

ywba aboi, which we translate sorrow, are mere natural sounds or vociferations that take place among drunken men, either from illness, or the nauseating effects of too much liquor. As to contentions among such, babblings on a variety of subjects, which they neither understand nor are fit to discuss; wounds, got by falling out about nothing; and red eyes, bloodshot with excess of drink, or black and blue eyes with fighting; — these are such common and general effects of these computations, as naturally to follow from them. So that they who tarry long at wine, and use mixed wine to make it more inebriating, (see chap. 9:2,) are the very persons who are most distinguished by the circumstances enumerated above. I need scarcely add, that by wine and mixed wine all inebriating liquors are to be understood.

For just as in a city, under an invasion of enemies when there has been siege and tumult, great is the uproar, so is it in the soul, under invasion of wine and luxury. "Who hath woe? who hath tumults? who hath discomforts and babblings? Are they not they that tarry long at the wine? Whose are bloodshot eyes?" (Proverbs 23:29, 30,) But yet, say what we will, we shall not bring off those who give themselves up to luxury, unless we bring into conflict therewith a different affection. And first, let us address ourselves to the women. Nothing uglier than a woman given to luxury, nothing uglier than a woman given to drink.

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on Acts, 27.

23:30 They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.

23:31 Look not you upon the wine when it is red, when it gives his color in the cup, when it moves itself aright.

Verse 31. Look not thou upon the wine — Let neither the color, the odour, the sparkling, etc., of the wine, when poured out, induce thee to drink of it. However good and pure it may be, it will to thee be a snare, because thou art addicted to it, and hast no self-command.

23:32 At the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like an adder.

23:32

Wherefore it especially behooves us to be sober, lest this heresy which has reached such a height of impudence, and has diffused itself abroad like the 'poison of an adder,' as it is written in the Proverbs, and which teaches doctrines contrary to the Savior; lest, I say, this be that 'falling away,' (2 Thess. 2:3) after which He shall be revealed, of whom Constantius is surely the forerunner

St. Athanasius of Alexandria: Historia Arianorum, 77.

23:33 Your eyes shall behold strange women, and your heart shall utter perverse things.

Verse 33. Thine eyes shall behold strange women — Evil concupiscence is inseparable from drunkenness. Mr. Herbert shows these effects well: —

He that is drunken may his mother kill, Big with his sister: he hath lost the reins; Is outlawed by himself. All kinds of ill Did, with his liquor, slide into his veins. The drunkard forfeits man; and doth divest All worldly right, save what he hath by beast. HEBBERT'S Poems. — The Church Porch.

23:34 Yea, you shalt be as he that lies down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lies upon the top of a mast.

Verse 34. Lieth down in the midst of the sea — He is utterly regardless of life; which is expressed very forcibly by one in a state of intoxication ascending the shrouds, clasping the mast-head, and there falling asleep; whence, in a few moments, he must either fall down upon the deck and be dashed to pieces, or fall into the sea and be drowned. Reader, if thou be a man given to this appetite, put a knife to thy throat.

23:35 They have stricken me, shalt you say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.

Verse 35. They have stricken me — Though beat and abused, full of pain, and exhibiting a frightful figure; yet so drunk was he, as to be insensible who had struck him: still, after all this abuse and disgrace, he purposes to embrace the next opportunity of repeating his excesses! SIN makes a man contemptible in life, miserable in death, and wretched to all eternity. Is it not strange, then, that men should LOVE it?

23:35

Those who are overcome by sudden passion are to be admonished to cease caring too much for earthly things; since, while they entangle their attention immoderately in transitory things, they are not aware of the darts of sins which pierce them. Whence, also, the utterance of one that is stricken and yet sleeps is expressed by Solomon, who says, They, have beaten me, and I was not pained; they have dragged me, and I felt it not. When shall I awake and again find wine (Proverbs 23:35)? For the soul that sleeps from the care of its solicitude is beaten and feels not pain, because, as it foresees not impending evils, so neither is it aware of those which it has perpetrated. It is dragged, and in no wise feels it, because it is led by the allurements of vices, and yet is not roused to keep guard over itself. But again it wishes to awake, that it may again find wine, because, although weighed down by the sleep of its torpor from keeping guard over itself, it still strives to be awake to the cares of the world, that it may be ever drunk with pleasures; and, while sleeping to that wherein it ought to have been wisely awake, it desires to be awake to something else, to which it might have laudably slept. Hence it is written previously, And thou shalt be as one that sleepeth in the midst of the sea, and as a steersman that is lulled to rest, having let go the rudder (Proverbs 23:35). For he sleeps in the midst of the sea who, placed among the temptations of this world, neglects to look out for the motions of vices that rush in upon him like impending heaps of waves. And the steersman, as it were, lets go the rudder when the mind loses the earnestness of solicitude for guiding the ship of the body.

Fr. Gregory (the Great), Pastoral Rule, 32.

23:35

nor do we think that we are affected by any loss when we forget God and think about things that are temporal and corrupt, so that these words of Solomon fairly apply to us: “They smite me but I have not grieved, and they have mocked me, but I knew it not.”

St. John Cassian: Conference 23:7.

CHAPTER 24

If wicked people prosper, we should not be inclined to do as they do, nor complain of what God does in His providence. They have no real happiness of heart, their prosperity is only for the present and there is no good for them in the world to come. let us therefore honor and reverence God and be dutiful to the government God has set over us.

Do not be envious. Of the house wisely built. Counsel necessary in war. Save life when thou canst. Of honey and the honey-comb. Of the just that falleth seven times. We should not rejoice at the misfortune of others. Ruin of the wicked. Fear God and the king. Prepare thy work. The field of the sluggard, and the vineyard of the foolish, described.

Vs. 1, 2: Envy not sinners. And let not a desire ever come into thy mind, Oh that I could shake off restraints!

24:1 Be not you envious against evil men, neither desire to be with them.

24:2 For their heart studies destruction, and their lips talk of mischief.

24:3 Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established:

vs. 3-6: Piety and prudence in outward affairs, both go together to complete a wise man. By knowledge the soul is filled with the graces and comforts of the spirit, those precious and pleasant riches. The spirit is strengthened for the spiritual work and the spiritual warfare, by true wisdom.

Verse 3. Through wisdom is a house blinded — That is, a family; household affairs. See the notes on chap. 9:1, etc.

24:4 And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches.

24:5 A wise man is strong; yea, a man of knowledge increases strength.

Verse 5. A wise man is strong. His wisdom enables him to construct a great variety of machines, by which, under his own influence, he can do the labor of a hundred or even a thousand men. But in all cases wisdom gives power and influence; and he who is wise to salvation can overcome even Satan himself. The Septuagint has: “The wise is better than the strong; and the man who has prudence, than a stout husbandman.”

24:6 For by wise counsel you shalt make your war: and in multitude of counsellors there is safety.

Verse 6. By wise counsel thou shalt make thy war — See note on chap. 20:18.

vs. 7-9: A weak man thinks wisdom is too high for him, therefore he will take no pains for it. It is bad to do evil, but worse to devise it. Even the first risings of sin in the heart are sin, and must be repented of. Those that strive to make others hateful, make themselves so.

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vs. 10: Under troubles we are apt to despair of relief. But be of good courage, and God shall strengthen thy heart.

vs. 7-9: A weak man thinks wisdom is too high for him, therefore he will take no pains for it. It is bad to do evil, but worse to devise it. Even the first risings of sin in the heart are sin, and must be repented of. Those that strive to make others hateful, make themselves so.

24:7 Wisdom is too high for a fool: he opens not his mouth in the gate.

Verse 7. A fool-openeth not his mouth in the gate. — Is not put into public offices of trust and responsibility.

24:8 He that devises to do evil shall be called a mischievous person.

24:9 The thought of foolishness is sin: and the scorner is an abomination to men.

Verse 9. The thought of foolishness is sin — tafj tlwa tmz zimmath

ivveleth chattath. “The device of folly is transgression;” or, “an evil purpose is sinful;” or, perhaps more literally, “the device of the foolish is sin.” It has been variously understood by the versions.

“The cunning: of the fool is sin.” — Targum.

“The imprudent man (or fool, afrwn) shall die in sins.” — Septuagint. So the Arabic.

“The thinkynge of the fool is synne”. — Old MS. Bible.

Fool is here taken for a wicked man, who is not only evil in his actions, but every thought of his heart is evil, and that continually. A simple thought about foolishness, or about sin itself, is not sinful; it is the purpose or device, the harbouring evil thoughts, and devising how to sin, that is criminal.

24:10 If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small.

vs. 10: Under troubles we are apt to despair of relief. But be of good courage, and God shall strengthen thy heart.

Verse 10. If thou faint — If thou give way to discouragement and despair in the day of adversity-time of trial or temptation.

Thy strength is small. — *hkjk rx tsar cochachah*, thy strength is contracted. So the old MS. Bible excellently: “Gif sliden thou dispeire, in the dai of anguyfs, schal be made litil thy strengthe”. In times of trial we should endeavor to be doubly courageous; when a man loses his courage, his strength avails him nothing.

24:11 *If you forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain;*

Verse 11. If thou forbear to deliver — If thou seest the innocent taken by the hand of lawless power or superstitious zeal, and they are about to be put to death, thou shouldst rise up in their behalf, boldly plead for them, testify to their innocence when thou knowest it; and thus thou wilt not be guilty of blood; which thou wouldst be, if, through any pretense, thou shouldst neglect to save the life of a man unjustly condemned.

vs. 11, 12: If a man know that his neighbor is in danger by any unjust proceeding, he is bound to do all in his power to deliver him. And what is it to suffer immortal souls to perish, when our persuasions and example may be the means of preventing it?

And again it is said “Redeem [Ransom] those who are ready to be slain: spare not.” (**Proverbs 24:11**) (He said not, inquire curiously, and learn who he is; and yet, for the most part, they who are led away to execution are wicked,) for this especially is charity. For he that doeth good to a friend, doeth it not altogether for God’s sake: but he that [doeth good] to one unknown, this man acts purely for God’s sake. “Do not spare” thy money, even if it be necessary to spend all, yet give.

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on Hebrews, 10.

For, “Give,” saith he, “to every one that asketh thee” (Luke 6:30); and, “Forbear not to redeem him that is to be slain.” (**Proverbs 24:11.**) Yet most of those that are slain suffer this for some evil they are convicted of; still he saith, “Forbear not.” For in this shall we be like God, thus shall we be admired, and shall obtain those immortal blessings, which may we all be thought worthy of, through the grace and loving-kindness of Jesus Christ our Lord, with whom, to the Father, together with the Holy Spirit, be glory, power, honor, now and forever, and world without end. Amen.

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on Philippians, 1.

And, even if thou shouldest be unable to do any good, the very devotion of thy heart, which Almighty God has given, is enough for Him. For it is written, Rescue them that are drawn unto death, and forbear not to deliver them that are ready to be slain (.). But if thou shouldest say, My powers are insufficient, He who sees into the heart understands.

Fr. Gregory (the Great): Book 10, Epistle 36 .

4:11

And so learn from your own experience to sympathize with those in trouble, and never to terrify with destructive despair those who are in danger, nor harden them with severe speeches, but rather restore them with gentle and kindly consolations, and as the wise Solomon says, “Spare not to deliver those who are led forth to death, and to redeem those who are to be slain,” and after the example of our Savior, break not the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax (Matt. 12:20) , and ask of the Lord that grace, by means of which you yourself may faithfully learn both in deed and power to sing: “the Lord hath given me a learned tongue that I should know how to uphold by word him that is weary:” (Isa. 50:4) for no one could bear the devices of the enemy, or extinguish or repress those carnal fires which burn with a sort of natural flame, unless God’s grace assisted our weakness, or protected and supported it.

St. John Cassian: Conference 2:13.

24:12 *If you say, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that ponders the heart consider it? and he that keeps your soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?*

24:12

For, when one reads of God as being “the searcher and witness of the heart;” when His prophet is reproved by His discovering to him the secrets of the heart; when God Himself anticipates in His people the thoughts of their heart, “Why think ye evil in your hearts?” when David prays “Create in me a clean heart, O God,” and Paul declares,

“With the heart man believeth unto righteousness,” and John says, “By his own heart is each man condemned;” when, lastly, “he who looketh on a woman so as to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart,” — then both points are cleared fully up, that there is a directing faculty of the soul, with which the purpose of God may agree;

Tertullian: A Treatise on the Soul, 15.

vs. 13, 14: We are quickened to the study of wisdom by considering both the pleasure and the profit of it. All men relish things that are sweet to the palate; but many have no relish for the things that are sweet to the purified soul, and that make us wise unto salvation.

24:13 My son, eat you honey, because it is good; and the honeycomb, which is sweet to your taste:

Verse 13. And the honey-comb — I have often had occasion to remark how much finer the flavour of honey is in the honey-comb than it is after it has been expressed from it, and exposed to the action of the air. But it has been asserted that the honey-comb is never eaten; it must be by those who have no acquaintance with the apiary. I have seen the comb with its contained honey eaten frequently, and of it I have repeatedly partaken. And that our Lord ate it, is evident from Luke 24:42. Nor can any man who has not eaten it in this way feel the full force of the allusions to the honey-comb and its sweetness in several parts of the sacred writings. See 1 Samuel 14:27; Psalm 19:10; Proverbs 5:3; 16:24; 27:7; Song of Solomon 4:11; 5:1; and the place before us.

24:14 So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto your soul: when you hast found it, then there shall be a reward, and your expectation shall not be cut off.

Verse 14. So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul — True religion, experimental godliness, shall be to thy soul as the honey-comb is to thy mouth. 1808

Then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off. — This is precisely the same with that in the preceding chapter, ver. 18, where see the note. The word *tyrja* acharith, we translate in the former place an end, and here we translate it a reward; but there is no place I believe in the sacred writings in which it has any such acceptation; nor can such a meaning be deduced from the root *rja* achar, which always refers to behind, after, extremity, latter part, time, etc., but never carries the idea of recompense, compensation, or such like; nor has one of the versions understood it so. There is another state or life, and thy expectation of happiness in a future world shall not be cut off. In this sense the versions all understood it. I will take them as they lie before me. “Which (wisdom) when thou shalt have found, thou shalt have hope in thy last days; and thy hope shall not perish.” — Vulgate.

“And if thou find it, thou shalt have a good death; and hope shall not forsake thee.” — Septuagint.

“Which, if thou have found, thy latter days shall be better than the former; and thy hope shall not be consumed.” — Chaldee.

“There shall be an end, and thy hope shall not be cut off.” — Syriac.

“For, if thou shalt find her, (wisdom,) thy death shall be glorious, and thy hope will not fail thee.” — Arabic.

“Whiche whan thou fyndist schalt han in the last thingis, hope: and thin hope schal not perischen”. — Old MS. Bible.

“And there is GOOD HOPE; yee that hope shal not be in vayne.” — Coverdale.

This rendering is indefinite, which is not the usual custom of the translator.

vs. 15, 16: The sincere soul falls as a traveler may do, by stumbling at some stone in his path; but gets up, and goes on his way with more care and speed. This is rather to be understood of falls into affliction, than falls into actual sin.

24:15 Lay not wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the righteous; spoil not his resting place:

24:15

Verse 15. The dwelling of the righteous — *qydx* tsaddik, the man who is walking unblameably in all the testimonies of God; who is rendering to every man his due.

To all the monks therefore who came to him, he continually gave this precept: ‘Believe on the Lord and love Him; keep yourselves from filthy thoughts and fleshly pleasures, and as it is written in the Proverbs, be not deceived “by the fullness of the belly.”’

St. Athanasius of Alexandria: De Vita S. Antoni, 21.

24:16 For a just man falls seven times, and rises up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief.

24:16

Verse 16. For a just man — **qydx** tsaddik, the righteous, the same person mentioned above.

Falleth seven times — Gets very often into distresses through his resting place being spoiled by the wicked man, the robber, the spoiler of the desert, lying in wait for this purpose, ver. 15.

And riseth up again — Though God permit the hand of violence sometimes to spoil his tent, temptations to assail his mind, and afflictions to press down his body, he constantly emerges; and every time he passes through the furnace, he comes out brighter and more refined.

But the wicked shall fall into mischief. — And there they shall lie; having no strong arm to uphold them. Yet, **Wherein we must do penance for a time only; and wherein it can have no end**

BUT that description of the forgetfulness spoken of only has to do with capital offenses, which are also condemned by the mosaic law, the inclination to which is destroyed and put an end to by a good life, and so also the penance for them has an end. But for those small offenses in which, as it is written, “the righteous falls seven times and will rise again” penitence will never cease. For either through ignorance, or forgetfulness, or thought, or word, or surprise, or necessity, or weakness of the flesh, or defilement in a dream, we often fall every day either against our will or voluntarily; offenses for which David also prays the Lord, and asks for purification and pardon, and says: “Who can understand sins? from my secret ones cleanse me; and from those of others spare Thy servant;” and the Apostle: “For the good which I would I do not, and the evil which I would not, that I do.” For which also the same man exclaims with a sigh “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Rom. 7:19, 24)

St. John Cassian: Conference 20:12.

24:16

But to those who have been delivered up, and have fallen, who also of their own accord have approached the contest, confessing themselves to be Christians, and have been tormented and thrown into prison, it is right with joy and exultation of heart to add strength, and to communicate to them in all things, both in prayer, and in partaking of the body and blood of Christ, and in hortatory discourse; in order that contending the more constantly, they may be counted worthy of “the prize of their high calling.” For “seven times,” he says, “a just man falleth, and riseth up again,” which, indeed, if all that have lapsed had done, they would have shown forth a most perfect penitence, and one which penetrates the whole heart.

St. Peter of Alexandria: Canon VIII.

24:16

When evils befall the wicked, they are weakened thereby; when evils befall the righteous, “the Lord strengtheneth all that are falling.”... “And lifteth up all those that have been cast down:” all, that is, who belong to him; for” God resisteth the proud.”

St. Augustine: On the Psalms, 145:13.

24:16

For no other reason it was said, “a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again:” that is, the just man perisheth not, though brought low in every way, yet not induced to transgress, otherwise he will not be just. For the words, “falleth seven times,” are employed to express every kind of tribulation, whereby man is cast down in the sight of men: and the words, “riseth up again,” signify that he profiteth from all these tribulations.

St. Augustine: On the Psalms, 119:161

24:16

On this account it is often put for all numbers together, as, “A just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again,” — that is, let him fall never so often, he will not perish (and this was meant to be understood not of sins, but of afflictions conducing to lowliness). Again, “Seven times a day will I praise Thee,” (Ps. 119:164)

St. Augustine: City of God, 11:31.

24:17 Rejoice not when your enemy falls, and let not your heart be glad when he stumbles:

vs. 17, 18: The pleasure we are apt to take in the troubles of an enemy is forbidden.

Verse 17. Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, (into this mischief,) and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth — When he meets with any thing that injures him; for God will not have thee to avenge thyself, or feel

any disposition contrary to love; for if thou do, the Lord will be angry, and may turn away his wrath from him, and pour it out on thee.

This I believe to be the true sense of these verses: but we must return to the sixteenth, as that has been most sinfully misrepresented.

For a just man falleth seven times. — That is, say many, “the most righteous man in the world sins seven times a day on an average.” Solomon does not say so: — 1. There is not a word about sin in the text. 2. The word day is not in the Hebrew text, nor in any of the versions. 3. The word *lwpy* yippol, from *lpn* naphal, to fall, is never applied to sin. 4.

When set in opposition to the words riseth up, it merely applies to affliction or calamity. See Mic. 7:8; Amos 8:4; Jeremiah 25:27; and Psalm 34:19, 20. “The righteous falls into trouble.”

Mr. Holden has a very judicious note on this passage: “Injure not a righteous man; for, though he frequently falls into distress, yet, by the superintending care of Providence, ‘he riseth up again,’ is delivered from his distress, while the wicked are overwhelmed with their misfortunes. That this is the meaning is plain from the preceding and following verses: yet some expound it by the just man often relapsing into sin, and recovering from it; nay, it has even been adduced to prove the doctrine of the final perseverance of the elect. But *lpn* is never used for falling into
24:17

For, “Rejoice not,” he saith, “when thine enemy stumbleth.” And tell me not of the greatness of the injuries received; for it is not this which maketh thy wrath to be retained; but this, that thou art unmindful of thine own offenses; that thou hast not before thine eyes either hell or the fear of God!

St. John Chrysostom: Concerning the Statues, 20:7.

24:17,18 LXX

Solomon also says in Proverbs: “When thine enemy shall fall be not glad, and in his ruin be not lifted up, lest the Lord see and it displease Him, and He turn away His wrath from him,” i.e., lest He see thy pride of heart, and cease from attacking him, and thou begin to be forsaken by Him and so once more to be troubled by that passion which by God’s grace thou hadst previously overcome. For the prophet would not have prayed in these words, “Deliver not up to beasts, O Lord, the soul that confesseth to Thee,” (Ps. 73:19) unless he had known that because of their pride of heart some were given over again to those faults which they had overcome, in order that they might be humbled.

St. John Cassian: Conference 5:15.

24:18 Lest the LORD see it, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him.

24:19 Fret not thyself because of evil men, neither be you envious at the wicked:

vs. 19, 20: Envy not the wicked their prosperity; be sure there is no true happiness in it.

24:20 For there shall be no reward to the evil man; the candle of the wicked shall be put out.

24:20 LXX

Wherefore we must imitate the nature of the earth in this respect, which is wont to return the seed she has received, multiplied a thousand-fold. And so it is written: “As a field is the foolish man, and as a vineyard is the man without sense. If thou leavest him, he will be made desolate.” As a field also is the wise man, so as to return the seed given him in fuller measure, as though it had been lent to him on interest. The earth either produces fruits of its own accord, or pays back and restores, what it was entrusted with, in fruitful abundance.

St. Ambrose: St. Ambrose: Duties of the Clergy, 1:31 (161).

24:21 My son, fear you the LORD and the king: and meddle not with them that are given to change:

vs. 21, 22: The godly in the land, will be quiet in the land. There may be cause to change for the better, but have nothing to do with them that are given change.

24:22 For their calamity shall rise suddenly; and who knows the ruin of them both?

vs. 23-26: The wisdom God giveth, renders a man fit for his station. Every one who finds the benefit of the right answer, will be attached to him that gave it

vs. 27: We must prefer necessities before conveniences, and not go in debt.

24:23 These things also belong to the wise. It is not good to have respect of persons in judgment.

24:24 He that saith unto the wicked, You are righteous; him shall the people curse, nations shall abhor him:

24:25 But to them that rebuke him shall be delight, and a good blessing shall come upon them.

Verse 26. Kiss his lips — Shall treat him with affection and respect.

24:26 Every man shall kiss his lips that gives a right answer.

24:27 Prepare your work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build your house.

Verse 27. Prepare thy work without — Do nothing without a plan. In winter prepare seed, implements, tackle, geers, etc., for seed-time and harvest.

Verse 28. Be not a witness — Do not be forward to offer thyself to bear testimony against a neighbor, in a matter which may prejudice him, where the essential claims of justice do not require such interference; and especially do not do this in a spirit of revenge, because he has injured thee before.

vs. 28, 29: There are three defaults in a witness pointed out.

24:28 Be not a witness against your neighbor without cause; and deceive not with your lips.

24:29 Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work.

vs. 30-34: See what a blessing the husbandman's calling is, and what a wilderness this earth would be without it. See what great difference there is in the management even of worldly affairs. Sloth and self-indulgence are the bane of all good. When we see fields overgrown with thorns and thistles, and the fences broken down, we see an emblem of the far more deplorable state of many souls. Every vile affection grows in men's hearts; yet they compose themselves to sleep. Let us show wisdom by doubling our diligence in every good thing.

24:30 I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding;

Verse 30. I went by the field of the slothful - This is a most instructive parable; is exemplified every day in a variety of forms; and is powerfully descriptive of the state of many a blackslider and trifler in religion. Calmet has an excellent note on this passage. I shall give the substance of it.

Solomon often recommends diligence and economy to his disciples. In those primitive times when agriculture was honorable, no man was respected who neglected to cultivate his grounds, who sunk into poverty, contracted debt, or engaged in ruinous securities. With great propriety, a principal part of wisdom was considered by them as consisting in the knowledge of properly conducting one's domestic affairs, and duly cultivating the inheritances derived from their ancestors. Moses had made a law to prevent the rich from utterly depressing the poor, by obliging them to return their farms to them on the Sabbatic year, and to remit all debts at the year of jubilee.

In the civil state of the Hebrews, we never see those enormous and suddenly raised fortunes, which never subsist but in the ruin of numberless families. One of the principal solitudes of this legislator was to produce, as far as possible in a monarchical state, an equality of property and condition. The ancient Romans held agriculture in the same estimation, and highly respected those who had applied themselves to it with success. When they spoke in praise of a man, they considered themselves as giving no mean commendation when they called him a good husbandman, an excellent laborer. From such men they formed their most valiant generals and intrepid soldiers. The property which is acquired by these means is most innocent, most solid, and exposes its possessor less to envy than property acquired in any other way. In Britain the merchant is all in all; and yet the waves of the sea are not more uncertain, nor more tumultuous, than the property acquired in this way, or than the agitated life of the speculative merchant.

But let us look more particularly into this very instructive parable:

I. The owner is described. 1. He was lx[**çya** ish atsel, the loitering, sluggish, slothful man. 2. He was bl rsj **µda** adam chasar leb, a man that wanted heart; destitute of courage, alacrity, and decision of mind.

II. His circumstances. This man had, 1st, hdç **sadeh**, a sowed field, arable ground. This was the character of his estate. It was meadow and corn land. 2. He had **µrk** kerem, a vineyard, what we would call perhaps garden and orchard, where he might employ his skill to great advantage in raising various kinds of fruits and culinary herbs for the support of his family.

III. The state of this heritage: 1. "It was grown over with thorns." It had been long neglected, so that even brambles were permitted to grow in the fields: 2. "Nettles had covered the face thereof." It was not weeded, and all kinds of rubbish had been suffered to multiply: 3. "The stone wall was broken down." This belonged to the vineyard: it was neither pruned nor digged; and the fence, for want of timely repairs, had all fallen into ruins, ver. 31.

IV. The effect all this had on the attentive observer. 1. I saw it, **ykna hzja** echezeh anochi, I fixed my attention on it. I found it was no mere eport. It is a fact. I myself was an eyewitness of it. 2. I considered it well, **bl tyça** ashith

libbi, I put my heart on it. All my feelings were interested. 3. I looked upon it, **yty[r]** raithi, I took an intellectual view of it. And 4. Thus I received instruction, **rswm ytjql** lakachti musar, I received a very important lesson from it: but the owner paid no attention to it. He alone was uninstructed; for he “slumbered, slept, and kept his hands in his bosom.” ver. 33. “Hugged himself in his sloth and carelessness.” 1813 V. The consequences of this conduct. 1. Poverty described as coming like a traveler, making sure steps every hour coming nearer and nearer to the door. 2. Want, **rsjm** machsor, total destitution; want of all the necessaries, conveniences, and comforts of life; and this is described as coming like an armed man keish magen, as a man with a shield, who comes to destroy this unprofitable servant: or it may refer to a man coming with what we call an execution into the house, armed with the law, to take even his bed from the slumberer. From this literal solution any minister of God may make a profitable discourse.

24:31 *And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down.*

24:32 *Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction.*

24:33 *Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep:*

24:34 *So shall your poverty come as one that travells; and your want as an armed man.*

CHAPTER 25

The way to turn an enemy into a friend is to act friendly towards him. If it does not gain him, it will aggravate his sin and punishment, and will heap the coals of God's wrath upon his head.

Herein Christ is greater than Solomon for John 21:25 tells us that if we had on record all the good things that Christ said the world could not contain the books.

A new series of Solomon's proverbs. God's glory in mysteries. Observations concerning kings. Avoid contentions. Opportune speech. The faithful ambassador. Delicacies to be sparingly used. Avoid familiarity. Amusements not grateful to a distressed mind. Do good to your enemies. The misery of dwelling with a scold. The necessity of moderation and self-government.

25:1 *These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out.*

Verse 1. These are also proverbs of Solomon — In my old MS. Bible, this verse concludes the preceding chapter. It seems that the remaining part of this book contains proverbs which had been collected by the order of King Hezekiah, and were added to the preceding book as a sort of supplement, having been collected from traditionary sayings of Solomon. And as the men of Hezekiah may mean Isaiah, Shebna, and other inspired men, who lived in that time, we may consider them as of equal authority with the rest, else such men could not have united them to the sacred book. The chronological notes in the margin of this and the five following chapters denote the time when the proverbs contained in them were collected together in the reign of Hezekiah, about two hundred and seventy years after the death of Solomon.

25:2 *It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honor of kings is to search out a matter.*

Verse 2. It is the glory of God to conceal a thing — This has been understood as referring to the revelation of God's will in his word, where there are many things concealed in parables, allegories, metaphors, similitudes, etc. And it is becoming the majesty of God so to publish his will, that it must be seriously studied to be understood, in order that the truth may be more prized when it is discovered. And if it be God's glory thus partially to conceal his purposes, it is the glory of a king to search and examine this word, that he may understand how by Him kings reign and princes decree judgment. Prophecies are partially concealed; and we cannot fully know their meaning till their accomplishment; and then the glory of God's wisdom and providence will be more particularly evident, 1815 when we see the event correspond so particularly and exactly with the prediction. I know not, however, that there are not matters in the Book of God that will not be fully opened till mortality is swallowed up of life. For here we see through a glass darkly; but there, face to face: here we know in part; but there we shall know as we also are known.

On this subject I cannot withhold an extract of a letter sent to myself, by a royal and learned personage.(1)

(1) His Royal Highness the Duke of Sussex.

“As far as I have presumed to dive into and occupy myself with the sacred volumes, I feel satisfied of their Divine origin and truth. And I am satisfied, likewise, that they contain more matter than any one, and myself in particular, can ever aspire fully to understand. This belief, however, ought in nowise to slacken our diligence, or damp our ardor, in attempting a constant pursuit after the attainment of knowledge and truth; as we may flatter ourselves, although unable to reach the gate, we are still approaching nearer to its portals, which of itself is a great blessing.” This sentiment will be approved by every pious and enlightened mind.

25:3 *The heaven for height, and the earth for depth, and the heart of kings is unsearchable.*

Vs. 1-3: God needs not search into any thing; nothing can be hid from him. But it is the honor of rulers to search out matters, to bring to light hidden works of darkness.

Verse 3. The heaven for height — The simple meaning of this is, the reasons of state, in reference to many acts of the executive government, can no more be fathomed by the common people, than the height of the heavens and the depth of the earth.

25:4 *Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer.*

Verse 4. Take away the dross from the silver — You cannot have a pure silver vessel till you have purified the silver; and no nation can have a king a public blessing till the wicked-all bad counsellors, wicked and interested ministers, and sycophants-are banished from the court and cabinet. When the wise and good only are the king's ministers and advisers, then the throne will be established in righteousness, and his administration be a universal blessing.

25:5 Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness.

vs. 4, 5: For a prince to suppress vice, and reform his people, is the best way to support his government.

25:6 Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men:

25:7 For better it is that it be said unto you, Come up hither; than that you shouldst be put lower in the presence of the prince whom your eyes have seen.

vs. 6, 7: Religion teaches us humility and self-denial. He who has seen the glory of the Lord in Christ Jesus, will feel his own unworthiness.

Verse 7. Come up hither — Our Lord refers to this, see Luke 14:8, and the notes there. Be humble; affect not high things; let those who are desperate climb dangerous precipices; keep thyself quiet, and you shalt live at ease, and in peace. Hear the speech of a wise heathen on this subject: —

“Why was it that Daedalus winged his way safely, while Icarus his son fell, and gave name to the Icarian sea? Was it not because the son flew aloft, and the father skimmed the ground? For both were furnished with the same kind of wings. Take my word for it, that he who lives privately lives safely; and every one should live within his own income. Envy no man; pray for a quiet life, yough it should not be dignified. Seek a friend, and associate with thy equals.”

25:8 Go not forth hastily to strive, lest you know not what to do in the end thereof, when your neighbor hath put you to shame.

Verse 8. Go not forth hastily to strive — **brl** lerib, to enter into a lawsuit. Keep from this pit or the bottomless deep, unless urged by the direst necessity.

25:9 Debate your cause with your neighbor himself; and discover not a secret to another:

Verse 9. Debate thy cause with thy neighbor — Take the advice of friends. Let both sides attend to their counsels; but do not tell the secret of thy business to any. After squandering your money away upon lawyers, both they and the judge will at last leave it to be settled by twelve of your fellow citizens! O the folly of going to law! O the blindness of men, and the rapacity of unprincipled lawyers!

On this subject I cannot but give the following extract from Sir John Hawkins’s Life of Dr. Johnson, which he quotes from Mr. Selwin, of London: “A man who deliberates about going to law should have, 1. A good cause; 2. A good purse; 3. A good skillful attorney; 4. Good evidence; 5. Good able counsel; 6. A good upright judge; 7. A good intelligent jury; and with all these on his side, if he have not, 8. Good luck, it is odds but he miscarries in his suit.” O the glorious uncertainty of the law!

25:10 Lest he that hears it put you to shame, and your infamy turn not away.

vs. 8-10: To be hasty in beginning strife, will bring into difficulties. War must at length end, and might better be prevented. It is so in private quarrels; do all you canst to settle the matter.

25:11 A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.

Verse 11. A word fitly spoken — **wynpa l** al ophannaiv, upon its wheels. An observation, caution, reproof, or advice, that comes in naturally, runs smoothly along, is not forced nor dragged in, that appears to be wiyout design, to rise out of the conversation, and yough particularly relative to one point, will appear to the company to suit all.

Is like apples of gold in pictures of silver. Is like the refreshing orange or beautiful citron, served up in open work or filigree baskets, made of silver. The Asiatics excel in filigree silver work. I have seen much of it, and it is exquisitely beautiful. The silver wire by which it is done they form into the appearance of numerous flowers; and yough these wires are soldered everywhere at their junctions with each other, yet this is done with such delicacy and skill as to be scarcely perceptible. I have seen animals formed on this filigree work, with all their limbs, and every joint in its natural play. Fruit-baskets are made also in this way, and are exquisitely fine. The wise man seems to have this kind of work particularly in view; and the contrast of the golden yellow fruit in the exquisitely wrought silver basket, which may be all termed picture work, has a fine and pleasing effect upon the eye, as the contained fruit has upon the palate at an entertainment in a sultry climate. So the word spoken judiciously and opportunely is as much in its place, as the golden apples in the silver baskets.

25:11

And, “If a man speak, let him speak in the words of God.” And, “If there is in thee understanding, give an answer to thy brother but if not, put thy hand on thy mouth.” For, “at one thee it is proper to keep silence, and at another

thee to speak.” And again it says “When a man speaks in season, it is honorable to him.” And again it says: “Let your speech be seasoned with grace. For it is required of a man to know how to give an answer to every one in season.” For “he that utters whatsoever comes to his mouth, that man produces strife; and he that utters a superfluity of words increases vexation; and he that is hasty with his lips falls into evil. For because of the unruliness of the tongue cometh anger; but the perfect man keeps watch over his tongue, and loves his soul’s life.” For these are they “who by good words and fair speeches lead astray the hearts of the simple, and, while offering them blessings, lead them astray.”

Epistle 1 of the Blessed Clement concerning Virginity, 11.

25:12 As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprovcr upon an obedient ear.

vs. 11, 12: A word of counsel, or reproof, rightly spoken, is especially beautiful, as fine fruit becomes still more beautiful in silver baskets. As an ear-ring of gold — I believe *μζν* nezem to mean the nose-ring with its pendants; the left nostril is pierced, and a ring put through it, as in the ear. This is very common in almost every part of the East, among women of condition. This is a farther illustration of the above metaphor.

25:13 As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refreshes the soul of his masters.

vs. 13: See what ought to be the aim of him that is trusted with any business; to be faithful. A faithful minister, Christ’s messenger, should be thus acceptable to us.

Verse 13. As the cold of snow — That snow was frequent in Judea, is well known; and that in the East they have snow-houses-places dug under ground, where they lay up snow for summer use-is also a fact. By means of the mass of snow desposited in them the icy temperature is kept up, so that the snow is easily preserved. The common method of cooling their wine, which is as easy as it is effectual, is by dipping a cloth in water, wrapping it round the bottle, and then hanging the bottle in the heat of the sun. The strong evaporation carries off the caloric from the wine, and the repetition of the wet cloth in the same exposure, makes the wine almost as cold as ice. How agreeable this must be in a burning climate, may be easily conceived. Perhaps it is this to which the wise man refers; for it is a fact that they could have no snow in harvest unless such as had been preserved as mentioned above; but this could be only in a few places, and within the reach of a very few persons. But cooling their liquors by the simple mode of evaporation already explained, was within the reach even of the laborers in the harvest field. I think the text favors this supposition; for *glç* tnxk ketsinnerth sheleg, need not be referred to snow itself procuring cold, but to a coldness like that of snow, procured by evaporation. If this interpretation be allowed, all difficulty will be removed.

25:14 Whoso boasts himself of a false gift is like clouds and wind wiyout rain.

vs. 14: He who pretends to have received or given that which he never had, is like the morning cloud, that disappoints those who look for rain.

Verse 14. A false gift — *rqç* ttm mattath shaker, a lying gift, one promised, but never besto wed. “Brhoso maketh greate boastes, and giveth nothing; “ COVERDALE. SO the VULGATE: “Vir gloriosus, et promissa non complens;” “A bragging man, who does not fulfill his promises,” is like clouds which appear to be laden with vapor, and like the wind which, yough it blow from a rainy quarter, brings no moistness with it. So the vain boaster; he is big with promise, but performs nothing.

25:15 By long forbearing is a prince persuaded, and a soft tongue breaks the bone.

vs. 15: Be patient to bear a present hurt. Be mild to speak wiyout passion; for persuasive language is the most effectual to prevail over the hardened mind. A soft tongue breaketh the bone. — This is similar to another proverb on the same subject: “A soft answer turneth away wrath.” An angry word does nothing but mischief.

25:16 Have you found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for you, lest you be filled therewith, and vomit it.

vs. 16: God has given us leave to use grateful things, but we are cautioned against excess.

Verse 16. Hast you found honey? — Make a moderate use of all thy enjoyments. “Let thy moderation be known unto all, and appear in all things.”

25:16

As of even honey repletion and satiety, though it be of honey, produce vomiting; and, as Solomon says and I think, there is a time for every thing, and that which is good ceases to be good if it be not done in a good way; just as a flower is quite out of season in winter, and just as a man’s dress does not become a woman, nor a woman’s a man;

and as geometry is out of place in mourning, or tears at a carousal; shall we in this instance alone disregard the proper time, in a matter in which most of all due season should be respected?

St. Gregory Nazianzen: A Preliminary Discourse Against the Eunomians, 5.

25:17 Withdraw your foot from your neighbor's house; lest he be weary of you, and so hate you.

vs. 17: We cannot be upon good terms with our neighbors, without discretion as well as sincerity. How much better a Friend is God than any other friend! The oftener we come to him, the more welcome.

Verse 17. Withdraw thy foot — Another proverb will illustrate this: “Too much familiarity breeds contempt.”

25:18 A man that bears false witness against his neighbor is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow.

vs. 18: A false testimony is dangerous in every thing.

25:19 Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint.

vs. 19: Confidence in an unfaithful man is painful and vexatious; when we put any stress on him, he not only fails, but makes us feel for it.

25:20 As he that takes away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that sings songs to an heavy heart.

vs. 20: We take a wrong course if we think to relieve those in sorrow by endeavoring to make them merry.

Verse 20. As vinegar upon nitre — The original word *rtn* nather is what

is known among chemists as the natron of the ancients and of the Scriptures, and carbonate of soda. It is found native in Syria and India, and occurs as an efflorescence on the soil. In Tripoli it is found in crystalline incrustations of from one third to half an inch thick. It is found also in solution in the water of some lakes in Egypt and Hungary. The borders of these lakes are covered with crystalline masses, of a grayish white or light brown color; and in some specimens the natron is nearly pure carbonate of soda, and the carbonate is easily discovered by effervescing with an acid. It appears to have its Hebrew name from *rtn* nathar, to dissolve or loosen: because a solution of it in water is abstersive, taking out spots, etc. It is

used in the East for the purposes of washing. If vinegar be poured on it, Dr. Shaw says a strong fermentation immediately takes place, which illustrates what Solomon says here: “The singing of songs to a heavy heart is like vinegar upon natron:” that is, “there is no affinity between them; and opposition, colluctation, and strife, are occasioned by any attempt to unite them.”

And poureth vynes upon chalde. — COVERDALE. This also will occasion an effervescence. See Jeremiah 2:22.

25:20 LXX

WHEREFORE if we are anxious to exert ourselves lawfully in the struggle of our spiritual combat we ought with no less care to set about healing this malady also. For “as the moth injures the garment, and the worm the wood, so dejection the heart of man.” With sufficient clearness and appropriateness has the Divine Spirit expressed the force of this dangerous and most injurious fault.

St. John Cassian: The Institutes, book 9, 2.

25:21 If your enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink:

If thine enemy be hungry — See this and the next verse explained, Romans 12:20.

25:21,22

Do not doubt, then, that the expression is figurative; and, while it is possible to interpret it in two ways, one pointing to the doing of an injury, the other to a display of superiority, let charity on the contrary call you back to benevolence, and interpret the coals of fire as the burning groans of penitence by which a man's pride is cured who bewails that he has been the enemy of one who came to his assistance in distress. In the same way, when our Lord says, “He who loveth his life shall lose it,” (John 12:25) we are not to think that He forbids the prudence with which it is a man's duty to care for his life, but that He says in a figurative sense, “Let him lose his life” — that is, let him destroy and lose that perverted and unnatural use which he now makes of his life, and through which his desires are fixed on temporal things so that he gives no heed to eternal. It is written: “Give to the godly man, and help not a sinner.” (Ecclus 12:4) The latter clause of this sentence seems to forbid benevolence; for it says, “help not a sinner.” Understand, therefore, that “sinner” is put figuratively for sin, so that it is his sin you are not to help.

St. Augustine: On Christian Doctrine, 3:16 (24).

25:22 For you shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward you.

vs. 21, 22: The precept to love even our enemies is an Old Testament commandment. Our Savior has shown his own great example in loving us when we were enemies.

Verse 22. You shalt heap coals of fire upon his head — Not to consume, but to melt him into kindness; a metaphor taken from smelting metallic ores: —

So artists melt the sullen ore of lead, By heaping coals of fire upon its head: In the kind warmth the metal learns to glow, And pure from dross the silver runs below. S. WESLEY.

25:23 The north wind drives away rain: so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue.

vs. 23: Slanders would not be so readily spoken, if they were not readily heard. Sin, if it receives any check, becomes cowardly. 25:24 *It is better to dwell in the corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman and in a wide house.*

Verse 23. The north wind driveth away rain — The margin has, “The north wind bringeth forth rain.” It is said that the “north wind brings forth rain at Jerusalem, because it brings with it the vapours arising from the sea that lies north of it.” The marginal is the true reading; and is supported by the Chaldee, Syriac, and Septuagint; but the Arabic reads south wind.

A backbiting tongue — A hidden tongue.

vs. 24: It is better to be alone, than to be joined to one who is a hindrance to the comfort of life.

Verse 24. It is better to dwell in a corner — See the note on chap. 21:9.

25:25 As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.

vs. 25: Heaven is a country afar off; how refreshing is good news from thence, in the everlasting gospel, which signifies glad tidings, and in the witness of the Spirit with our spirits that we are God’s children!

TO EULOGIUS, PATRIARCH OF ALEXANDRIA

Gregory to Eulogius, etc.

As cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country (Proverbs 25:25). But what can be good news to me, so far as concerns the behoof of holy Church, but to hear of the health and safety of your to me most sweet Holiness, who, from your perception of the light of truth, both illuminate the same Church with the word of preaching, and mold it to a better way by the example of your manners?

Fr. Gregory (the Great): Book 10, Epistle 39.

25:26 A righteous man falling down before the wicked is as a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring.

vs. 26: When the righteous are led into sin, it is as hurtful as if the public fountains were poisoned.

25:27 It is not good to eat much honey: so for men to search their own glory is not glory.

vs. 27: We must be, through grace, dead to the pleasures of sense, and also to the praises of men.

Verse 27. It is not good to eat much honey — Coverdale translates the whole passage thus: “Like as it is not good to eat to much hony; even so, he that wyll search out hye thinges, it shal be to hevvy for him.” “As he that etith myche honye, and it is not to him goode; so, that is a sercher of mageste, schal ben oppressid of glorie” — Old MS. Bible. He that searches too much into mysteries, is likely to be confounded by them. I really think this is the meaning of the place; and shall not puzzle either myself or my reader with the discordant explanations which have been brought forward with the hope of illustrating this passage.

25:28 He that has no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.

vs. 28: The man who has no command over his anger, is easily robbed of peace. Let us give up ourselves to the Lord, and pray him to put his Spirit within us, and cause us to walk in his statutes.

25:28

Hence it is written, As a city that lieth open and without environment of walls, so is a man that cannot keep in his spirit in speaking (Proverbs 25:28). For, because it has not the wall of silence, the city of the mind lies open to the darts of the foe; and, when by words it casts itself out of itself, it shews itself exposed to the adversary. And he overcomes it with so much the less labor as with the more labor tile mind itself, which is conquered, fights against itself by much speaking.

Fr. Gregory (the Great), Pastoral Rule, 14.

CHAPTER 26

God gives us two ears and two eyes, but only one tongue. We should therefore see and hear more than we speak, for we cannot recover our words. Honor is not seemly in a fool. The correction and treatment suitable to such. Of the slothful man. Of him who interferes with matters which do not concern him. Contentions to be avoided. Of the dissembler and the lying tongue.

26:1 As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest, so honor is not seemly for a fool.

Vs. 1: Honor is out of season to those unworthy and unfit for it.

As snow in summer — None of these is suitable to the time; and at this unsuitable time, both are unwelcome: so a fool to be in honor is unbecoming.

26:2 As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying, so the curse causeless shall not come.

As the bird — *rwp*x tsippor is taken often for the sparrow; but means generally any small bird. As the sparrow flies about the house, and the swallow emigrates to strange countries; so an undeserved malediction may flutter about the neighborhood for a season: but in a short time it will disappear as the bird of passage; and never take effect on the innocent person against whom it was pronounced. He that is cursed without cause, the curse shall do him no more harm than the bird that flies over his head.

26:3 A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's back.

vs. 3: Every creature must be dealt with according to its nature, but careless and profligate sinners never will be ruled by reason and persuasion. Man indeed is born like the wild ass's colt; but some, by the grace of God, are changed.

Verse 3. A whip for the horse — Correction is as suitable to a fool, as a whip is for a horse, or a bridle for an ass.

26:4 Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like unto him.

Verse 4. Answer not a fool — On this and the following verse Bishop Warburton, who has written well on many things, and very indifferently on the doctrine of grace, has written with force and perspicuity: "Had this advice been given simply, and without circumstance, to answer the fool, and not to answer him, one who had reverence for the text would satisfy himself in supposing that the different directions referred to the doing a thing in and out of season; 1. The reasons given why a fool should not be answered according to his folly, is, "lest he (the answerer) should be like unto him." 2. The reason given why the fool should be answered according to his folly, is, "lest he (the fool) should be wise in his own conceit." 1821

"1. The cause assigned for forbidding to answer, therefore, plainly insinuates that the defender of religion should not imitate the insulter of it in his modes of disputation, which may be comprised in sophistry, buffoonery, and scurrility.

"2. The cause assigned for directing to answer, as plainly intimates that the sage should address himself to confute the fool upon his own false principles, by showing that they lead to conclusions very wide from, very opposite to, those impieties he would deduce from them. If any thing can allay the fool's vanity, and prevent his being wise in his own conceit, it must be the dishonor of having his own principles turned against himself, and shown to be destructive of his own conclusions." — Treatise on Grace. Preface.

26:5 Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.

vs. 4, 5: We are to fit our remarks to the man, and address them to his conscience, so as may best end the debate.

26:5

For we are taught what is like by what is like. For says Solomon, "Answer a fool according to his folly." Wherefore also, to those that ask the wisdom that is with us, we are to hold out things suitable, that with the greatest possible ease they may, through their own ideas, be likely to arrive at faith in the truth. For "I became all things to all men, that I might gain all men" (1 Cor. 9:20).

St. Clement of Alexandria: Stromata 5:4.

6:5 LXX

Give then no sleep to your eyes or slumber to your eyelids that you may be delivered "as a roe from the net and a bird from the snare." For, behold, you are passing through the midst of snares; you are treading on the top of a high wall whence a fall is perilous to the fuller; wherefore do not straightway attempt extreme discipline; above all things beware of confidence in yourself, lest you fall from a height of discipline through want of training.

St. Basil the Great: Letter 41:2.

26:6 He that sends a message by the hand of a fool cutts off the feet, and drinks damage.

Verse 6. Cutteth off the feet — Sending by such a person is utterly useless. My old MS. Bible translates well: “Halt in feet and drinking wickednesse that sendith wordis bi a foole messenger”. Nothing but lameness in himself can vindicate his sending it by such hands; and, after all, the expedient will be worse than the total omission, for he is likely to drink wickedness, i.e., the mischief occasioned by the fool’s misconduct. Coverdale nearly hits the sense as usual: “He is lame of his fete, yee dronken is he in vanite, that committeth eny thinge to a foole.”

26:7 The legs of the lame are not equal: so is a parable in the mouth of fools.

26:8 As he that binds a stone in a sling, so is he that gives honor to a fool.

Verse 8. As he that bindeth a stone in a sling, so is he that giveth honor to a fool. — It is entirely thrown away. This, however, is a difficult proverb; and the versions give but little light on the subject. The Hebrew may be translated, “As a piece of precious stone among a heap of stones, so is he that giveth honor to a fool.” See the margin, and Parkhurst: but on this interpretation the meaning would rather be, “It is as useless to throw a jewel among a heap of stones to increase its bulk, as to give honor to a fool.”

“As he that sendith a stoon into a hepe of monee; so he that geveth to an unwiisman wirschip”. — Old MS. Bible.

“He that setteth a foole in hye dignite, that is even as yf a man dyd caste a precious stone upon the galous.” — Coverdale. This translator refers to the custom of throwing a stone to the heap under which a criminal lay buried.

The Vulgate gives some countenance to this translation: “He who gives honor to a fool is like one who throws a stone to Mercury’s heap.” Mercury was considered the deity who presided over the highways; and stones were erected in different places to guide the traveler. Hence those lines of Dr. Young: —

“Death stands like Mercuries in every way; And kindly points us to our journey’s end.”

26:9 As a thorn goes up into the hand of a drunkard, so is a parable in the mouths of fools.

vs. 6-9: Fools are not fit to be trusted, nor to have any honor. Wise sayings, as a foolish man delivers and applies them, lose their usefulness.

26:10 The great God that formed all things both rewards the fool, and rewards transgressors.

vs. 10: This verse may either declare how the Lord, the Creator of all men, will deal with sinners according to their guilt, or, how the powerful among men should disgrace and punish the wicked.

Verse 10. The great God that formed all things — See the margin, where this verse is very differently translated. I shall add that of Coverdale: “A man of experience discerneth all thinges well: but whoso hyreth a foole, hyreth soch one as wyl take no hede.” The **br** rab may mean either the great God, or a great man: hence the two renderings, in the text and in the margin.

26:10

Like these too, are the heretics, who, having fallen from true discernment, dare to invent to themselves atheism. ‘For the fool saith in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, and become abominable in their doings’ (Ps. 14:1). Of such as are fools in their thoughts, the actions are wicked, as He saith, ‘can ye, being evil, speak good things’ (Matt. 12:34); for they were evil, because they thought wickedness. Or how can those do just acts, whose minds are set upon fraud? Or how shall he love, who is prepared beforehand to hate? How shall he be merciful, who is bent upon the love of money? How shall he be chaste, who looks upon a woman to lust after her? ‘For from the heart proceed evil thoughts, fornications, adulteries, murders. (Matt. 15:19)’ By them the fool is wrecked, as by the waves of the sea, being led away and enticed by his fleshly pleasures; for this stands written, ‘All flesh of fools is greatly tempest-tossed.’ While he associates with folly, he is tossed by a tempest, and perishes, as Solomon says in the Proverbs, ‘The fool and he who lacketh understanding shall perish together, and shall leave their wealth to strangers.’ Now they suffer such things, because there is not among them one sound of mind to guide them. For where there is sagacity, there the Word, who is the Pilot of souls, is with the vessel; ‘for he that hath understanding shall possess guidance;’ but they who are without guidance fall like the leaves.

St. Athanasius of Alexandria: Paschal Letters, 19:6.

26:11 As a dog returns to his vomit, so a fool returns to his folly.

Verse 11. As a dog returneth to his vomit — See note on 2 Peter 2:22.

vs. 11: The dog is a loathsome emblem of those sinners who return to their vices, 2 Peter 2:22.

Let us then, I beseech you, not neglect our salvation, that our labor may not be in vain. For he who turns from his sins, and goes and commits the same again, is “like a dog that returneth to his vomit.” (Proverbs 26:11.)

But if we act as we ought, and take heed to our ways, we shall be thought worthy of those high rewards, which that we may all obtain, God grant through the grace and lovingkindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, with whom, etc.

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on 1 Timothy, hom. 5.

26:11

And again we read “if a man goes back from righteousness to sin the Lord will prepare him for the sword,” and, “as a dog when he has returned to his vomit, and become odious, so is a fool who by his wickedness has returned to his sin.”

St. John Chrysostom: Letter to the Fallen Theodore, Letter 1: 18.

“Whoso diggeth a pit for his neighbor, shall fill into it himself.” (**Proverbs 26:27**) Which was the case then. For they desired to kill Him, to stop, as they thought, His preaching; the result was the opposite. For the preaching flourishes by the grace of Christ, while all that was theirs is quenched and perished; they have lost their country, their freedom, their security, their worship, they have been deprived of all their prosperity, and are become slaves and captives.

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on St. John, 51.

26:12 Seest you a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him.

vs. 12: We see many a one who has some little sense, but is proud of it. This describes those who think their spiritual state to be good, when really it is very bad.

This misery comes of senselessness. One cannot be haughty-minded without being a fool; and he that is brimful of folly is haughty. Listen to the Wise Man, who says, “I saw a man wise in his own conceit; there is more hope of a fool than of him.” (Proverbs 26:12.) Seest thou how it was not without reason I said that the evil of which I am speaking is worse than that of folly, for it is written, “There is more hope of a fool than of him”? Wherefore, Paul too said, “Be not wise in your own conceits.” (Romans 12:16.)

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on Philipians, 7.

counsel, is a sign of folly. It is said, “Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him;” (Proverbs 26:12.) and, “Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!” (Isaiah 5:21.) and Paul himself in another place, “Be not wise in your own conceits.” (Romans 12:16.)

St. John Chrysostom: Commentary on Galatians 1:17.

26:13 The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets.

vs. 13: The slothful man hates every thing that requires care and labor. But it is foolish to frighten ourselves from real duties by fancied difficulties. This may be applied to a man slothful in the duties of religion.

Verse 13. The slothful man saith — See the note on chap. 22:13.

26:14 As the door turns upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed.

vs. 14: Having seen the slothful man in fear of his work, here we find him in love with his ease. Bodily ease is the sad occasion of many spiritual diseases. He does not care to get forward with his business. Slothful professors turn thus. The world and the flesh are hinges on which they are hung; and yough they move in a course of outward services, yet they are not the nearer to heaven.

26:15 The slothful hides his hand in his bosom; it grieves him to bring it again to his mouth.

vs. 15: The sluggard is now out of his bed, but he might have lain there, for any thing he is likely to bring to pass in his work. It is common for men who will not do their duty, to pretend they cannot. Those that are slothful in religion, will not be at the pains to feed their souls with the bread of life, nor to fetch in promised blessings by prayer.

26:16 The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason.

vs. 16: He that takes pains in religion, knows he is working for a good Master, and that his labor shall not be in vain.

Verse 16. Than seven men that can render a reason. — Seven here only means perfection, abundance, or multitude. He is wiser in his own eyes than a multitude of the wisest men. “Than seven men that sytt and teach.” — Coverdale; i.e., than seven doctors of the law, or heads of the schools of the prophets, who always sat while they taught.

26:17 He that passes by, and meddles with strife belonging not to him, is like one that takes a dog by the ears.

vs. 17: To make ourselves busy in other men's matters, is to thrust ourselves into temptation.

Verse 17. He that passeth by — This proverb stands true ninety-nine times out of a hundred, where people meddle with domestic broils, or differences between men and their wives.

26:18 As a mad man who casts firebrands, arrows, and death,

vs. 18, 19: He that sins in jest, must repent in earnest, or his sin will be his ruin.

26:19 So is the man that deceives his neighbor, and saith, Am not I in sport?

Verse 19. Am not I in sport? — How many hearts have been made sad, and how many reputations have been slain, by this kind of sport! "I designed no harm by what I said;" "It was only in jest," etc. Sportive as such persons may think their conduct to be, it is as ruinous as that of the mad man who shoots arrows, throws firebrands, and projects in all directions instruments of death, so that some are wounded, some burnt, and some slain.

26:20 Where no wood is, there the fire goes out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceases.

Verse 20. Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out — The tale-receiver and the tale-bearer are the agents of discord. If none received the slander in the first instance, it could not be propagated. Hence our proverb, "The receiver is as bad as the thief." And our laws treat them equally; for the receiver of stolen goods, knowing them to be stolen, is hanged, as well as he who stole them.

26:21 As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife.

26:22 The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.

vs. 20-22: Contention heats the spirit, and puts families and societies into a flame. And that fire is commonly kindled and kept burning by whisperers and backbiters.

Verse 22. The words of a tale-bearer — The same with chap. 18:8, where see the note.

26:23 Burning lips and a wicked heart are like a potsherd covered with silver dross.

Verse 23. Burning lips and a wicked heart — Splendid, shining, smooth lips; that is, lips which make great professions of friendship are like a vessel plated over with base metal to make it resemble silver; but it is only a vile pot, and even the outside is not pure.

vs. 23: A wicked heart disguising itself, is like a potsherd covered with the dross of silver.

26:24 He that hates dissembles with his lips, and lays up deceit within him;

26:25 When he speaks fair, believe him not: for there are seven abominations in his heart.

Verse 25. When he speaketh fair — For there are such hypocrites and false friends in the world.

Believe him not — Let all his professions go for nothing.

For there are seven abominations in his heart. — That is, he is full of abominations.

26:26 Whose hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness shall be shewed before the whole congregation.

vs. 24-26: Always distrust when a man speaks fair unless you know him well. Satan, in his temptations, speaks fair, as he did to Eve; but it is madness to give credit to him

26:27 Whoso diggs a pit shall fall therein: and he that rolls a stone, it will return upon him.

Verse 27. Whoso diggeth a pit — See note on Psalm 7:15. There is a Latin proverb like this: *Malum consilium consultori pessimum*, "A bad counsel, but worst to the giver." Harm watch; harm catch.

vs. 27: What pains men take to do mischief to others! but it is digging a pit, it is rolling a stone, hard work; and they prepare mischief to themselves.

For "he who diggeth a pit for his neighbor, falleth into it." (Proverbs 26:27.) Let us then not plot against others, lest we injure ourselves. When we supplant the reputation of others, let us consider that we injure ourselves, it is against ourselves we plot. For perchance with men we do him harm, if we have power, but we injure ourselves in the sight of God, by provoking Him against us. Let us not then harm ourselves.

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on Philipians, 14.

26:28 A lying tongue hates those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth works ruin.

vs. 28: There are two sorts of lies equally detestable. A slandering lie, the mischief of this every body sees. A flattering lie, which secretly works ruin. A wise man will be more afraid of a flatterer than of a slanderer.

Verse 28. A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it — He that injures another hates him in proportion to the injury he has done him; and, strange to tell, in proportion to the innocence of the oppressed. The debtor cannot bear the sight of his creditor; nor the knave, of him whom he has injured.

CHAPTER 27

Use the present time with diligence and wisdom and presume not upon tomorrow. We should speak of the morrow as those who are submitted to the will of God, knowing the uncertainty of one moment, except as God allows it to us.

Human friendships are often sweet, but the greatest sweetness and confidence will be found in Jesus, the greatest Friend of all.

To-morrow is uncertain. Self-praise forbidden. Anger and envy. Reproof from a friend. Want makes us feel the value of a supply. A good neighbor. Beware of suretyship. Suspicious praise. The quarrelsome woman. One friend helps another. Man insatiable. The incorrigible fool. Domestic cares. The profit of flocks for food and raiment.

27:1 Boast not thyself of to-morrow; for you knowest not what a day may bring forth.

Vs. 1: We know not what a day may bring forth. This does not forbid preparing for tomorrow, but presuming upon tomorrow. We must not put off the great work of conversion, that one thing needful.

Verse 1. Boast not thyself of to-morrow — See note on James 4:13, etc. Do not depend on any future moment for spiritual good which at present you needest, and God is willing to give, and without which, should death surprise you, you must be eternally lost; such as repentance, faith in Christ, the pardon of sin, the witness of the Holy Spirit, and complete renovation of soul. Be incessant in thy application to God for these blessings.

My old MS. Bible translates thus: “Ne glorie you into the morewenning”. Here we see the derivation of our word morning; “morewenning”, from more, and wen or won, to dwelt, i.e., a continuance of time to live or dwell in your present habitation. Every man wishes to live longer, and therefore wishes for to-morrow; and when to-morrow comes, then to-morrow, and so on.

The young man again, let him also consider the uncertainty of death, and that oftentimes, when many older persons continued here, the young were carried off before them. For, for this reason, that we may not make traffic of our death, it is left in uncertainty. Wherefore also a certain wise man adviseth, saying, “Make no tarrying to turn unto the Lord, and put not off from day to day: for thou knowest not what to-morrow shall bring forth.” (Ecclesiastes 5:7; Proverbs 27:1) For by putting off there is danger and fear; but by not putting off manifest and secure salvation. Hold fast then by virtue.

St. John Chrysostom: Commentary on 2 Corinthians 10:17.

27:1

Let us not then be procrastinating till tomorrow. For we “know not what the next day may bring forth;” nor let us say, “we shall conquer this habit by little and little;” since this little and little will never come to an end. Wherefore, dismissing that excuse, we should say, “If we do not reform the practice of swearing today, we will not leave off till we do, though ten thousand things were to press us; though it were necessary to die, or to be punished, or to lose all we have; we will not give the devil the advantage of slackness, nor the pretext of delay.”

St. John Chrysostom: Concerning the Statues, 20:22

27:2 Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.

vs. 2: There may be occasion for us to justify ourselves, but not to praise ourselves.

Verse 2. Let another man praise you, and not thine own mouth — We have a similar proverb, which illustrates this: “Self-praise is no commendation.”

27:2

For self-pleasing is a perilous thing for one who has to be on his guard against falling into pride.

St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate 58:3.

27:3 A stone is heavy, and the sand weighty; but a fool's wrath is heavier than them both.

27:4 Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?

vs. 3, 4: Those who have no command of their passions, sink under the load.

Verse 4. Who is able to stand before envy? — The rabbins have a curious story on this subject, and it has been formed by the moderns into a fable. There were two persons, one covetous and the other envious, to whom a certain person promised to grant whatever they should ask; but double to him who should ask last. The covetous man would not ask first, because he wished to get the double portion, and the envious man would not make the first request because he could not bear the thoughts of thus benefiting

his neighbor. However, at last he requested that one of his eyes should be taken out, in order that his neighbor might lose both.

27:4

For that evil is so far incurable that it is made worse by attentions, it is increased by services, is irritated by presents, because as the same Solomon says: “envy endures nothing.”

St. John Cassian: Conference 18:16.

27:5 Open rebuke is better than secret love.

Verse 5. Open rebuke is better than secret love. — Plutarch gives an account of a man who, aiming a blow at his enemy’s life, cut open an imposthume, which by a salutary discharge saved his life, that was sinking under a disease for which a remedy could not be found. Partial friendship covers faults; envy, malice, and revenge, will exhibit, heighten, and even multiply them. The former conceals us from ourselves; the latter shows us the worst part of our character. Thus we are taught the necessity of amendment and correction. In this sense open rebuke is better than secret love. Yet it is a rough medicine, and none can desire it. But the genuine open-hearted friend may be intended, who tells you your faults freely but conceals them from all others; hence the sixth verse: “Faithful are the wounds of a friend.”

27:6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

vs. 5, 6: Plain and faithful rebukes are better, not only than secret hatred, but than love which compliments in sin, to the hurt of the soul.

27:6

it seems to me, more seriously “wounding friendship and setting at naught the laws of brotherly union.” For I would hesitate to give the name of Christian to those friendships in which the common proverb, “Flattery makes friends, and truth makes enemies,” is of more authority than the scriptural proverb, “Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.”

St. Augustine: Letter 82, 31.

27:6

I had rather, he says, be healed by a rebuke administered in kindness, than be deceived and led astray by smooth flattery, coming on me as an ointment on my head. The self-same sentiment is found elsewhere in Scripture under other words: “Better are the wounds of a friend than the proffered kisses of an enemy.”

St. Augustine: Answers to Letters of Petilian, the Donatist, book 2:104 (236).

27:6

Did I not say to thee when you continually rebuked me for speaking the truth, “I love thee better than they do who flatter thee?” “I who reprove thee care more for thee than they who pay thee court?”

St. John Chrysostom: Eutropius, Patrician and Counsel, homily 1:1.

It is not that we desire to be approved, and you reprov'd. I would gladly manifest, if it were possible, with my very eyes, the love which I bear to you: for then no one would be able to reproach me, though my language were ever so rough. “For speech of friends, yea, were it insult, can be born;” more “faithful are the wounds of a friend, rather than the ready kisses of an enemy. (Proverbs 27:6.) There nothing I love more than you, no, not even light itself. I would gladly have my eyes put out ten thousand times over, if it were possible by this means to convert your souls; so much is your salvation dearer to me than light itself. For what profit to me in the rays of the sun, when despondency on your account makes it all thick darkness before my eyes? Light is good when it shines in cheerfulness, to a sorrowful heart it seems even to be a trouble. How true this is, may you never learn by experience!

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on Acts, 3.

27:6

Not every one who is indulgent is a friend; nor is every one an enemy who smites. Better are the wounds of a friend than the proffered kisses of an enemy. It is better with severity to love, than with gentleness to deceive. More good is done by taking away food from one who is hungry, if, through freedom from care as to his food, he is forgetful of righteousness, than by providing bread for one who is hungry, in order that, being thereby bribed, he may consent to unrighteousness.

St. Augustine: Letter 93, ch. 2:4.

27:6

Certainly, if it is necessary to give witness, then, when one knows of any fault in a friend, one ought to rebuke him secretly — if he does not listen, one must do it openly. For rebukes are good, and often better than a silent friendship. Even if a friend thinks himself hurt, still rebuke him; and if the bitterness of the correction wounds his mind, still rebuke him and fear not. “The wounds of a friend are better than the kisses of flatterers:” Rebuke, then, thy erring friend; forsake not an innocent one. For friendship ought to be steadfast and to rest firm in true affection. We ought not to change our friends in childish fashion at some idle fancy.

St. Ambrose: Duties of the Clergy, 3:22 (127).

27:6

GOOD-WILL also is wont to remove the sword of anger. It is also good-will that makes the wounds of a friend to be better than the willing kisses of an enemy. Goodwill again makes many to become one. For if many are friends, they become one; in whom there is but one spirit and one opinion.

St. Ambrose: St. Ambrose: Duties of the Clergy, 1:34 (173).

27:7 The full soul loathes an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.

vs. 7: The poor have a better relish of their enjoyments, and are often more thankful for them, than the rich. In like manner the proud and self-sufficient disdain the gospel; but those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, find comfort from the meanest book or sermon that testifies of Christ Jesus.

27:7 LXX

Therefore also a certain wise man who had an accurate knowledge of all that concerned pleasure, and understood how to moralize about these things said “the full soul mocketh at honeycombs:” showing that the conditions of pleasure consist not in the nature of the meal, but in the disposition of the eaters.

St. John Chrysostom: None can harm him who does not injure himself, 8.

27:8 As a bird that wanders from her nest, so is a man that wanders from his place.

vs. 8: Every man has his proper place in society, where he may be safe and comfortable.

Verse 8. Is a bird that wandereth from her nest — Leaving her own brood, places of retreat, and feeding-ground behind, and going into strange countries, where she is exposed to every kind of danger. So is the man who leaves his family connections and country, and goes into strange parts to find employment, better his circumstances, make a fortune, etc. I have seen multitudes of such wanderers from their place come to great misery and wretchedness. God’s general advice is, “Do good, and dwell in the land; and verily you shalt be fed.”

27:8

Have pity, O Lord God, lest they who pass by trample on the unfledged bird; and send Thine angel, who may restore it to its nest that it may live until it can fly.

St. Augustine: Confession, 12:27 (37).

27:9 Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man’s friend by hearty counsel.

Verse 9. Ointment and perfume — Anointing the head and various parts of the body with aromatic oil is frequent in the East, and fumigating the beards of the guests at the conclusion of an entertainment is almost universal; as is also sprinkling rose-water, and water highly odoriferous. Two of the curious vessels which are used for this purpose are now before me; they hold some quarts each, and are beautifully inlaid with silver in the form of sprigs, leaves, etc.

27:10 Your own friend, and your father’s friend, forsake not; neither go into your brother’s house in the day of your calamity: for better is a neighbor that is near than a brother far off.

Verse 10. Thine own friend — A well and long tried friend is invaluable. Him that has been a friend to thy family never forget, and never neglect. And, in the time of adversity, rather apply to such a one, than go to thy nearest relative, who keeps himself at a distance. 1826

vs. 9, 10: Depend not for relief upon a kinsman, merely for kindred’s sake; apply to those who are at hand, and will help in need. But there is a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother, and let us place entire confidence in him.

27:10

For Solomon also says: “Better is a neighbor that is near than a brother far off.” For this reason a man generally trusts himself to the good-will of a friend rather than to the ties of relationship with his brother. So far does good-will prevail that it often goes beyond the pledges given by nature.

St. Ambrose: Duties of the Clergy, 1:34 (174).

27:11 My son, be wise, and make my heart glad, that I may answer him that reproaches me.

vs. 11: An affection parent urges his son to prudent conduct that should gladden his heart. The good conduct of Christians is the best answer to all who find fault with the gospel.

27:12 A prudent man foresees the evil, and hides himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished.

Verse 12. A prudent man foreseeth the evil — The very same as chap. 22:3.

vs. 12: Where there is temptation, if we thrust ourselves into it, there will be sin, and punishment will follow.

27:13 Take his garment that is surety for a stranger, and take a pledge of him for a strange woman.

Verse 13. Take his garment — The same as chap. 20:16.

vs. 13: An honest man may be made a beggar, but he is not honest that makes himself one.

27:14 He that blesses his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him.

vs. 14: It is folly to be fond of being praised; it is a temptation to pride.

Verse 14. He that blesseth his friend — He who makes loud and public protestations of acknowledgments to his friend for favors received, subjects his sincerity to suspicion; and remember the Italian proverb elsewhere quoted: — “He who praises you more than he was wont to do, has either deceived you, or is about to do it.” Extravagant public professions are little to be regarded.

27:15 A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike.

Verse 15. A continual dropping — See chap. 19:13.

27:16 Whosoever hides her hides the wind, and the ointment of his right hand, which bewrays itself.

Verse 16. Whosoever hideth her hideth the wind — You may as well attempt to repress the blowing of the wind, as the tongue of a scold; and to conceal this unfortunate propensity of a wife is as impossible as to hush the storm, and prevent its sound from being heard.

The ointment of his right hand — You can no more conceal such a woman’s conduct, than you can the smell of the aromatic oil with which your hand has been anointed. The Hebrew is very obscure, and is variously translated. Coverdale thus: “He that refrayneth her, refrayneth the wynde; and holdith oyle fast in his honde.” That is, he attempts to do what is impossible to be done.

vs. 15, 16: The contentions of a neighbor may be like a sharp shower, troublesome for a time; the contentions of a wife are like constant rain.

27:17 Iron sharpens iron; so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.

vs. 17: We are cautioned to take heed whom we converse with. And directed to have in view, in conversation, to make one another wiser and better.

Verse 17. Iron sharpeneth iron — As hard iron, viz., steel, will bring a knife to a better edge when it is properly whetted against it: so one friend may be the means of exciting another to reflect, dive deeply into, and illustrate a subject, wiyout which whetting or excitement, this had never taken place. Had Horace seen this proverb in the Septuagint translation when he wrote to the Pisos?

Ergo fungar vice cotis, acutum Reddere quae ferrum valet, exors ipsa secandi.

HOR. ARS. POET., ver. 304. 1827

“But let me sharpen others, as the hone Gives edge to razors, yough itself have none.”

FRANCIS.

27:18 Whoso keeps the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof: so he that waits on his master shall be honored.

vs. 18: Yough a calling be laborious and despised, yet those who keep to it, will find there is something to be got by it. God is a Master who has engaged to honor those who serve him faithfully.

27:19 As in water face answers to face, so the heart of man to man.

Verse 19. As in water face answereth to face — All men’s hearts are pretty nearly alike; water is not more like to water, than one heart is to another. Or, as a man sees his face perfectly reflected by the water, when looking into it; so the wise and penetrating man sees generally what is in the heart of another by considering the general tenor of his words and actions.

“Surely, if each man saw another’s heart There would be no commerce; All would disperse, And live apart.”

HERBERT.

vs. 19: One corrupt heart is like another; so are sanctified hearts: the former bear the same image of the earthly, the latter the same image of the heavenly. Let us carefully watch our own hearts, comparing them with the word of God.

27:20 Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied.

vs. 20: Two things are here said to be never satisfied, death and sin. The appetites of the carnal mind for profit or pleasure are always desiring more. Those whose eyes are ever toward the Lord, are satisfied in him, and shall for ever be so.

Verse 20. Hell and destruction are never full — How hideous must the soul of a covetous man be, when God compares it to hell and perdition!

The eyes of man are never satisfied. — As the grave can never be filled up with bodies, nor perdition with souls; so the restless desire, the lust of power, riches, and splendor, is never satisfied. Out of this ever unsatisfied desire spring all the changing fashions, the varied amusements, and the endless modes of getting money, prevalent in every age, and in every country.

27:21 As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise.

vs. 21: Silver and gold are tried by putting them into the furnace and fining-pot; so is a man tried by praising him.

Verse 21. As the fining pot for silver — As silver and gold are tried by the art of the refiner, so is a man's heart by the praise he receives. If he feel it not, he deserves it; if he be puffed up by it, he is worthless.

27:21

HE IS FORCIBLY GOADED ON BY THE LOVE OF PRAISE.

60. By these temptations, O Lord, are we daily tried; yea, unceasingly are we tried. Our daily "furnace" is the human tongue. And in this respect also dost Thou command us to be continent. Give what Thou commandest, and command what Thou wilt.

St. Augustine: Confession, 10:37 (60).

27:22 Yough you shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him.

vs. 22: Some are so bad, that even severe methods do not answer the end; what remains but that they should be rejected? The new-creating power of God's grace alone is able to make a change.

Verse 22. Though you should bray a fool — Leaving all other conjectures, of which commentators are full, I would propose, that this is a metaphor taken from pounding metallic ores in very large mortars, such as are still common in the East, in order that, when subjected to the action of the fire, the metal may be the more easily separated from the ore. However you may try, by precept or example, or both, to instruct a stupid man, your labor is lost; his foolishness cannot be separated from

him. You may purge metals of all their dross; but you cannot purge the fool of his folly.

27:22

That is one confirmed in wickedness. The apostle, too, says, "Them that sin, rebuke before all;" that is to say, all but reprobate. Who are meant by the "comes," but we ourselves, who once were like hogs, walking in all the filthiness of the world; but now, believing in Christ, we build our houses upon the holy flesh of Christ as upon a rock?

"From the Commentary of St. Hippolytus on Proverbs

27:22

For let them hear that in them is fulfilled that which is written, If thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar, as if with a pestle pounding barley, his foolishness will not be taken away from him (Proverbs 27:22).

Fr. Gregory (the Great), Pastoral Rule, 13.

27:23 Be you diligent to know the state of your flocks, and look well to your herds.

Verse 23. The state of thy flocks — The directions to the end of the chapter refer chiefly to pastoral and agricultural affairs. Do not trust thy flocks to the shepherd merely; number them thyself; look into their condition; see how they are tended; and when, and with what, and in what proportion, they are fed.

27:24 For riches are not for ever: and doth the crown endure to every generation?

Verse 24. For riches are not for ever — All other kinds of property are very transitory. Money and the highest civil honors are but for a short season. Flocks and herds, properly attended to, may be multiplied and continued from generation to generation. The crown itself is not naturally so permanent.

27:25 *The hay appears, and the tender grass shews itself, and herbs of the mountains are gathered.*

Verse 25. The hay appeareth — Take care that this be timeously mown, carefully dried and safely ricked or housed. And when the tender grass and the proper herbs appear in the mountains in the spring, then send forth the lambs, the young of the flock, that they may get suitable pasturage, wiyout too much impoverishing the home fields; for by the sale of the lambs and goats, the price of the field is paid—all the landlord's demands are discharged. Either a certain number of lambs, goats, and other cattle, was given to the landlord; or so much money as so many lambs, etc., were then worth.

27:26 *The lambs are for your clothing, and the goats are the price of the field.*

Verse 26. The lambs are for thy clothing — So many fleeces are given in some places as rent to the landlord.

27:27 *And you shalt have goats' milk enough for your food, for the food of your household, and for the maintenance for your maidens.*

vs. 23-27: We ought to have some business to do in this world, and not to live in idleness, and not to meddle with what we do not understand. We must be diligent and take pains. Let us do what we can, still the world cannot be secured to us, therefore we must choose a more lasting portion; but by the blessing of God upon our honest labors, we may expect to enjoy as much of earthly blessings as is good for us.

Verse 27. Goats' milk enough for thy food — *ûmjll* lelachmecha, “to thy bread;” for they ate the bread and supped the milk to assist mastication, and help deglutition. And it seems that bread, with goats' milk, was the general article of food for the master and his family; and for the servant maids who assisted in the household work, and performed the operations required in the dairy. The reader who wishes to see these maxims detailed and illustrated at large, may consult the writers De Re Rustica, where he will find much curious information.

CHAPTER 28

True religion is true wisdom, making men wise in every relation. Those who make conscience of God's law will find a security in the worst of times and will always be found vigorously opposing sin.

The timidity of the wicked. Quick succession in the government of a country is a punishment to the land. Of the poor who oppress the poor. The upright poor man is preferable to the wicked rich man. The unprofitable conduct of the usurer. The prosperity of the righteous a cause of rejoicing. He is blessed who fears always. A wicked ruler a curse. The murderer generally execrated. The faithful man. The corrupt judge. The foolishness of trusting in one's own heart. The charitable man. When the wicked are elevated, it is a public evil.

28:1 *The wicked flee when no man pursues: but the righteous are bold as a lion.*

Vs. 1: Sin makes men cowards. Whatever difficulties the righteous meet in the way of duty, they are not daunted.

Verse 1. The wicked flee — Every wicked man, however bold he may appear, is full of dreary apprehensions relative to both worlds. But the righteous has true courage, being conscious of his own innocence, and the approbation of his God. "The unpituous fleeth". — Old MS. Bible. This word is often used for impious, wicked, ungodly; hence it appears that our word pity anciently meant piety or godliness.

28:1,2

This it was that the blessed martyrs did in their burning love; and if we celebrate their memories in no mere empty form, and, in the banquet whereat they themselves were filled to the full, approach the table of the Lord, we must, as they did, be also ourselves making similar preparations.

St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate 84:1.

28:1

For such men tremble at their shadows, suspect their friends, their enemies, their servants, such as know them, such as know them not; and before their punishment, suffer extreme punishment here.

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on Matthew, 14:4.

28:1

"The wicked flee when no man pursueth." How doth he flee when no man pursueth? He hath that within which drives him on — an accuser in his conscience; and this he carries about everywhere; and just as it would be impossible to flee from himself, so neither can he escape the persecutor within; but wherever he goeth, he is scourged, and hath an incurable wound!

St. John Chrysostom: Concerning the Statues, 8;3.

Be not thou afraid: (the wicked one) fears the tracks of saints, as foxes do lions. For "the righteous," it says, "is as bold as a lion." (Proverbs 28:1.) Let us bring these lions into our house, and all the wild beasts are put to flight, the lions not needing to roar, but simply to utter their voice. For not so much does the roaring of a lion put the wild beasts to flight, as the prayer of a righteous man puts to flight evil spirits: let him but speak, they cower.

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on Acts, 53.

*For we can flee from God, not in place, for He is everywhere; and hear the Prophet, when he says, "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from Thy presence"? (Psalm 139:7.) How then can we flee from God? Even as we can become distant from God, even as we can be removed afar off. "They that are far from Thee," it says, "shall perish." (Psalm 73:27.) And again, "Have not your iniquities separated between Me and you?" (Isaiah 59:2.) How then comes this removal, how comes this separation? In purpose and soul. for it cannot be in place. For how could one fly from Him who is everywhere present? The sinner then flies. This is what the Scripture saith, "The wicked fleeth when no man pursueth him." (**Proverbs 28:1.**) We eagerly fly from God, although He always pursueth us. The Apostle hasted, that he might be near Him. We haste, that we may be far off.*

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on Philippians, 11.

*"For it is said the righteous are bold as a lion." (**Proverbs 28:1.**) For he that is armed with such a breastplate, it cannot be that he should fear the array that is against him, but he will leap into the midst of the enemy. And again Isaiah saith, "How beautiful are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings." (Isaiah 52:7.) Who would not run, who would not serve in such a cause; to publish the good tidings of peace, peace between God and man, peace, where men have toiled not, but where God hath wrought all?*

St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on Ephesians 24.

28:2 For the transgression of a land many are the princes thereof: but by a man of understanding and knowledge the state thereof shall be prolonged.

vs. 2: National sins disturb the public repose.

Verse 2. Many are the princes — Nations, as nations, cannot be judged in a future world; therefore, God judges them here. And where the people are very wicked, and the constitution very bad, the succession of princes is frequent—they are generally taken off by an untimely death. Where the people know that the constitution is in their favor, they seldom disturb the prince, as they consider him the guardian of their privileges.

But by a man of understanding — Whether he be a king, or the king's prime minister, the prosperity of the state is advanced by his counsels.

28:3 A poor man that oppresses the poor is like a sweeping rain which leaves no food.

vs. 3: If needy persons get opportunities of oppressing, their extortion will be more severe than that of the more wealthy.

Verse 3. A poor man that oppresseth the poor — Our Lord illustrates this proverb most beautifully, by the parable of the two debtors, Matthew 18:23. One owed ten thousand talents, was insolvent, begged for time, was forgiven. A fellow servant owed this one a hundred pence: he was insolvent; but prayed his fellow servant to give him a little time, and he would pay it all. He would not, took him by the throat, and cast him into

prison till he should pay that debt. Here the poor oppressed the poor; and what was the consequence? The oppressing poor was delivered to the tormentors; and the forgiven debt charged to his amount, because he showed no mercy. The comparatively poor are often shockingly uncharitable and unfeeling towards the real poor.

Like a sweeping rain — These are frequent in the East; and sometimes carry flocks, crops, and houses, away with them.

28:4 They that forsake the law praise the wicked: but such as keep the law contend with them.

vs. 4: Wicked people strengthen one another in wicked ways.

Verse 4. They that forsake the law — He that transgresses says, in fact, that it is right to transgress; and thus other wicked persons are encouraged.

28:5 Evil men understand not judgment: but they that seek the LORD understand all things.

vs. 5: If a man seeks the Lord, it is a good sign that he understands much, and it is a good means of understanding more.

Verse 5. They that seek the Lord understand all things. — They are wise unto salvation; they “have the unction from the Holy One, and they know all things,” 1 John 2:20, every thing that is essentially needful for them to know, in reference to both worlds.

28:6 Better is the poor that walks in his uprightness, than he that is perverse in his ways, yough he be rich.

vs. 6: An honest, godly, poor man, is better than a wicked, ungodly, rich man; has more comfort in himself, and is a greater blessing to the world.

28:7 Whoso keeps the law is a wise son: but he that is a companion of riotous men shames his father.

vs. 7: Companions of riotous men not only grieve their parents, but shame them.

28:7

The Holy Spirit speaks by Solomon, and says, “He that giveth unto the poor shall never lack, but he that turneth away his eye shall be in great poverty;” showing that the merciful and those who do good works cannot want, but rather that the sparing and barren hereafter come to want. Moreover, the blessed Apostle Paul, full of the grace of the Lord's inspiration, says: “He that ministereth seed to the sower, shall both minister bread for your food, and shall multiply your seed sown, and shall increase the growth of the fruits of your righteousness, that in all things ye may be enriched.” (2 Cor. 9:10).

St. Cyprian: Treatise Viii On Works And Alms, 9.

28:8 He that by usury and unjust gain increases his substance, he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor.

vs. 8: That which is ill got, yough it may increase much, will not last long. Thus the poor are repaid, and God is glorified.

Verse 8. He that by usury-increaseth his substance — By taking unlawful interest for his money; lending to a man in great distress, money, for the use of which he requires an exorbitant sum. O that the names of all those unfeeling,

hard-hearted, consummate villains in the nation, who thus take advantage of their neighbour's necessities to enrich themselves, were published at every market cross; and then the delinquents all sent to their brother savages in New Zealand. It would be a happy riddance to the country.

28:9 He that turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.

vs. 9: The sinner at whose prayers God is angry, is one who obstinately refuses to obey God's commands.

Verse 9. He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law — Many suppose, if they do not know their duty, they shall not be accountable for their transgressions; and therefore avoid every thing that is calculated to enlighten them. They will not read the Bible, lest they should know the will of God; and they will not attend Divine ordinances for the same reason. But this pretense will avail them nothing; as he that might have known his master's will, but would not, shall be treated as he shall be who did know it, and disobeyed it. Even the prayers of such a person as this are reputed sin before God.

28:10 Whoso causes the righteous to go astray in an evil way, he shall fall himself into his own pit: but the upright shall have good things in possession.

vs. 10: The success of ungodly men is their own misery.

Verse 10. Whoso causeth the righteous to go astray — He who strives to pervert one really converted to God, in order that he may pour contempt on religion, shall fall into that hell to which he has endeavored to lead the other.

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28:11 The rich man is wise in his own conceit; but the poor that hath understanding searches him out.

vs. 11: Rich men are so flattered, that they think themselves superior to others.

28:12 When righteous men do rejoice, there is great glory: but when the wicked rise, a man is hidden.

vs. 12: There is glory in the land when the righteous have liberty.

Verse 12. When righteous men do rejoice — When true religion is no longer persecuted, and the word of God duly esteemed, there is great glory; for the word of the Lord has then free course, runs, and is glorified: but when the wicked rise-when they are elevated to places of trust, and put at the head of civil affairs, then the righteous man is obliged to hide himself; the word of the Lord becomes scarce, and there is no open vision. The first was the case in this country, in the days of Edward VI.; the second in the days of his successor, MARY 1:Popery, cruelty, and knavery, under her, nearly destroyed the Church and the State in these islands.

28:13 He that covers his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy.

vs. 13: It is folly to indulge sin, and excuse it. He who covers his sins, shall not have any true peace. He who humbly confesses his sins, with true repentance and faith, shall find mercy from God. The Son of God is our great atonement. Under a deep sense of our guilt and danger, we may claim salvation from that mercy which reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Verse 13. He that covereth his sins — Here is a general direction relative to conversion. 1. If the sinner do not acknowledge his sins; if he cover and excuse them, and refuse to come to the light of God's word and Spirit, lest his deeds should be reprov'd, he shall find no salvation. God will never admit a sinful, unhumbled soul, into his kingdom. 2. But if he confess his sin, with a penitent and broken heart, and, by forsaking every evil way, give this proof that he feels his own sore, and the plague of his heart, then he shall have mercy. Here is a doctrine of vital importance to the salvation of the soul, which the weakest may understand.

28:14 Happy is the man that fears always: but he that hardens his heart shall fall into mischief.

28:14

But, until that day comes, thou oughtest, ever suspicious and ever fearful, to be afraid of faults, and wash them with daily tears. Assuredly the apostle Paul had already ascended into the third heaven, had also been caught up into Paradise, and heard secret words which it was not lawful for a man to speak (2 Corinthians 12:2, etc.), and yet, still fearful, he said, I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, while preaching to others, I myself should become a castaway (1 Corinthians 9:27). One who is caught up into heaven still fears; and shall one whose conversation is still on earth desire already not to fear? Consider, most sweet daughter, that security is wont to be the mother of carelessness. Thou oughtest not, then, in this life to have security, whereby thou mayest be rendered careless. For it is written, Happy is the man that is always afraid (Proverbs 28:14). And again it is written, Serve the Lord in fear, and rejoice unto him with trembling (Psalm 2:11). In short, then, it must needs be that in the time of this life trembling possess your soul, to the end that it may hereafter rejoice without end

through the joy of security. May Almighty God fill your soul with the grace of His Holy Spirit, and, after the tears which you daily shed in prayer, bring you to eternal joys.

Fr. Gregory (the Great), Book 7, Epistle 25 to Gregoria, Lady of the Bed-chamber (cubicularioe)

vs. 14: There is a fear which causes happiness. Faith and love will deliver from the fear of eternal misery; but we should always fear offending God, and fear sinning against him.

Verse 14. Happy is the man that feareth alway — That ever carries about with him that reverential and filial fear of God, which will lead him to avoid sin, and labor to do that which is lawful and right in the sight of God his Savior.

28:15 As a roaring lion, and a ranging bear; so is a wicked ruler over the poor people.

vs. 15: A wicked ruler, whatever we may call him, this scripture calls a roaring lion, and a ranging bear.

28:16 The prince that wants understanding is also a great oppressor: but he that hates covetousness shall prolong his days.

vs. 16: Oppressors want understanding; they do not consult their own honor, ease, and safety.

Verse 16. The prince that wanteth understanding — A weak prince will generally have wicked ministers, for his weakness prevents him from making a proper choice; and he is apt to prefer them who flatter him, and minister most to his pleasures. The quantum of the king's intellect may be always appreciated by the mildness or oppressiveness of his government. He who plunges his people into expensive wars, to support which they are burdened with taxes, is a prince wiyout understanding. He does not know his own interest, and does not regard that of his people. But these things, yough general truths, apply more particularly to those despotic governments which prevail in Asiatic countries.

28:17 A man that does violence to the blood of any person shall flee to the pit; let no man stay him.

vs. 17: The murderer shall be haunted with terrors. None shall desire to save him from deserved punishment, nor pity him.

Verse 17. That doeth violence to the blood — He who either slays the innocent, or procures his destruction, may flee to hide himself: but let

none give him protection. The law demands his life, because he is a murderer; and let none deprive justice of its claim. Murder is the most horrid crime in the sight of God and man; it scarcely ever goes unpunished, and is universally execrated.

28:18 Whoso walks uprightly shall be saved: but he that is perverse in his ways shall fall at once.

vs. 18: Uprightness will give men holy security in the worst times; but the false and dishonest are never safe.

Verse 18. Shall fall at once — Shall fall wiyout resource, altogether.

28:18

We ought not then to be wearied out by these wanderings of mind and relax from our fervor: for “he that tilleth his ground shall be filled with bread: but he that followeth idleness shall be filled with poverty.” Nor should we be drawn away from being intent on this watchfulness through a dangerous despair, for “in every one who is anxious there is abundance, for he who is pleasant and free from grief will be in want;” (Prov. 14:23), and again: “a man in grief labors for himself, and forcibly brings about his own destruction.” (Prov. 16:26 LXX),

St. John Cassian: Conference 7:4.

28:19 He that tills his land shall have plenty of bread: but he that follows after vain persons shall have poverty enough.

vs. 19: Those who are diligent, take the way to live comfortably.

Verse 19. He that tilleth his land — See chap. 12:11.

28:19

AND Solomon, the wisest of men, clearly points to this fault of idleness in many passages, as he says: “He that followeth idleness shall be filled with poverty,” (Prov. 28:19), either visible or invisible, in which an idle person and one entangled with different faults is sure to be involved, and he will always be a stranger to the contemplation of God, and to spiritual riches, of which the blessed Apostle says: “For in all things ye were enriched in him, in all utterance and in all knowledge.” (1 Cor. 1:5). But concerning this poverty of the idler elsewhere he also writes thus: “Every sluggard shall be clothed in torn garments and rags.” (Prov. 23:12 LXX),. For certainly he will not merit to be adorned with that garment of incorruption (of which the Apostle says, “Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ,” (Rom. 8:14), and again: “Being clothed in the breastplate of righteousness and charity” (1 Thess. 5:8), concerning which

the Lord Himself also speaks to Jerusalem by the prophet: “Arise, arise, O Jerusalem, put on the garments of thy glory)” (Isai. 52:1), whoever, overpowered by lazy slumber or by accidie, prefers to be clothed, not by his labor and industry, but in the rags of idleness, which he tears off from the solid piece and body of the Scriptures, and fits on to his sloth no garment of glory and honor, but an ignominious cloak and excuse. For those, who are affected by this laziness, and do not like to support themselves by the labor of their own hands, as the Apostle continually did and charged us to do, are wont to make use of certain Scripture proofs by which they try to cloak their idleness, saying that it is written, “Labor not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which remains to life eternal;” (John 6:27); and “My meat is to do the will of my Father.” (John 4:34). But these proofs are (as it were) rags, from the solid piece of the gospel, which are adopted for this purpose, viz., to cover the disgrace of our idleness and shame rather than to keep us warm, and adorn us with that costly and splendid garment of virtue which that wise woman in the Proverbs, who was clothed with strength and beauty, is said to have made either for herself or for her husband; of which presently it is said: “Strength and beauty are her clothing, and she rejoices in the latter days” (Prov. 26:25 LXX), Of this evil of idleness Solomon thus makes mention again: “The ways of the idlers are strewn with thorns;” (Prov. 15:19 LXX), i.e., with these and similar faults, which the Apostle above declared to spring from idleness. And again: “Every sluggard is always in want.” (Prov. 13:4 LXX). And of these the Apostle makes mention when he says, “And that you want nothing of any man’s.” (1 Thess. 4:11), And finally: “For idleness has been the teacher of many evils:” (Ecclus. 33:29), which the Apostle has clearly enumerated in the passage which he expounded above: “Working not at all, but curiously meddling.” To this fault also he joins another: “And that ye study to be quiet;” and then, “that ye should do your own business and walk honestly towards them that are without, and that you want nothing of any man’s.” Those also whom he notes as disorderly and rebellious, from these he charges those who are earnest to separate themselves: “That ye withdraw yourselves,” says he, “from every brother that walketh disorderly and not according to the tradition which they received from us.”

St. John Cassian: The Institutes, book 10, 21.

28:20 A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that makes haste to be rich shall not be innocent.

vs. 20: The true way to be happy, is to be holy and honest; not to raise an estate suddenly, without regard to right or wrong.

Verse 20. He that maketh haste to be rich — See chap. 13:11; 20:21.

28:20

When they burn to be filled at once with all manner of wealth, let them hear what is written, He that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent (Proverbs 28:20): for certainly he who goes about to increase wealth is negligent in avoiding sin; and, being caught after the manner of birds, while looking greedily at the bait of earthly things, he is not aware in what a noose of sin he is being strangled, When they desire any gains of the present world, and are ignorant of the losses they will suffer in the world to come, let them hear what is written, An inheritance to which haste is made in the beginning in the last end shall lack blessing (Proverbs 20:21). For indeed we derive our beginning from this life, that we may come in the end to the lot of blessing. They, therefore, that make haste to an inheritance in the beginning cut off from themselves the lot of blessing in the end; since, while they crave to be increased in goods here through the iniquity of avarice, they become disinherited there of their eternal patrimony.

Fr. Gregory (the Great), Pastoral Rule, 20.

28:21 To have respect of persons is not good: for for a piece of bread that man will transgress.

vs. 21: Judgment is perverted, when any thing but pure right is considered.

28:22 *He that hastes to be rich hath an evil eye, and considers not that poverty shall come upon him.*

vs. 22: He that hastens to be rich, never seriously thinks how quickly God may take his wealth from him, and leave him in poverty.

28:23 *He that rebukes a man afterwards shall find more favor than he that flatters with the tongue.*

vs. 23: Upon reflection, most will have a better opinion of a faithful reprover than of a soothing flatterer.

28:24 Whoso robs his father or his mother, and saith, It is no transgression; the same is the companion of a destroyer.

vs. 24: Here is the wickedness of those who think it no sin to rob their parents, by wheedling them or threatening them, or by wasting what they have, and running into debt.

Verse 24. Whoso robbeth his father — The father's property is as much his own, in reference to the child, as that of the merest stronger. He who robs his parents is worse than a common robber; to the act of dishonesty and rapine he adds ingratitude, cruelty, and disobedience. Such a person is the compatriot of a destroyer; he may be considered as a murderer.

28:25 *He that is of a proud heart stirs up strife: but he that putteth his trust in the LORD shall be made fat.*

vs. 25: Those make themselves always easy, that live in continual dependence upon God and his grace, and live by faith.

Verse 25. Shall be made fat. — Shall be prosperous.

28:26 *He that trusts in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walks wisely, he shall be delivered.*

vs. 26: A fool trusts to his own strength, merit, and righteousness. And trusts to his own heart, which is not only deceitful above all things, but which has often deceived him.

Verse 26. He that trusts in his own heart is a fool — For his heart, which is deceitful and desperately wicked, will infallibly deceive him.

28:27 *He that gives unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hides his eyes shall have many a curse.*

Verse 27. He that gives unto the poor — See the notes on the passages referred to in the margin.

vs. 27: A selfish man not only will not look out for objects of compassion, but will look off from those that call for his attention.

28:28 *When the wicked rise, men hide themselves: but when they perish, the righteous increase.*

vs. 28: When power is put into the hands of the wicked, wise men decline public business. If the reader will go diligently over this and the other chapters, in many places where at first he may suppose there is least of Christ, still he will find what will lead to him.

CHAPTER 29

Those who never regard the Word of God are an easy prey to the enemy of souls. A confidence in God and His Word enables one to look with gracious contempt upon the most formidable design of the devil, and will keep one in the way of duty, and above the fear of man.

We must not despise correction. The prudent king. The flatterer. The just judge. Contend not with a fool. The prince who opens his ears to reports. The poor and the deceitful. The pious king. The insolent servant. The humiliation of the proud. Of the partner of a thief. The fear of man. The Lord the righteous Judge.

29:1 *He, that being often reproved hardens his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.*

Verse 1. Hardeneth his neck — Becomes stubborn and obstinate.

Vs. 1: If God wounds, who can heal? The word of God warns all to flee from the wrath to come, to the hope set before us in Jesus Christ.

29:2 *When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked bears rule, the people mourn.*

vs. 2: The people have cause to rejoice or mourn, as their rulers are righteous or wicked.

29:3 *Whoso loves wisdom rejoices his father: but he that keeps company with harlots spends his substance.*

Verse 3. But he that keepeth company — h[r] roeh, he that feedeth harlots, dbay yeabed, shall utterly destroy his substance. Has there ever been a single case to the contrary?

vs. 3: Divine wisdom best keeps us from ruinous lusts.

29:4 *The king by judgment establishes the land: but he that receives gifts overthrows it.*

Verse 4. He that receiveth gifts — This was notoriously the case in this kingdom, before the passing of the Magna Charta, or great charter of liberties. Hence that article in it, Nulli vendemus justitiam; “We will not sell justice to any.” I have met with cases in our ancient records where, in order to get his right, a man was obliged almost to ruin himself in presents to the king, queen, and their favourites, to get the case decided in his favor.

vs. 4: The Lord Jesus is the King who will minister true judgment to the people.

29:5 *A man that flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet.*

vs. 5: Flatterers put men off their guard, which betrays them into foolish conduct.

Verse 5. Spreadeth a net for his feet. — Beware of a flatterer; he does not flatter merely to please you, but to deceive you and profit himself.

29:6 *In the transgression of an evil man there is a snare: but the righteous doth sing and rejoice.*

vs. 6: Transgressions always end in vexations. Righteous men walk at liberty, and walk in safety.

29:7 *The righteous considers the cause of the poor: but the wicked regards not to know it.*

vs. 7: This verse is applicable to compassion for the distress of the poor, and the unfeeling disregard shown by the wicked.

29:7 Vulgate

Likewise, touching that which is written, “A son which receiveth the word shall be far from destruction: but receiving, he receiveth it for himself, and no falsehood proceedeth out of his mouth:” some one may say, that what is here set down, “A son which receiveth the word,” is to be taken for no other than the word of God, which is truth. Therefore, “A son receiving the truth shall be far from destruction,” refers to that which is written, “Thou wilt destroy all that speak leasing.” But when it follows, “Receiving he receiveth for himself,” what other doth this insinuate than what the Apostle saith, “But let every man prove his own work, and then he shall have glorying in himself and not in another?” (Gal. 6:4) For he that receiveth the word, that is, truth, not for himself, but for men-pleasing, keepeth it not when he sees they can be pleased by a lie. But whoso receiveth it for himself, no falsehood proceedeth out of his mouth: because even when the way to please men is to lie, that man lieth not, who receiving the truth not thereby to please them but to please God, hath received it for himself.

St. Augustine: O n Lying, 37.

29:7 Vulgate

These sons of Jerusalem on high, and of the holy city eternal, if ever, as they be men, a lie of what kind soever doth worm itself into them, they ask humbly for pardon, not therefrom seek moreover glory.

St. Augustine: To Consentius: Against Lying, 33.

29:8 *Scornful men bring a city into a snare: but wise men turn away wrath.*

vs. 8: The scornful mock at things sacred and serious. Men who promote religion, which is true wisdom, turn away the wrath of God.

29:9 If a wise man contends with a foolish man, whether he rage or laugh, there is no rest.

vs. 9: If a wise man dispute with a conceited wrangler, he will be treated with anger or ridicule; and no good is done.

Verse 9. Whether he rage or laugh — Coverdale translates, “Yf a wyse man go to lawe with a foole, whether he deale with him frendly or roughly he geteth no rest.”

29:9

In saying, “He will not be corrected by words,” he did not order him to be left to himself, but implied an admonition as to the means whereby he ought to be corrected; otherwise he would not have said, “He will not be corrected by words,” but without any qualification, “He will not be corrected.” For in another place he says that not only the servant, but also the undisowned son, must be corrected with stripes, and that with great fruits as the result; for he says, “Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shall deliver his soul from hell; “ and elsewhere he says, “He that spareth the rod hateth his son.”

Correction of the Donatists, 6:21.

29:10 The bloodthirsty hate the upright: but the just seek his soul.

vs. 10: Christ told his disciples that they should be hated of all men. The just, whom the blood-thirsty hate, gladly do any thing for their salvation.

29:11 A fool utters all his mind: but a wise man keeps it in till afterwards.

vs. 11: He is a fool who tells every thing he knows, and can keep no counsel.

Verse 11. A fool uttereth all his mind. A man should be careful to keep his own secret, and never tell his whole mind upon any subject, while there are other opinions yet to be delivered; else, if he speak again, he must go over his old ground; and as he brings out nothing new, he injures his former argument. 1834

29:11

Therefore the Lord pointed out patience as the guardian of our state, in that He taught us to possess ourselves in it. Thus we learn how great is the sin of impatience, through which we lose the very possession of what we are. Let the impatient hear what is said again through Solomon; A fool uttereth all his mind, but a wise man putteth it off, and reserves it until afterwards (Proverbs 29:11). For one is so driven by the impulse of impatience as to utter forth the whole mind, which the perturbation within throws out the more quickly for this reason, that no discipline of wisdom fences it round. But the wise man puts it off, and reserves it till afterwards. For, when injured, he desires not to avenge himself at the present time, because in his tolerance he even wishes that men should be spared; but yet he is not ignorant that all things are righteously avenged at the last judgment.

Fr. Gregory (the Great), Pastoral Rule, 9

29:11

WE ought then to restrain every movement of anger and moderate it under the direction of discretion, that we may not by blind rage be hurried into that which is condemned by Solomon: “The wicked man expends all his anger, but the wise man dispenses it bit by bit,” i.e., a fool is inflamed by the passion of his anger to avenge himself; but a wise man, by the ripeness of his counsel and moderation little by little diminishes it, and gets rid of it.

St. John Cassian: Conference 16:27.

29:12 If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked.

vs. 12: One who loves flatterers, and hearkens to slanderers, causes his servants to become liars and false accusers.

Verse 12. If a ruler hearken to lies — Wherever the system of espionage is permitted to prevail, there the system of falsity is established; for he who is capable of being a spy and informer, is not only capable of telling and swearing lies, but also of cutting his king’s or even his father’s throat. I have seen cases, where the same spy received pay from both parties, and deceived both.

29:13 The poor and the deceitful man meet together: the LORD lightens both their eyes.

vs. 13: Some are poor, others have a great deal of deceitful riches. They meet in the business of this world; the Lord gives to both the comforts of this life. To some of both sorts he gives his grace.

Verse 13. The poor and the deceitful man — It is difficult to fix the meaning of **מַיִקְקֵי** techachim, which we here render the deceitful man.

The TARGUM has, “The poor and the man of LITTLE WEALTH.” The SEPTUAGINT, “The usurer and the DEBTOR.” The VULGATE, “The poor and CREDITOR.” COVERDALE, “The poor and the LENDER.” OTHERS, “The poor and the RICH;” “The poor and the OPPRESSORS.” I suppose the meaning may be the same as in chap. 22:2: “The rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the Maker of them all.” Where see the note.

Verse 16. When the wicked are multiplied — That, in the multiplication of the wicked transgression is increased, requires no proof; but an important doctrine attaches to this. On this account wicked nations and wicked families are cut off and rooted out. Were it not so righteousness would in process of time be banished from the earth. This will account for many of the numerous instances in which whole families fail.

29:14 *The king that faithfully judges the poor, his throne shall be established for ever.*

vs. 14: The rich will look to themselves, but the poor and needy the prince must defend and plead for.

29:15 *The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself brings his mother to shame.*

vs. 15: Parents must consider the benefit of due correction, and the mischief of undue indulgence.

29:16 *When the wicked are multiplied, transgression increases: but the righteous shall see their fall.*

vs. 16: Let not the righteous have their faith and hope shocked by the increase of sin and sinners, but let them wait with patience.

29:16 LXX

When the impious fall the righteous tremble. He should be grieved over as a limb cut from the body.

St. Basil the Great: Letter 22:3.

29:17 *Correct your son, and he shall give you rest; yea, he shall give delight unto your soul.*

vs. 17: Children must not be suffered to go without rebuke when they do amiss.

29:18 *Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keeps the law, happy is he.*

Verse 18. Where there is no vision — My old MS. Bible, following the Vulgate, translates: “Whan prophecye schal failen, the peple schal ben to scatered”. Where Divine revelation, and the faithful preaching of the sacred testimonies, are neither revered nor attended, the ruin of that land is at no great distance.

But he that keepeth the law, happy is he. — Go how it may with others, he shall be safe. So our Lord: “Blessed are they who hear the word of God, and keep it.”

vs. 18: How bare does a place look without Bibles and ministers! and what an easy prey is it to the enemy of souls! That gospel is an open vision, which holds forth Christ, which humbles the sinner and exalts the Savior, which promotes holiness in the life and conversation: and these are precious truths to keep the soul alive, and prevent it from perishing.

29:19 *A servant will not be corrected by words: for yough he understand he will not answer.*

vs. 19: Here is an unprofitable, slothful, wicked servant; one that serves not from conscience, or love, but from fear.

29:20 *Seest you a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him.*

vs. 20: When a man is self-conceited, rash, and given to wrangling, there is more hope of the ignorant and profligate.

29:21 *He that delicately brings up his servant from a child shall have him become his son at the length.*

Verse 21. He that delicately bringeth up his servant — Such persons are generally forgetful of their obligations, assume the rights and privileges of children, and are seldom good for any thing.

vs. 21: Good usage to a servant does not mean indulgence, which would ruin even a child. The body is a servant to the soul; those that humor it, and are over-tender of it, will find it forget its place.

29:22 *An angry man stirs up strife, and a furious man abounds in transgression.*

Verse 22. An angry man stirreth up strife — His spirit begets its like wherever he goes. 1835

And a furious man aboundeth in transgression. — His furious spirit is always carrying him into extremes, and each of these is a transgression.

vs. 22: An angry, passionate disposition makes men provoking to one another, and provoking to God.

29:23 *A man's pride shall bring him low: but honor shall uphold the humble in spirit.*

vs. 23: Only those who humble themselves shall be exalted and established.

29:24 *Whoso is partner with a thief hates his own soul: he hears cursing, and bewrays it not.*

Verse 23. A man's pride shall bring him low — A proud man is universally despised, and such are often exposed to great mortifications.

Verse 24. Hateth his own soul — **wꝛpn** naphsho, his life, as the outraged law may at any time seize on and put him to death.

He heareth cursing — **hla** alah, the execration or adjuration, (for all culprits were charged, as before God, to tell the truth,) **dgy alw** velo yagpid, but HE will not tell IT. He has no fear of God, nor reverence for an oath, because his heart is hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

vs. 24: The receiver is as bad as the thief.

29:25 The fear of man brings a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.

vs. 25: Many are ashamed to own Christ now; and he will not own them in the day of judgment. But he that trusts in the Lord will be saved from this snare.

Verse 25. The fear of man bringeth a snare — How often has this led weak men, yough sincere in their general character, to deny their God, and abjure his people! See the case of Peter; and learn from this, O reader, that where the mighty have been slain, you wilt fall, unless you call on the Strong for strength, and for courage to use it. Be not ashamed of JESUS nor of his people, nor of his cross. Glory in this, that you knowest him, art joined to them, and art counted worthy to bear it.

29:26 Many seek the ruler's favor; but every man's judgment comes from the LORD.

vs. 26: The wisest course is, to look to God, and seek the favor of the Ruler of rulers; for every creature is that to us which God makes it to be.

Verse 26. Many seek the ruler's favor — To be screened from the punishment determined by the law; but should he grant the favor sought, and pardon the criminal, this takes not away his guilt in the sight of God, from whom all just judgment proceeds.

29:27 An unjust man is an abomination to the just: and he that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked.

Verse 27. And he that is upright in the way — “But as for those that be in the right waye, the wicked hate them.” — COVERDALE.

To this verse the VULGATE adds the following: Verbum custodiens filius extra perditionem erit; “The son that keeps the word shall not fall into perdition.” This is not in all copies of the Vulgate: but it was in that from which my old MS. Bible was made, where it is thus translated: “The sone keping the worde schal ben out of perdicyon”. I believe verbum here is intended for the Divine word; the revelation from God.

vs. 27: The just man abhors the sins of the wicked, and shuns their company. Christ exposed the wickedness of men, yet prayed for the wicked when they were crucifying him. Hatred to sin in ourselves and others, is a needful branch of the Christian temper. But all that are unholy, have rooted hatred to godliness.

30:23

He should have imitated the ant, he should have heard the Word of God, he should have gathered together grains, and he should have stored them within. There had come the trial of tribulation, there had come upon him a winter of numbness, tempest of fear, the cold of sorrow, whether it were loss, or any danger to his safety, or any bereavement of his family; or any dishonor and humiliation; it was winter; the ant falleth back upon that which in summer she hath gathered together; and within in her secret store, where no man seeth, she is recruited by her summer toils. When for herself she was gathering together these stores in summer, all men saw her: when on these she feedeth in winter, no one seeth. What is this? See the ant of God, he riseth day by day, he haveeneth to the Church of God, he prayeth, he heareth lection, he chanteth hymn, he digesteth that which he hath heard, with himself he thinketh thereon, he storeth within grains gathered from the threshing-floor. They that providently hear those very things which even now are being spoken of, do thus, and by all men are seen to go forth to the Church, go back from Church, to hear sermon, to hear lection, to choose a book, open and read it: all these things are seen, when they are done. That ant is treading his path, carrying and storing up in the sight of men seeing him. There cometh winter sometime, for to whom cometh it not? There chanceth loss, there chanceth bereavement: other men pity him perchance as being miserable, who know not what the ant hath within to eat, and they say, miserable he whom this hath befallen, or what spirits, dost You think, hath he whom this hath befallen? how afflicted is he? He measureth by himself, hath compassion according to his own strength; and thus he is deceived: because the measure wherewith he measureth himself, he would apply to him whom he knoweth not... O sluggard, gather in summer while You art able; winter will not suffer thee to gather, but to eat that which You shall have gathered. For how many men so suffer tribulation, that there is no opportunity either to read anything, or to hear anything, and they obtain no admittance, perchance, to those that would comfort them. The ant hath remained in her nest, let her see if she hath gathered anything in summer, whereby she may recruit herself in winter.

St. Augustine: On the Psalms, 67:3.

CHAPTER 30

God's Word is sure and pure, and venturing our souls upon it, we shall find it a shield against temptations, a safe protection in the midst of greatest dangers. God will certainly reckon with any who presume to add to His word, or advance anything with competition with it.

It is God who has gathered the winds in His fists and His name is "I am that I am" (Ex. 3:14), a name to be adored, not to be understood. He has a Son, Jesus Christ, whose name was to be called "Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, Prince of peace." By Him, God made all that was made, and by Him He controls all things.

Agur's confession of faith, 1-6.

His prayer, 7-9.

Of wicked generations, 10-14.

Things that are never satisfied, 15, 16.

Of him who despises his parents, 17.

Three wonderful things, 18-20.

Three things that disquiet the land, 21-23.

Four little but very intelligent animals, 24-28. Four things that go well, 29-31.

A man should cease from doing foolishly, and from strife, 32, 33.

30:1 The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, even the prophecy: the man spake unto Ithiel, even unto Ithiel and Ucal,

Verse 1. The words of Agur the son of Jakeh — The words Agur, Jakeh, Ithiel, and Ucal, have been considered by some as proper names: by others, as descriptive characters. With some, Agur is Solomon; and Jakeh, David; and Ithiel and Ural are epithets of Christ.

The Vulgate translates, Verba congregantis filii vomentis: visio, quam locutus est sir, cum quo est Deus, et qui Deo secum morante confortatus, ait. "The words of the collector, the son of the vomiter: the vision of the man who has God with him, and who is fortified by God dwelling with him, saith."

COVERDALE makes the following words a title to the chapter:

"The wordes of Agur the sonne of Jake.

"The prophecie of a true faithfull man, whom God hath helped; whom God hath comforted and nourished."

The whole might be thus translated, keeping near to the letter: —

“The words of the epistle of the obedient son.” Or,

“The words of the collector, the son of Jakeh. The parable which rbgh haggeber, the strong man, the hero, spake unto him who is God with me; to him who is God with me, even the strong God.” 1837

“The visoun that a man spake with whiche is God, and that God with him, wonyng confortid”. — Old MS. Bible.

From this introduction, from the names here used, and from the style of the book, it appears evident that Solomon was not the author of this chapter; and that it was designed to be distinguished from his work by this very preface, which specifically distinguishes it from the preceding work. Nor can the words in ver. 2, 3, 8, 9, be at all applied to Solomon: they suit no part of Solomon’s life, nor of his circumstances. We must, therefore, consider it an appendix or supplement to the preceding collection; something in the manner of that part which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah, had collected. As to mysteries here, many have been found by them who sought for nothing else; but they are all, in my view of the subject, hazarded and precarious. I believe Agur, Jakeh, Ithiel, and Ural, to be the names of persons who did exist, but of whom we know nothing but what is here mentioned. Agur seems to have been a public teacher, and Ithiel and Ucal to have been his scholars; and what he delivers to them was done by prophesy. It was what the prophets generally term **am** massa, an ORACLE, something immediately delivered by the Holy Spirit for the benefit of man.

30:2 Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man.

Verse 2. Surely I am more brutish — These words can in no sense, nor by any mode of speech, be true of Solomon: for while he was the wisest of men, he could not have said that he was more brutish than any man, and had not the understanding of a man. It is saying nothing to the purpose, to say he was so independently of the Divine teaching. Had he put this in, even by innuendo, it might be legitimate: but he does not; nor is it by fair implication to be understood. Solomon is not supposed to have written the Proverbs after he fell from God. Then indeed he might have said he had been more brutish than any man. But Agur might have used these words with strict propriety, for aught we know; for it is very probable that he was a rustic, wiyout education, and wiyout any human help, as was the prophet Amos; and that all that he knew now was by the inspiration of the Almighty, independently of which he was rustic and uneducated.

30:2

Wherefore also Moses says, “ Show Thyself to me,” — intimating most clearly that God is not capable of being taught by man, or expressed in speech, but to be known only by His own power. For inquiry was obscure and dim; but the grace of knowledge is from Him by the Son. Most clearly Solomon shall testify to us, speaking thus: “The prudence of man is not in me: but God giveth me wisdom, and I know holy things.” Now Moses, describing allegorically the divine prudence, called it the tree of life planted in Paradise; which Paradise may be the world in which all things proceeding from creation grow. In it also the Word blossomed and bore fruit, being “made flesh,” and gave life to those “who had tasted of His graciousness;” since it was not without the wood of the tree that He came to our knowledge. For our life was hung on it, in order that we might believe. And Solomon again says: “She is a tree of immortality to those who take hold of her.” “Behold, I set before thy face life and death, to love the LORD thy God, and to walk in His ways, and hear His voice, and trust in life. But if ye transgress the statutes and the judgments which I have given you, ye shall be destroyed with destruction. For this is life, and the length of thy days, to love the LORD thy God” (Deut. 30:15,16).

St. Clement of Alexandria: Stromata 5:11.

30:3 I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy.

ver. 3. 1839

The Arabic has, What is his names [A] and what is the name of his father? him who begat him. But the Chaldee, the Syriac, and the Vulgate, read as the Hebrew.

Many are of opinion that Agur refers here to the first and second persons of the everblessed TRINITY. It may be so; but who would venture to rest the proof of that most glorious doctrine upon such a text, to say nothing of the obscure author? The doctrine is true, sublimely true; but many doctrines have suffered in controversy, by improper texts being urged in their favor. Every lover of God and truth should be very choice in his selections, when he comes forward in behalf of the more mysterious doctrines of the Bible. Quote nothing that is not clear: advance nothing that does not tell. When we are obliged to spend a world of critical labor, in order to establish the sense of a

text which we intend to allege in favor of the doctrine we wish to support, we may rest assured that we are going the wrong way to work. Those who indiscriminately amass every text of Scripture they think bears upon the subject they defend, give their adversaries great advantage against them. I see many a sacred doctrine suffering through the bad judgment of its friends every day. The Godhead of Christ, salvation by faith, the great atoning sacrifice, and other essential doctrines of this class, are all suffering in this way. My heart says, with deep concern, *Non tali auxilio, nec defensoribus istis, Tempus eget.*

When truth is assailed by all kinds of weapons, handled by the most powerful foes, injudicious defenders may be ranked among its enemies. To such we may innocently say,

“Keep your cabins; you do assist the storm.”

Verse 3. I neither learned wisdom — I have never been a scholar in any of those schools of the wise men, nor have the knowledge of the holy, kedoshim, of the saints or holy persons. 1838

The Septuagint give this a different turn: yeov dedidace me sofan, kai gnwsin agiwn egnwka; “God hath taught me wisdom, and the knowledge of the saints I have known.”

This may refer to the patriarchs, prophets, or holy men, that lived before the days of Solomon. That is, the translators might have had these in view.

30:4 *Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his son’s name, if you canst tell?*

Verse 4. Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? — Calmet paraphrases this passage thus: “Who hath descended, etc. In order to show the truth of what he was about to say, he observes: I have not the science of the saints; for how could I have acquired it? Who is he who could attain to that? Who has ascended to heaven to learn that science, and who has descended in order to publish it? Is the science of salvation one of those things that can be apprehended only by study? Is it not a pure gift of the goodness of God? Moses, after having shown to the people the will of God, said to them: ‘This commandment which I command you this day is not hidden from you; neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?’ Deuteronomy 30:11, 12. The person whose words we are here examining speaks a knowledge more sublime than that contained in the simple laws of the Lord, common to all the people of Israel. He speaks of the sublime science of the designs of God, of his ways, and of his secrets; and in this sense he affirms he has no knowledge.”

Who hath gathered the wind in his fists? — It is as difficult for a mortal man to acquire this Divine science by his own reason and strength, as to collect the winds in his fists. And who can command the spirit of prophecy, so that he can have it whensoever he pleases?

What is his name? — Show me the nature of this Supreme Being. Point out his eternity, omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence; comprehend and describe him, if you canst.

What is his son’s name — Some copies of the Septuagint have *h ti onoma toiv tiknoio autou*; “Or the name of his sons;” meaning, I suppose, the holy angels, called his saints or holy ones,

vs. 4: there is a prophetic notice of Him who came down from heaven to be our Instructor and Savior, and then ascended into heaven to be our Advocate. The Messiah is here spoken of as a Person distinct from the Father, but his name as yet secret. The great Redeemer, in the glories of his providence and grace, cannot be found out to perfection. Had it not been for Christ, the foundations of the earth had sunk under the load of the curse upon the ground, for man’s sin. Who, and what is the mighty One that doeth all this? There is not the least ground to suspect anything wanting in the word of God; adding to his words opens the way to errors and corruptions.

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When truth is assailed by all kinds of weapons, handled by the most powerful foes, injudicious defenders may be ranked among its enemies. To such we may innocently say,

“Keep your cabins; you do assist the storm.”

Proverbs 30:7

30:5 Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.

Verse 5. Every word of God is pure — *hpwrx hwla trma lk col*

imrath eloah tseruphah, “Every oracle of God is purified.” A metaphor taken from the purifying of metals. Every thing that God has pronounced, every inspiration which the prophets have received, is pure, wiyout mixture of error, wiyout dross. Whatever trials it may be exposed to, it is always like gold: it bears the fire, and comes out with the same lustre, the same purity, and the same weight.

The Septuagint give this a different turn: *yeov dedidace me sofian, kai gnwsin agiwn egnwka*; “God hath taught me wisdom, and the knowledge of the saints I have known.”

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He is a shield unto them — And this oracle among the rest. “He is the defense of all them that put their trust in him.” *lkl lechol*, to all, is added

here by nineteen of Kennicott’s and De Rossi’s MSS.; for instead of

mysjl lachosim, to the trusters, they read *myswjh lkl lechol*

hachosim, “to EVERY ONE of them that trust.” Where the preposition and adjective are not only added, but the noun is written more full, and more emphatic: but a translation cannot well express it wiyout paraphrase.

30:6 Add you not unto his words, lest he reprove you, and you be found a liar.

Vs. 1-6: Agur speaks of himself as wanting a righteousness, and having done very foolishly. And it becomes us all to have low thoughts of ourselves. He speaks of himself as wanting revelation to guide him in the ways of truth and wisdom. The more enlightened people are, the more they lament their ignorance; the more they pray for clearer, still clearer discoveries of God, and his rich grace in Christ Jesus. In ver.

Verse 6. Add not you unto his words — You can no more increase their value by any addition, than you can that of gold by adding any other metal to it. Take care that you do not any thing that this word forbids, nor leave undone any thing that it commands: for this is adding and diminishing in Scripture phrase.

Lest he reprove you — Lest he try thy word by fire, as his has been tried; and it appear that, far from abiding the test, the fire shows thine to be reprobate silver; and so you be found a falsifier of God's word, and a liar.

How amply has this been fulfilled in the case of the Romish Church! It has added all the gross stuff in the Apocrypha, besides innumerable legends and traditions, to the word of God! They have been tried by the refiner's fire. And this Church has been reprov'd, and found to be a liar, in attempting to filiate on the most holy God spurious writings discreditable to his nature.

Verse 7. Two things have I required of you — These two petitions are mentioned in the next verse; and he wishes to have them answered before he should die. That is, he wishes the answer now, that he may live the rest of his life in the state he describes.

Verse 8. Remove far from me vanity and lies. — 1. **awḡ** shav, all false shows, all false appearances of happiness, every vain expectation. Let me not set my heart on any thing that is not solid, true, durable, and eternal. 2. Lies, **bzk rbd** debar cazab, all words of deception, empty pretensions, false promises, uncertain dependences, and words that FAIL; promises which, when they become due, are like bad bills; they are dishonored because they are found to be forged, or the drawer insolvent. From the import of the original, I am satisfied that Agur prays against idolatry, false religion, and false worship of every kind. **awḡ** shau is used

for an idol, a false god. Jeremiah 18:15: "My people have forsaken me; they have burnt incense to VANITY;" **awḡl** lashshav, "to an IDOL." Psalm

31:6: "I have hated them that regard lying VANITIES;" **awḡ ylbh** habley shave, "vain IDOLS." See also Hosea 12:11; Jonah 2:8. And **bzk** cazab, a thing that fails or deceives, may well apply to the vain pretensions, false promises, and deceptive religious rites of idolatry. So Jeremiah 15:18: "Wilt you be unto me as a liar," **bzka wmk** kemo achzob, like the false, failing promises of the false gods; "and as waters that fail;" **wnman al** lo neemanu, that are not faithful; not like the true God, whose promises never fail. According to this view of the subject, Agur prays, 1. That he may be preserved from idolatry. 2. That he may put no confidence in any words but those pure words of God that never fail them that trust in him.

Give me neither poverty nor riches — Here are three requests: 1. Give me not poverty. The reason is added: Lest, being poor, I shall get into a covetous spirit, and, impelled by want, distrust my Maker, and take my neighbour's property; and, in order to excuse, hide, or vindicate my conduct, I take the name of my God in vain; **ytḡpt** taphasti, "I catch at

the name of God." Or, by swearing falsely, endeavor to make myself pass for innocent. "Forswore the name of my God". — Old MS. Bible. Coverdale, "deny or apostatize from him."

2. Give me not riches. For which petition he gives a reason also: Lest I be full, and addict myself to luxurious living, pamper the flesh and starve the soul, and so deny you, the Fountain of goodness; and, if called on to resort to first principles, I say, Who is Jehovah! Why should I acknowledge, why should I serve him? And thus cast aside all religion, and all moral obligation.

3. The third request is, Feed me with food convenient for me, **yqj ṡjl ynpyrfh** hatripheni leechem chukki; the meaning of which is, "give me as prey my statute allowance of bread," i.e., my daily bread, a sufficient portion for each day. There is an allusion made to hunting: "Direct so by thy good providence, that I may each day find sufficient portion to subsist on, as a hunter in the forest prays that he may have good speed." It is the province of a preacher to show the importance and utility of such a prayer, and dilate the circumstances, and expand the reasons, after the commentator has shown the literal sense.

30:7 Two things have I required of you; deny me them not before I die:

30:8 Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me:

But, one says, “the wisdom of the poor man is despised.” (Ecclesiastes 9:16) And again another says, “Give me neither riches nor poverty” (**Proverbs 30:8**), and, “Deliver me from the furnace of poverty.” (See Isaiah 48:10) And again, if riches and poverty are from the Lord, how can either poverty or riches be an evil? Why then were these things said? They were said under the Old [Covenant], where there was much account made of wealth, where there was great contempt of poverty, where the one was a curse and the other a blessing. But now it is no longer so.

St. John Chrysostom: *Homilies on Hebrews*, 18.

30:8, 9

This competent portion he desires without impropriety who desires it and nothing beyond it; for if his desires go beyond it, he is not desiring it, and therefore his desire is improper. This was desired, and was prayed for by him who said: “Give me neither poverty nor riches: feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny Thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.” You see assuredly that this competency is desired not for its own sake, but to secure the health of the body, and such provision of house and clothing as is befitting the man’s circumstances, that he may appear as he ought to do among those amongst whom he has to live, so as to retain their respect and discharge the duties of his position.

St. Augustine: *Letter 130, ch. 6:12*.

30:8

When one says: “Give me, neither poverty nor riches,” what else is this than, Give us this day our daily bread “?”

St. Augustine: *Letter 130, ch. 12:22*.

On this account a certain wise man said, “Give me neither poverty nor riches.” (**Proverbs 30:8.**) However it is neither poverty nor riches, but the will that cannot use either of them. “Acknowledge,” he says, “that thou passest through the midst of snares.” (Ecclus. 9:13.).

St. John Chrysostom: *Homilies on 1 Thessalonians*, hom. 3.

0:9 Lest I be full, and deny you, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.

Vs. 7-9: Agur wisely prayed for a middle state, that he might be kept at a distance from temptations; he asked daily bread suited to his station, his family, and his real good. There is a remarkable similarity between this prayer and several clauses of the Lord’s prayer. If we are removed from vanity and lies; if we are interested in the pardoning love of Christ, and have him for our portion; if we walk with God, then we shall have all we can ask or think, as to spiritual things. When we consider how those who have abundance are prone to abuse the gift, and what it is to suffer want, Agur’s prayer will ever be found a wise one, yough seldom offered. Food convenient; what is so for one, may not be so for another; but we may be sure that our heavenly Father will supply all our need, and not suffer us to want anything good for us; and why should we wish for more?

Proverbs 30:10

30:10 Accuse not a servant unto his master, lest he curse you, and you be found guilty.

Vs. 10 Slander not a servant to his master, accuse him not in small matters, to make mischief.

Verse 10. Accuse not a servant — Do not bring a false accusation against a servant, lest you be found guilty of the falsehood, and he curse you for having traduced his character, and in his turn traduce thine. In general, do not meddle with other people’s servants.

30:11 There is a generation that curses their father, and doth not bless their mother.

Verse 11. There is a generation — There are such persons in the world. In this and the three following verses the wise man points out four grand evils that prevailed in his time.

The first, Those who not only did not honor, but who evil-treated, their parents.

30:12 There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.

Verse 12. The second, Those who were self-righteous, supposing themselves pure, and were not so.

30:13 There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up.

Verse 13. The third, Those who were full of vanity, pride, and insolence.

30:14 There is a generation, whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.

Verse 14. The fourth, The greedy, cruel, and oppressive, and, especially, oppressive to the poor.

vs. 11-14: In every age there are monsters of ingratitude who ill-treat their parents. Many persuade themselves they are holy persons, whose hearts are full of sin, and who practice secret wickedness. There are others whose lofty pride is manifest. There have also been cruel monsters in every age.

30:15 The horseleech hath two daughters, crying, Give, give. There are three things that are never satisfied, yea, four things say not, It is enough:

Verse 15. The horseleech hath two daughters, crying, Give, give. — “This horseleech,” says Calmet, “is COVETOUSNESS, and her two daughters are Avarice and Ambition. They never say, It is enough; they are never satisfied; they are never contented.”

Many explanations have been given of this verse; but as all the versions agree in rendering **hqwla** alukah the horseleech or blood-sucker, the

general meaning collected has been, “There are persons so excessively covetous and greedy, that they will scarcely let any live but themselves; and when they lay hold of any thing by which they may profit, they never let go their hold till they have extracted the last portion of good from it.” Horace has well expressed this disposition, and by the same emblem, applied to a poor poet, who seizes on and extracts all he can from an author of repute, and obliges all to hear him read his wretched verses. 1843

Quem vero arripuit, tenet, occiditque legendo, Non missura cutem, nisi plena cruoris,
HIRUDO. DE ARTE POET., ver. 475.

“But if he seize you, then the torture dread; He fastens on you till he reads you dead; And like a LEECH, voracious of his food, Quits not his cruel hold till gorged with blood.”

FRANCIS.

The word **hqwla** alukah, which we here translate horseleech, is read in no

other part of the Bible. May it not, like Agur, Jakeh, Ithiel, and Ucal, be a proper name, belonging to some well-known woman of his acquaintance, and well known to the public, who had two daughters notorious for their covetousness and lechery? And at first view the following verse may be thought to confirm this supposition: “There are three things that are never satisfied, yea, four things say not, It is enough.” The grave, the barren womb the earth, the fire. What an astonishing simiarity there is between this and the following institute, taken from the Code of Hindoo Laws, chap. xx., sec. i., p. 203.

“A woman is never satisfied with the copulation of man, no more than a fire is satisfied with burning fuel; or the main ocean is with receiving the rivers; or death, with the dying of men and animals.” You can no more satisfy these two daughters of Alukah than you can the grave, etc.

Some of the rabbins have thought that alukah signifies destiny, or the necessity of dying, which they say has two daughters, Eden and Gehenna, paradise and hell. The former has never enough of righteous souls; the latter, of the wicked. Similar to them is the opinion of Bochart, who thinks alukah means destiny, and the two daughters, the grave and hell; into the first of which the body descends after death, and into the second, the soul.

The Septuagint gives it a curious turn, by connecting the fifteenth with the sixteenth verse: *th bdellh yugaterev hsan agaphsei agapwmenai, kai ai treiv autai ouk enepimplasan authn, kai h tetarth ouk hrkesyh eipeinù ‘ikanon;* 1843

Quem vero arripuit, tenet, occiditque legendo, Non missura cutem, nisi plena cruoris,
HIRUDO. DE ARTE POET., ver. 475.

“But if he seize you, then the torture dread; He fastens on you till he reads you dead; And like a LEECH, voracious of his food, Quits not his cruel hold till gorged with blood.”

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other part of the Bible. May it not, like Agur, Jakeh, Ithiel, and Ucal, be a proper name, belonging to some well-known woman of his acquaintance, and well known to the public, who had two daughters notorious for their covetousness and lechery? And at first view the following verse may be thought to confirm this supposition: “There are three things that are never satisfied, yea, four things say not, It is enough.” The grave, the barren womb the

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CHAUCER’S January and May is an excellent comment on such wiles and protestations.

The way of a man with a maid. — hml[b bealmah with or in a maid; but

one of De Rossi’s MSS. has wymb[b bealmaiv, in his youth; and with this the SEPTUAGINT, ev neothti, the VULGATE, in adolescentia, the SYRIAC and the ARABIC agree; and so also my own MS. Bible: — “The weie of a man in his waxing youthe”. Dr. Kennicott, in a sermon preached at Onsford, 1765, p. 46, has defended the reading of the versions, corroborating it by two MSS., one in the Harleian, and the other in the Bodleian library, besides that mentioned by De Rossi. See De Rossi’s Var. Lect. Certainly the way of a man in his youth contains too many intricacies for human wisdom to explore. He only who searches the heart knows fully its various corrupt principles, and their productions. The common reading may refer to the formation of a child in the womb. But some have understood it of the immaculate conception. See my note on Matthew 1:23, where the subject is largely considered.

If we take the four things which Agur says were too wonderful for him, in their obvious sense, there is little difficulty in them. 1. The passage which a bird makes through the air; 2. That which is made by a serpent on a rock; and, 3. That made by a ship through the sea, are such as cannot be ascertained: for who can possibly show the track in which either of them has passed? And as to the fourth, if it refer to the suspected incontinence of one reputed a virgin, the signs are so equivocal, as to be absolutely unascertainable. The existence of the hymen has been denied by the ablest anatomists; and the signs of continence or incontinence, except in the most recent cases, are such as neither man nor woman can swear to, even to the present day; and they were certainly not less difficult to Agur and his contemporaries. I shall carry this matter no farther.

30:15

As to the horse-leech. There were three daughters fondly loved by sin — fornication, murder, and idolatry. These three did not satisfy her, for she is not to be satisfied. In destroying man by these actions, sin never varies, but only grows continually. For the fourth, he continues, is never content to say “enough,” meaning that it is universal lust. In naming the “fourth,” he intends lust in the universal. For as the body is one, and yet has many members; so also sin, being one, contains within it many various lusts by which it lays its snares for men. Wherefore, in order to teach us this, he uses the examples of Sheol (Hades), and the love of women, and hell (Tartarus), and the earth that is not filled with water. And water and fire, indeed, will never say, “It is enough.” And the grave (Hades) in no wise ceases to receive the souls of unrighteous men; nor does the love of sin, in the instance of the love of women, cease to be given to fornication, and it becomes the betrayer of the soul. And as Tartarus, which is situated in a doleful and dark locality, is not touched by a ray of light, so is every one who is the slave of sin in all the passions of the flesh Like the earth not filled with water he is never able to come to confession, and to the laver of regeneration, and like water and fire, never says, “It is enough.”

From the Commentary of St. Hippolytus on Proverbs

30:16 The grave; and the barren womb; the earth that is not filled with water; and the fire that saith not, It is enough.

30:17 The eye that mocks at his father, and despises to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.

vs. 15-17: Cruelty and covetousness are two daughters of the horseleech, that still cry, “Give, give,” and they are continually uneasy to themselves. Four things never are satisfied, to which these devours are compared. Those are never rich that are always coveting. And many who have come to a bad end, have owned that their wicked courses began by despising their parents’ authority.

30:17

“The eye that mocketh at his father, and dishonors the old age of his mother.” That is to say, one that blasphemes God and despises the mother of Christ, the wisdom of God, — his eyes may ravens from the caves tear out, i.e., him may unclean and wicked spirits deprive of the clear eye of gladness; and may the young eagles devour him: and such shall be trodden under the feet of the saints.

From the Commentary of St. Hippolytus on Proverbs

30:18 There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not:

30:18

“There be three things which I cannot understand, and the fourth I know not: the tracks of an eagle flying,” i.e., Christ’s ascension; “and the ways of a serpent upon a rock,” i.e., that the devil did not find a trace of sin in the body of Christ; “and the ways of a ship crossing the sea,” i.e., the ways of the Church, which is in this life as in a sea, and which is directed by her hope in Christ through the cross; “and the ways of a man in youth,” — the ways of Him, namely, who is born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin. For behold, says the Scripture, a man whose name is the Rising.

From the Commentary of St. Hippolytus on Proverbs

30:19 The way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with a maid.

30:19

For as a serpent cannot mark its track upon a rock, so the devil could not find sin in the body of Christ. For the Lord says, “Behold, the prince of this world cometh, and will find nothing in me.” — For as a ship, sailing in the sea, leaves no traces of her way behind her, so neither does the Church, which is situate in the world as in a sea, leave her hope upon the earth, because she has her life reserved in heaven; and as she holds her way here only for a short time, it is not possible to trace out her course. — As the Church does not leave her hope behind in the world, her hope in the incarnation of Christ which bears us all good, she did not leave the track of death in Hades. — Of whom but of Him who is born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin? — who, in renewing the perfect man in the world, works miracles, beginning from the baptism of John, as the Evangelist also testifies: And Jesus was then beginning to be about thirty years of age. This, then, was the youthful and blooming period of the age of Him who, in journeying among the cities and districts, healed the diseases and infirmities of men.

From the Commentary of St. Hippolytus on Proverbs

30:20 Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eats, and wipes her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness.

vs. 18-20: Four things cannot be fully known. The kingdom of nature is full of marvels. The fourth is a mystery of iniquity; the cursed arts by which a vile seducer gains the affection of a female; and the arts which a vile woman uses to conceal her wickedness.

30:20

“Such is the way of an adulterous woman, who, when she has done the deed of sin, wipeth herself, and will say that no wickedness has been done.” Such is the conduct of the Church that believes on Christ, when, after committing fornication with idols, she renounces these and the devil, and is cleansed of her sins and receives forgiveness, and then asserts that she has done no wickedness.

From the Commentary of St. Hippolytus on Proverbs

30:21 For three things the earth is disquieted, and for four which it cannot bear:

vs. 21-23 Four sorts of persons are very troublesome. Men of low origin and base spirit, who, getting authority, become tyrants. Foolish and violent men indulging in excesses. A woman of a contentious spirit and vicious habits. A servant who has obtained undue influence. Let those whom Providence has advanced from low beginnings, carefully watch against that sin which most easily besets them.

Verse 21. For three things the earth is disquieted, and for four which it cannot bear — This is another enigma. Four things insupportable to men. 1. A slave, when he becomes ruler. 2. An overfed fool. 3. An ill-tempered woman, when mistress of a family. And, 4. A servant maid, when the rule of the house is committed to her.

1. A slave, when he comes to bear rule, is an unprincipled tyrant. It has been often observed both in America and in the West Indies, when it was judged necessary to arm some of the most confidential slaves, that no regiments were used so cruelly in the drill, etc., as those black regiments that had black officers.

2. The overfed fool. The intellectually weak man, who has every thing at his command, has generally manners which none can bear; and, if a favourite with his master, he is insupportable to all others.

3. An ill-tempered woman, when she gets embarrassed with domestic cares, is beyond bearing.

4. A servant maid, when, either through the death of the mistress, or the sin of the husband, she is in fact exalted to be head over the family, is so insolent and impudent, as to be hateful to every one, and execrated by all.

30:21

The shaking (of the earth) signifies the change of things upon earth. — Sin, then, which in its own nature is a slave, has reigned in the mortal body of men: once, indeed, at the time of the flood; and again in the time of the Sodomites, who, not satisfied with what the land yielded, offered violence to strangers; and a third time in the case of hateful Egypt, which, though it obtained in Joseph a man who distributed food to all, that they might not perish of famine, yet did not take well with his prosperity, but persecuted the children of Israel. “The handmaid casting out her mistress:” i.e., the Church of the Gentiles, which, though itself a slave and a stranger to the promises, cast out the free-born and lordly synagogue, and became the wife and bride of Christ. By Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the whole earth is moved. The “fourth it cannot bear:” for He came first by lawgivers, and secondly by prophets, and thirdly by the Gospel, manifesting Himself openly; and in the fourth instance He shall come as the Judge of the living and the dead, whose glory the whole creation will not be able to endure.

From the Commentary of St. Hippolytus on Proverbs

30:21-23

“By three things the earth is moved,” viz., by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. “And the fourth it cannot bear,” viz., the last appearing of Christ. “When a servant reigneth:” Israel was a slave in Egypt, and in the land of promise became a ruler. “And a fool when he is filled with meat:” i.e., getting the land in possession readily, and eating its fruit, and being filled, it (the people) kicked. “And a handmaid when she casts out her mistress:” i.e., the synagogue which took the life of the Lord, and crucified the flesh of Christ.

From the Commentary of St. Hippolytus on Proverbs

30:22 For a servant when he reigns; and a fool when he is filled with meat;

30:23 For an odious woman when she is married; and an handmaid that is heir to her mistress.

30:24 There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise:

Verse 24. There be four things — Of which it is said, they are very little but very wise. 1. The ants. 2. The rabbits. 3. The locusts. 4. The spider.

1. The ants show their wisdom by preparing their meat in the summer, seeking for it and storing it when it may be had; not for winter consumption, for they sleep all that time; but for autumn and spring. See the note on chap. 6:6. The ants are a people; they have their houses, towns, cities, public roads, etc. I have seen several of these, both of the brown and large black ant.

2. The rabbits act curiously enough in the construction of their burrows; but the word **פֶּשָׁפָּשׁ** shaphan probably does not here mean the

animal we call coney or rabbit. It is most likely that this is what Dr. Shaw calls the Daman-Israel; a creature very like a rabbit, but never burrowing in the ground, but dwelling in clefts and holes of rocks.

3. The locusts. These surprising animals we have already met with and described. Yough they have no leader, yet they go forth by troops, some miles in circumference, when they take wing.

4. The spider. This is a singularly curious animal, both in the manner of constructing her house, her nets, and taking her prey. But the habits, etc., of these and such like must be sought in works on natural history.

30:24-28

“There be four things which are least upon the earth, and these are wiser than the wise: The ants have no strength, yet they prepare their meat in the summer.” And in like manner, the Gentiles by faith in Christ prepare for

themselves eternal life through good works. “And the conies, a feeble folk, have made their houses in the rocks.” The Gentiles, that is to say, are built upon Christ, the spiritual rock, which is become the head of the corner. “The spider, that supports itself upon its hands, and is easily caught, dwells in the strongholds of kings.” That is, the thief with his hands extended (on the cross), rests on the cross of Christ and dwells in Paradise, the stronghold of the three Kings — Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. “The locust has no king, and yet marches out in array as by one command.” The Gentiles had no king, for they were ruled by sin; but now, believing God, they engage in the heavenly warfare.

“From the Commentary of St. Hippolytus on Proverbs

30:25 The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer;

30:26 The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks;

30:26 LXX

And of these spiritual hedgehogs we read in Proverbs as follows: “And the hedgehogs are a feeble folk, who have made their homes in the rocks.” And indeed what is feebler than a Christian, what is weaker than a monk, who is not only not permitted any vengeance for wrongs done to him but is actually not allowed to suffer even a slight and silent feeling of irritation to spring up within?

St. John Cassian: Conference 10:11.

30:27 The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands;

30:28 The spider takes hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces.

vs. 24-28: Four things that are little, are yet to be admired. There are those who are poor in the world, and of small account, yet wise for their souls and another world.

30:29 There be three things which go well, yea, four are comely in going:

vs. 29-33: We may learn from animals to go well; also to keep our temper under all provocations. We must keep the evil yought in our minds from breaking out into evil speeches. We must not stir up the passions of others. Let nothing be said or done with violence, but every thing with softness and calmness. Alas, how often have we done foolishly in rising up against the Lord our King! Let us humble ourselves before him. And having found peace with Him, let us follow peace with all men.

Verse 29. There be three things which go well — Here is another set of emblems; four things which walk beautifully and with majesty. 1. The lion. 2. The greyhound. 3. The he-goat. And, 4. A king.

1. Nothing can be more majestic than the walk of the lion. It is deliberate, equal, firm, and in every respect becoming the king of the forest.

2. The greyhound. *μyntm ryzrz* zartzir mothnayim, the girt in the

loins; but what this beast is we do not distinctly know. It is most likely that this was the greyhound, which in the East are remarkably fine, and very fleet. Scarcely any thing can be conceived to go with greater fleetness, in full chase, than a greyhound with its prey in view: it seems to swim over the earth.

3. The goat, *çyt* tayish. This is generally allowed to be the he-goat; and how he walks, and what state he assumes, in the presence of his part of the flock, every one knows, who has at all noticed this animal. The ram also, which some suppose to be intended, is both fierce and majestic at the head of the sheep.

4. And a king, against whom there is no risi,nv up. That is, a king whose court, counsels, and troops, are so firmly united to him, as to render all hopes of successful conspiracy against him utterly vain. He walks boldly and majestically about, being safe in the affections of his people. But the Hebrew is singular; it makes but two words; and these are they, *μwqla ûlmw* umelech Alkum, “and King Alkum.” It is a doubt whether this may not be a proper name, as Agur abounds in them; see Ithiel, Ucal, and probably Alukah, ver. 15. But it is said, “We know nothing of a king named Alkum.” True; nor do we know any thing of Agur, Ithiel, Ucal, to say nothing of Alukah. And this might have been some remarkable chieftain, who carried his victories wherever he went, and was remarkably fortunate. If, however, we separate the word into *la al*, “not,” and *μwq* kum, “he arose,” we may make the interpretation above given.

30:29

There are in the Book of Proverbs three things which go well, a lion, a goat, and a cock; and to these is added a fourth; — a King making a speech before the people, to pass over the other sets of four which are there counted up, although things of various natures.

St. Gregory Nazianzen: On the Holy Spirit, 18.

30:29

There be three things which go well, and the fourth which is comely in going;” that is, the angels in heaven, the saints upon earth, and the souls of the righteous under the earth. And the fourth, viz. God, the Word Incarnate, passed in honor through the Virgin’s womb; and creating our Adam anew, he passed through the gates of heaven, and became the first-fruits of the resurrection and of the ascension for all.

“The whelp of the lion is stronger than the beasts:” i.e., Christ as prophesied of by Jacob in the person of Judah. “A cock walking with high spirit among his dames:” such was Paul, when preaching boldly among the churches the word of the Christ of God. “A goat heading the herd:” such is He who was offered for the sins of the world. “And a king speaking among the people:” so Christ reigns over the nations, and speaks by prophets and apostles the word of truth.

“From the Commentary of St. Hippolytus on Proverbs

30:30 A lion which is strongest among beasts, and turns not away for any;

30:31 A grayhound; an he goat also; and a king, against whom there is no rising up.

30:32 If you hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or if you hast yought evil, lay your hand upon your mouth.

Verse 32. If you hast done foolishly — And who has not, at one time or other of his life?

Lay thine hand upon thy mouth. — Like the leper; and cry to God, Unclean! unclean! and keep silence to all besides. God will blot out thy offense, and neither the world nor the Church ever know it, for he is merciful; and man is rarely able to pass by a sin committed by his fellows, especially if it be one to which himself is by nature not liable or inclined.

30:33 Surely the churning of milk brings forth butter, and the wringing of the nose brings forth blood: so the forcing of wrath brings forth strife.

Verse 33. And the wringing — “Who hugeli snytith drawith out blood”. — Old MS. Bible. This is well expressed in homely phrase. The Septuagint have, “draw the milk, and you may have butter; if you press the nostrils you may bring out blood; and if you draw out your discourse to a great length, you may have strife and contention.” Avoid, therefore, all strong excitements and irritations. Coverdale’s translation of this verse is very simple: “Whoso chyrneth mylck maketh butter; he that rubbeth his nose maketh it blede; and he that causeth wrath bryngeth forth strife.”

CHAPTER 31

A virtuous woman who has command of her spirit, who is pious and industrious, who is firm for the principles of God's Word, is a rare prize. Such a one is of unspeakable worth, and he who has such a wife, should show to her great kindness and respect, and to God, thankfulness of heart.

The scope of each of the various proverbs of this book is one and the same—to direct our manner of life aright and to point us to the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is “made unto us Wisdom and Righteousness.”

The words and prophecy of King Lemuel, about what his mother taught him, 1, 2.

Debauchery and much wine to be avoided, 3-7.

How kings should administer justice, 8, 9.

The praise of a virtuous woman and good housewife, in her economy, prudence, watchfulness, and assiduity in labor, 10-29.

Frailty of beauty, 30, 31.

31:1 The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him.

But who is Muel or Lemuel? Solomon, according to general opinion; and the mother here mentioned, Bath-sheba. I cannot receive these sayings; for 1. Whoever this was, he appears to have been the first-born of his mother: called here emphatically **ynfb rb** bar bitni, the son of my womb; which is not likely to be true of Solomon, as his mother had been the wife of Uriah, and possibly had borne that rough and faithful soldier some children. 2. It is intimated here that this son had come by a lawful marriage: hence **yrdn rb** bar nedarai, the son of my vow, her matrimonial covenant; for so it is most natural to understand the words. But is there any proper sense in which we can say that this was correct in reference to David, Bath-sheba and Solomon? For although the son born in adultery died, it is by no means likely that Bath-sheba made any particular vows relative to Solomon; for of her piety, so much vaunted of by some writers, we yet want the proofs.

But, however this may be, there is no evidence whatever that Muel or Lemuel means Solomon; the chapter seems, to be much later than his time, and the several Chaldaisms which occur in the very opening of it are no mean proof of this. If Agur was not the author of it, it may be considered as another supplement to the book of Proverbs. Most certainly Solomon did not write it.

The prophecy that his mother taught him. — **ajm** massa may here signify the oracle; the subject that came by Divine inspiration; see on chap. 30:1. From this and some other circumstances it is probable that both these chapters were written by the same author. Houbigant thinks that Massa here is the name of a place; and, therefore, translates, “The words of Lemuel, king of Massa, with which his mother instructed him.”

31:2 What, my son? and what, the son of my womb? and what, the son of my vows?

Perhaps Coverdale has hit the sense as nearly as any other: “These are the wordes of Kynge Lemuel; and the lesson that his mother taughte him. My sonne, you son of my body, O my deare beloved sonne!”

The son of my vows? — A child born after vows made for offsprings is called the child of a person's vows.

31:3 Give not your strength unto women, nor your ways to that which destroys kings.

Verse 3. Give not thy strength — Do not waste thy substance on women. In such intercourse the strength of body, soul and substance is destroyed. Such connections are those which destroy kings, **yklm** melachin, the Chaldee termination instead of the Hebrew.

31:4 It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink:

Verse 4. It is not for kings-to drink wine — An intemperate man is ill fit to hold the reins of government.

Verse 5. Lest they drink, and forget the law — When they should be administering justice, they are found incapable of it; or, if they go into the judgment-seat, may pervert justice.

31:5 Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted.

31:6 Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts.

Verse 6. Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish — We have already seen, that inebriating drinks were mercifully given to condemned criminals, to render them less sensible of the torture they endured in dying. This is what was offered to our Lord; but he refused it. See note on Psalm 104:15.

Hear what the Scripture saith, "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto the bitter in soul." (**Proverbs 31:6.**) And justly, because it can mitigate asperity and gloominess, and drive away clouds from the brow. "Wine maketh glad the heart of man" (Psalm 104:15), says the Psalmist. How then does wine produce drunkenness? For it cannot be that one and the same thing should work opposite effects. Drunkenness then surely does not arise from wine, but from intemperance. Wine is bestowed upon us for no other purpose than for bodily health; but this purpose also is thwarted by immoderate use. But hear moreover what our blessed Apostle writes and says to Timothy, "Use a little wine for thy stomach's sake, and thine often infirmities."

This is the reason why God has formed our bodies in moderate proportions, and so as to be satisfied with a little, from thence at once instructing us that He has made us adapted to another life. And that life He would fain have bestowed upon us even from the very beginning; but since we rendered ourselves unworthy of it, He deferred it; and in the time during which He deferred it, not even in that does He allow us immoderate indulgence; for a little cup of wine and a single loaf is enough to satisfy a man's hunger. And man the Lord of all the brute creation has He formed so as to require less food in proportion than they, and his body small; thereby declaring to us nothing else than this, that we are hastening onward to another life. "Be not drunk," says he, "with wine, wherein is riot"; for it does not save but it destroys; and that, not the body only, but the soul also.

St. John Chrysostom: *Homilies on Ephesians 19.*

31:7 Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.

31:8 Open your mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction.

Verse 8. Open thy mouth for the dumb — For such accused persons as have no counsellors, and cannot plead for themselves. 1851

Are appointed to destruction. — **Pwlj ynb** beney chaloph, variously translated, children of passage-indigent travelers; children of desolation — those who have no possessions, or orphans. I believe it either signifies those who are strangers, and are travelling from place to place, or those who are ready to perish in consequence of want or oppression.

31:9 Open your mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy.

Vs. 1-9: When children are under the mother's eye, she has an opportunity of fashioning their minds aright. Those who are grown up, should often call to mind the good teaching they received when children. The many awful instances of promising characters who have been ruined by vile women, and love of wine, should warn every one to avoid these evils. Wine is to be used for want or medicine. Every creature of God is good, and wine, yough abused, has its use. By the same rule, due praise and consolation should be used as cordials to the dejected and tempted, not administered to the confident and self-sufficient. All in authority should be more carefully temperate even than other men; and should be protectors of those who are unable or afraid to plead their own cause. Our blessed Lord did not decline the bitterest dregs of the cup of sorrow put into his hands; but he puts the cup of consolation into the hands of his people, and causes those to rejoice who are in the deepest distress.

Vs. 10-31: This is the description of a virtuous woman of those days, but the general outlines equally suit every age and nation. She is very careful to recommend herself to her husband's esteem and affection, to know his mind, and is willing that he rule over her.

1: She can be trusted, and he will leave such a wife to manage for him. He is happy in her. And she makes it her constant business to do him good.

2: She is one that takes pains in her duties, and takes pleasure in them. She is careful to fill up time, that none be lost. She rises early. She applies herself to the business proper for her, to women's business. She does what she does, with all her power, and trifles not.

3: She makes what she does turn to good account by prudent management. Many undo themselves by buying, wiyout considering whether they can afford it. She provides well for her house. She lays up for hereafter.

4: She looks well to the ways of her household, that she may oblige all to do their duty to God and one another, as well as to her.

5: She is intent upon giving as upon getting, and does it freely and cheerfully.

6: She is discreet and obliging; every word she says, shows she governs herself by the rules of wisdom. She not only takes prudent measures herself, but gives prudent advice to others. The law of love and kindness is written in the heart, and shows itself in the tongue. Her heart is full of another world, even when her hands are most busy about this world.

7: Above all, she fears the Lord. Beauty recommends none to God, nor is it any proof of wisdom and goodness, but it has deceived many a man who made his choice of a wife by it. But the fear of God reigning in the heart, is the beauty of the soul; it lasts for ever.

8: She has firmness to bear up under crosses and disappointments. She shall reflect with comfort when she comes to be old, that she was not idle or useless when young. She shall rejoice in a world to come. She is a great blessing to her relations. If the fruit be good, the tree must have our good word. But she leaves it to her own works to praise her.

Every one ought to desire this honor that cometh from God; and according to this standard we all ought to regulate our judgments. This description let all women daily study, who desire to be truly beloved and respected, useful and honorable. This passage is to be applied to individuals, but may it not also be applied to the church of God, which is described as a virtuous spouse? God by his grace has formed from among sinful men a church of true believers, to possess all the excellencies here described. 1849

31:10 Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.

31:10

Verse 10. Who can find a virtuous woman? — This and the following verses are acrostic, each beginning with a consecutive letter of the Hebrew alphabet: ver. 10, **a** aleph; ver. 11, **b** beth; ver. 12, **g** gimel ; and so on to the end of the chapter, the last verse of which has the letter **t** tau. From this to the end of the chapter we have the character of a woman of genuine worth laid down; first, in general, ver. 10-12; secondly, in its particular or component parts, ver. 13-29; and, thirdly, the summing up of the character, ver. 30, 31.

I. Her general character.

1. She is a virtuous woman—a woman of power and strength. **lyj tḡa** esheth chayil, a strong or virtuous wife, full of mental energy.

2. She is invaluable; her price is far above rubies—no quantity of precious stones can be equal to her worth. The divine Solomon, in his instructive wisdom, I mean his Proverbs, praises the woman who looks to her household and loves her husband, contrasting her with one who roams abroad, and is uncontrolled and dishonorable, and hunts for precious souls with wanton words and ways, while she manages well at home and bravely sets about her woman's duties, as her hands hold the distaff, and she prepares two coats for her husband, buying a field in due season, and makes good provision for the food of her servants, and welcomes her friends at a liberal table; with all the other details in which he sings the praises of the modest and industrious woman.

St. Gregory Nazianzen: On His Sister Gorgonia, 9.

31:11 The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.

Verse 11. The heart of her husband—

3. She is an unspotted wife. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her—he knows she will take care that a proper provision is made for his household, and will not waste any thing. He has no need for spoil—he is not obliged to go out on predatory excursions, to provide for his family, at the expense of the neighboring tribes.

31:12 She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.

Verse 12. She will do him good—

4. She has her husband's happiness in view constantly. She recompenses all his kindness to her in beneficent acts. For kind words she returns kind deeds. Her good is unmixed; she will do him good and not evil. 2 Her good is not capricious; it is constant and permanent, while she and her husband live. His heart safely trusts in her, for she will do him good all the days of her life. This is her general character. 1852

31:13 She seeks wool, and flax, and works willingly with her hands.

Verse 13. She seeketh wool and flax, and worketh willingly, etc.—

II. This is the second part of her character, giving the particulars of which it is composed.

1. She did not buy ready woven cloth: she procured the raw material, if wool, most probably from her own flocks; if flax, most probably from her own fields.

2. Here she manufactured; for she worketh willingly with her hands. And all her labor is a cheerful service; her will, her heart, is in it.

It needs no arguments to prove that women, even of the highest ranks, among the Greeks, Romans, and Israelites, worked with their hands at every kind of occupation necessary for the support of the family. This kind of employment was not peculiar to the virtuous woman in the text.

31:14 She is like the merchants' ships; she brings her food from afar.

Verse 14. She is like the merchants' ships—

3. She acts like merchants. If she buy any thing for her household, she sells sufficient of her own manufactures to pay for it; if she imports, she exports: and she sends articles of her own manufacturing or produce to distant countries; she traffics with the neighboring tribes.

31:15 She rises also while it is yet night, and gives meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.

Verse 15. She riseth also while it is yet night—

4. She is an economist of time; and when the nights are long, and the days short, her family not only spend a part of the evening after sunset in domestic labor, but they all arise before daylight, and prepare the day's food, that they may not have their labor interrupted. To those who are going to the fields, and to the flocks, she gives the food necessary for the day: **Prf** teref, prey, a term taken from hunting, the object of which was, the supplying their natural wants: hence applied to daily food. See notes on chap. 30:8. And to the women who are to be employed within she gives **qj** chok, the task—the kind of work they are to do, the materials out of which they are to form it, and the quantity she expects from each. Thus all the servants are settled: their food, work, and tasks appointed. Every thing is done orderly.

31:16 She considers a field, and buys it: with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard.

Verse 16. She considereth a field and buyeth it—1853

5. She provides for the growing wants of her family. More land will shortly be needed, for the family is growing up; and having seen a field contiguous to her own, which was on sale, she estimates its worth, and purchases it a good bargain; and she pays for it by the fruit of her own industry.

6. She does not restrict herself to the bare necessities of life; she is able to procure some of its comforts. She plants a vineyard, that she may have wine for a beverage, for medicine, and for sacrifice. This also is procured of her own labor. Whatever goes out brings its worth in; and barter, not buying, is her chief mode of traffic.

31:17 She girds her loins with strength, and strengthens her arms.

Verse 17. She girdeth her loins with strength—

7. She takes care of her own health and strength, not only by means of useful labor, but by healthy exercise. She avoids what might enervate her body, or soften her mind—she is ever active, and girt ready for every necessary exercise. Her loins are firm, and her arms strong.

31:18 She perceives that her merchandise is good: her candle goes not out by night.

Verse 18. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good—

8. She takes care to manufacture the best articles of the kind, and to lay on a reasonable price that she may secure a ready sale. Her goods are in high repute, and she knows she can sell as much as she can make. And she finds that while she pleases her customers, she increases her own profits.

9. She is watchful and careful. Her candle—her lamp, burns all night, which is of great advantage in case of sudden alarms; and in the times and places where there were so many banditti, this was a very necessary family regulation. Perhaps some works were carried on during the night, those employed sleeping in the daytime. Thus labor never stood still; whilst some slept, others worked. This was no unusual thing in ancient times; and it prevails now; but alas! little children are often thus employed to help to support their indigent parents, and to fill the coffers of their unfeeling taskmasters.

31:19 She lays her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.

Verse 19. She layeth her hands to the spindle—

10. She gives an example of skill and industry to her household. She takes the distaff, that on which the wool or flax was rolled; and the spindle, that by twisting of which she twisted the thread with the right hand, while she held the distaff in the guard of the left arm, and drew down the thread with the fingers of the left hand. Allowing that spindle and distaff are proper translations of *rwçyk* kishor, and *ûlp* pelech, this was their use, and the way in which they were used. The spindle and distaff are the most ancient of all the instruments used for spinning, or making thread. The spinning-wheel superseded them in these countries; but still they were in considerable use till spinning machinery superseded both them and the spinning-wheels in general.

31:19
She who emulates Sarah is not ashamed of that highest of ministries, helping wayfarers. For Abraham said to her, "Haste, and knead three measures of meal, and make cakes" (Gen. 18:6). "And Rachel, the daughter of Laban, came," it is said, "with her father's sheep" (Gen. 29:9). Nor was this enough; but to teach humility it is added, "for she fed her father's sheep." And innumerable such examples of frugality and self-help, and also of exercises, are furnished by the Scriptures,

St. Clement of Alexandria: Instructor 3:10.

31:20 She stretches out her hand to the poor; yea, she reaches forth her hands to the needy.

Verse 20. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor—

11. She is truly charitable. She knows that in every portion of a man's gain God requires a lot for the poor; and if this is not given, God's blessing is not in the rest. And she is not contented to give common alms. While with one hand (*dy yad*) she relieves the general poor, with both hands (*hydy yadeyha*) she gives to the needy, *ynl* leaney, to the afflicted poor.

31:21 She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet.

Verse 21. She is not afraid of the snow—

12. She is not anxious relative to the health and comfort of her family in the winter season, having provided clothes sufficient for each in the cold weather, in addition to those which they wore in the warm season.

For all her household are clothed with scarlet. — Not scarlet, for the color can avail nothing in keeping off the cold; nor would it be a proper color for the bogs and dirt of winter. But *μynç* shanim, from *hnç* shanah, to iterate, to double, signifies not only scarlet, so called from being twice or doubly dyed, but also double garments, not only the ordinary coat but the surtout or great-coat also, or a cloak to cover all. But most probably double garments, or twofold to what they were accustomed to wear, are here intended. If the general clothing be intended, scarlet cannot be the meaning, nor did our translators entirely rely on it; and therefore put double garments, the true meaning, in the margin, from which it cannot be too speedily transferred to the text. The Vulgate has "duplicibus." And my old MS. very properly, "Alle forsoth hir hoomli men, ben clothid with double". And Coverdale, with equal propriety, "For all hir household folkes are duple clothed." But if her husband and children alone are referred to, scarlet, which in the general meaning of the term, may be proper

enough; as even in these countries of ours, scarlet, as being a lively bright color, is used in the winter dresses.

31:21
 For those are good things, whereof the texture of the priestly robe was the token, that is to say, either the Law, or the Church, which latter hath made two garments for her spouse, as it is written' — the one of action, the other of spirit, weaving together the threads of faith and works. Thus, in one place, as we read, she makes a groundwork of gold, and afterwards weaves thereon blue, and purple, with scarlet, and white. Again, [as we read] elsewhere, she first makes little flowerets of blue and other colors, and attaches gold, and there is made a single priestly robe, to the end that adornments of diverse grace and beauty, made up of the same bright colors, may gain fresh glory by diversity of arrangement.

St. Ambrose: The Christian Faith, 2: Introduction, 11.

31:21
 Whence also Solomon when he had summed up the manifold grace of the Church, added: "for all who are with her are clothed with double garments."

St. John Cassian: Conference 14:8.

31:22 She makes herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple.

Verse 22. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry—

13. She is not regardless either of her own person, or of the decent, proper appearance of her presses and wardrobe. She has coverings or carpeting for her guests to sit upon; she has also tapestry, **μydbrm** marbaddim, either tapestry, carpeting, or quilted work for her beds; and her own clothing is shesh, flne flax, or linen cloth, and purple; probably for a cloak or mantle. The fine linen or cotton cloth of Egypt is probably intended. I have often seen it wrapping the bodies of mummies; it is something like our coarse calico. The purple was supposed to have been dyed by a precious liquor obtained from the pinna magna, a large shellfish, of the muscle kind, found on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. I have seen some of them nearly two feet in length. But it is a doubt whether any such liquor was ever obtained from this or any other fish; and the story itself is invented merely to hide the secret, the proper method of dying purple; which was kept so well that it certainly died with the ancients.

31:23 Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land.

Verse 23. Her husband is known in the gates—

14. She is a loving wife, and feels for the respectability and honor of her husband. He is an elder among his people, and he sits as a magistrate in the gate. He is respected not only on account of the neatness and cleanliness of his person and dress, but because he is the husband of a woman who is justly held in universal esteem. And her complete management of household affairs gives him full leisure to devote himself to the civil interests of the community.

31:24 She makes fine linen, and sells it; and delivers girdles unto the merchant.

Verse 24. She maketh fine linen, and selleth it—

15. She is here remarkable for carrying on a traffic of splendid and ornamental dresses, or habits, as she is, ver. 13, for “a coarser manufacture,” The **wds** sidon is supposed to come from [A] in Arabic; and to signify a kind of loose inner garment, shirt, chemise, or fine muslin covering. Some of these are so exceedingly fine, like the abroam, that when spread on the grass, they are scarcely discernible. Some such garments as these are still worn by ladies in India and in China, and are so thin and transparent, that every part of the body may be seen through them. I have many representations of persons clothed in this way before me both of the Chinese, the Hindoo, and the Malabar ladies. Probably this eminent Jewish matron had such articles manufactured in her own house. She dealt also in girdles. These are still a very general and very expensive article of dress. I have seen them made of silk, and highly ornamented with gold and silver thread, worked into flowers and various curious devices. The loose Eastern robe is confined by these; and the word may also take in the shawl of the turban, which is often superb and costly. It is properly the girdle for the head. As these were generally woven, the consumption was great; and an able artist must have had a good trade.

The Arabic gives a remarkable translation of this verse: “She maketh towels, (or tablecloths,) and sells them to the inhabitants of Basra, (a city in Mesopotamia,) and fine linens, and sells them to the Canaanites.” My old MS. Bible has, “Sandel sche made and sold, and a lital girdil sche toke to Chanane”. Perhaps **yn[nkl]** lakkenaani, for the merchant, may stand

here for **μyn[nkl]** lakkenanim, the Canaanites.

31:25 Strength and honor are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.

31:26 She opens her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.

Verse 26. Strength and honor are her clothing—

16. All the articles manufactured by herself or under her care have a double perfection: 1. They are strong. 2. They are elegant; Strength and honor are her clothing; and on account of this she shall rejoice in time to come; she shall never have occasion to blush for any thing she has made, for any thing she or hers have worn, or for any thing she has sold. Besides, she has so conducted herself that she has reason to expect that the hand of the Lord shall be still with her, and shall keep her from evil that it may not grieve her.

Verse 26. She openeth her mouth with wisdom—

17. He comes now to the moral management of her family. 1. She is wise and intelligent; she has not neglected the cultivation of her mind. 2. She is amiable in her carriage, full of good nature, well tempered, and conciliating in her manners and address.

In her tongue is the law of kindness. — This is the most distinguishing excellence of this woman. There are very few of those who are called managing women who are not lords over their husbands, tyrants over their servants, and insolent among their neighbors. But this woman, with all her eminence and excellence, was of a meek and quiet spirit. Blessed woman!

31:26

Do not fear that thou art not able to fulfill the law, flee to mercy. If thou canst not fulfill the law, make use of that covenant, make use of the bond, make use of the prayers which the heavenly One, skilled in the law, has ordained and composed for you.

St. Augustine: On the Gospel of St. John, tractate 7:10.

31:27 She looks well to the ways of her household, and eats not the bread of idleness.

Verse 27. She looketh well to the ways of her household—

18. She is a moral manager: she takes care that all shall behave themselves well; that none of them shall keep bad company or contract vicious habits. A religious industry, or an industrious religion, is the law of her house. She can instruct them in religion, as well as she can teach them in their labor. In her house, diligence in business, and fervency of spirit, serving the Lord, go hand in hand.

And eateth not the bread of idleness.—

19. She knows that idleness leads to vice; and therefore every one has his work, and every one has his proper food. That they may work well, they are fed well; and every one, at least, earns the bread that he eats—eateth not the bread of idleness.

31:28 Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her.

Verse 28. Her children arise up, and call her blessed—

20. She considers a good education next to Divine influence; and she knows also that if she train up a child in the way he should go, when he is old he will not depart from it. 1. Her children are well bred; they rise up and pay due respect. 2. They are taught the fear of the lord, and obedience to his testimonies; therefore they call her blessed. So they are of a decent, orderly, respectable, religious behavior. 3. Her husband is so satisfied with her conduct towards himself, his household, his business, and their children, that he praiseth her. He shows himself sensible of her excellence, and encourages her, in her work, by the commendations he bestows.

31:29 Many daughters have done virtuously, but you excellest them all.

Verse 29. Many daughters have done virtuously — This is undoubtedly the speech of the husband, giving testimony to the excellence of his wife: “Her husband also, and he praiseth her, saying, ‘many daughters,’ women, ‘have done virtuously,’ with due propriety as wives, mistresses, and mothers; ‘but YOU,’ my incomparable wife, ‘excellent them all;’ **hnlk I[tyl[taw** veath alith al cullanah, but YOU hast ascended above the whole of them—you hast carried every duty, every virtue, and every qualification and excellency, to a higher perfection, than any of whom we have ever read or heard.” And let the reader seriously consider the above particulars, as specified under the different heads and subdivisions; and he will be probably of the same mind. But high as the character of this Jewish matron stands in the preceding description, I can say that I have met at least her equal, in a daughter of the Revelation Dr. Samuel Annesly, the wife of Samuel Wesley, sen., rector of Epworth in Lincolnshire, and mother of the late extraordinary brothers, John and Charles Wesley. I am constrained to add this testimony, after having traced her from her birth to her death, through all the relations that a woman can bear upon earth. Her Christianity gave to her virtues and excellences a heightening, which the Jewish matron could not possess. Besides, she was a woman of great learning and information, and of a depth of mind, and reach of yought, seldom to be found among the daughters of Eve, and not often among the sons of Adam.

31:30 Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that fears the LORD, she shall be praised.

Verse 30. Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain, etc.—

III. Here is the summing up of the character. 1. Favour, **j** chen, grace of manner may be deceitful, many a fair appearance of this kind is put on, assumed for certain secular or more unworthy purposes; it is learned by painful drilling in polished seminaries, and, being the effect of mere physical discipline, it continues while the restraint lasts; but it is **rqḥ** seeker, a lie, a mere semblance, an outward varnish. It

is not the effect of internal moral regulation; it is an outside, at which the inside murmurs; and which, because not ingenuous, is a burden to itself.

2. Beauty, *ypyh* haiyophi, elegance of shape, symmetry of features, dignity of mien, and beauty of countenance, are all *lbh* hebel, vanity; sickness impairs them, suffering deranges them, and death destroys them.

3. "But a woman that feareth the Lord," that possesses true religion, has that grace that harmonizes the soul, that purifies and refines all the tempers and passions, and that ornament of beauty, a meek and quiet mind, which in the sight of God is of great price: —

She shall be praised. — This is the lasting grace, the unfading beauty. 1858

The fear of God is the greatest safeguard.

To sin once is too much; but a yousand acts of devotion towards God are not sufficient to honor him.

If a man foresaw his end, and his exit from life, he would abhor his actions, and their deceitfulness.

Life is a sort of sleep, from which many awake not but in death.

The life of man is a path that leads to death.

The orphan is not the person who has lost his father; but he who has neither wisdom, nor a good education.

Want of good sense is worse than all the degrees of poverty.

Nothing so effectually hides what we are as silence.

He who has least wisdom has most vanity.

There is no greatness of soul in avenging one's self.

The heart of the fool is in his mouth, and the tongue of the wise man is in his heart.

He who runs with a slack rein, guided only by hope, encounters the last moment of his life, and falls.

Envy has no rest.

When you have once received a benefit, render yourself not unworthy of it, by a want of gratitude.

The desire of revenge is a constant hinderance to a happy and contented life.

When you have got an advantage over your enemy, pardon him, in returning God thanks for that advantage.

When you are in prosperity, you need seek no other revenge against him who envies you than the mortification he has from it.

How advantageous must wisdom be to its possessor, seeing it is of so great value as not to be purchased by money!
1861

Nothing obtains pardon more speedily than repentance.

There is no disease so dangerous as the want of common sense.

Of all vices, vanity and a love of contention are the most difficult to be corrected.

Visiting your neighbor is no crime, but your visits should not be so often repeated, as to induce him to say, It is enough.

If a prince would worship God in truth, he must remain in his limits, be true to his treaties, be content with what he has, and suffer patiently the privation of what he has not.

Nothing so much resembles flowers planted on a dunghill, as the good which is done to an ignorant or worthless man.

In whatsoever company or society you be, engage not in those matters which concern the whole; for if you succeed, the whole company will attribute the success to itself; and if you succeed not, each person will lay the blame on you.

When the soul is ready to depart, what avails it whether a man die on a throne or in the dust?

Take and give with equity.

We need not be surprised when those who ask or seek for improper things, fall into misfortunes which they did not expect.

Riches dwell no longer in the hand of a liberal man, than patience in the heart of a lover, or water in a sieve.

As soon as a person takes pleasure in hearing slander, he is to be ranked in the number of slanderers.

That which a man suffers for this world, fills his heart with darkness; but that which he suffers for the other, fills it with light.

The greatest repose which a man can enjoy, is that which he feels in desiring nothing. 1862

One seldom finds that which he seeks, when he searches for it with impatience.

Do not reproach a man for the sin which he has committed, when God has forgiven him.

He who pushes a jest farther than good breeding requires, shall never fail to be hated or despised.

He who is worthy of being called a man, is unshaken in adversity, humble in prosperity, active and bold in danger; and, if he be not learned, has at least a love for learning.

The man who is governed by his passions is in a worse state than the most miserable slave.

Men often give themselves much trouble to succeed in an affair from which they derive only vexation in the end.

He is a free man who desires nothing; and he is a slave who expects that which he wishes.

The advice of a wise man is to be considered as a prediction.

Be sincere, yough your sincerity should cost you your life.

Live not on credit, and you shall live in liberty.

A wise man practises the three following things: he abandons the world before it abandons him; he builds his sepulcher before the time of entering it; and he does all with a design to please God, before entering into his presence.

He who lords it over those who are below him, shall one day find a master who will lord it over him.

Sin not, if you would have less vexation in the hour of death.

He who takes not counsel beforehand, will surely fail in accomplishing his projects.

Covetousness leads to poverty; but he is truly rich who desires nothing.

He who relates the faults of others to you, designs to relate yours to them. 1863

Watch your friends; except those of whom you are certain; but know, that none can be a true friend but he who has the fear of God.

The most perfect pleasures in this world are always mingled with some bitterness.

He who considers consequences with too much attention, is ordinarily a man of no courage.

The world is the hell of the good, and the heaven of the wicked; i.e., it is all the evil that the former shall meet with, and all the good that the latter shall enjoy.

By doing good to those who have evil intentions against you, you thereby shut their mouth.

He who knows well what he is capable of, has seldom bad success.

He who has too good an opinion of himself, drives all others away from him.

He who loves jesting and raillery, brings himself into many troubles.

Partial knowledge is better than total ignorance; if you cannot get what you wish, get what you can.

He who has lost shame may bury his heart.

The poor should get learning in order to become rich; and the rich should acquire it for their ornament.

A man should accommodate himself to the weakness of his inferiors, in order to derive from them the services he requires.

An avaricious man runs straight into poverty. He leads a life of poverty here below; but he must give the account of a rich man in the day of judgment.

The greatest advantage that a man can procure for his children, is to have them well educated.

Do good to him who does you evil, and by this means you will gain the victory over him. 1864

Men, because of speech, have the advantage over brutes; but beasts are preferable to men whose language is indecent.

If you can do good to-day, defer it not till tomorrow.

The excellence of many discourses consists in their brevity.

Two things are inseparable from lying; many promises and many excuses.

Deceivers, liars, and all persons who lead an irregular life, are intoxicated by the prosperity which smiles upon them in all things; but that intoxication is the just recompense of their evil actions.

He lives in true repose who bridles his passions.

It is in vain to expect these five things from the following persons: A present from a poor man; service from a lazy man; succor from an enemy; counsel from an envious man; and true love from a prude.

It is unbecoming the character of a wise man to commit the fault for which he reproveth others.

A passionate man is capable of nothing; how unfit then is such a person for a governor!

A rich man who is not liberal, resembles a tree without fruit.

You cannot keep your own secret; what cause then have you to complain, if another to whom you have declared it should reveal it?

It is the same with the administration of the affairs of kings as with sea voyages; you may lose, gain, amass treasures, and lose your life.

He who submits to a voluntary poverty neither possesses, nor is possessed by, any thing.

A wicked man should be considered as dead while he is alive; but a good man lives even in the tomb.

No man should undertake any thing till he has thoroughly examined it.

He who possesses any art or science, is at least equal to a great lord. 1865

Honours, employments, and dignities cannot recompense a man for the pains he has taken to acquire them.

On many occasions a good book supplies the place of an agreeable companion.

That day in which a man neither does some good action, nor acquires some useful knowledge, should not be (if possible) numbered in the days of his life.

He who is of a surly and unyielding disposition, never fails to excite troubles even among relatives and friends.

A great monarch should fix a good reputation as an object to which he should continually bend his pursuits; because, of all the grandeurs and eminences of this world, this is the only thing that shall survive him.

Leave not till to-morrow what you can perform to-day.

To have pity on one's enemy, when he is in distress, is the mark of a great soul.

He who does good shall not lose his reward. A good action never perishes, neither before God nor before men.

Covetousness proceeds ad infinitum; therefore, determine the bounds of your desires, and the objects of your pursuits. He who does not act thus shall never become either rich or happy.

A monarch who considers his own interest should ever abide in his kingdom, and consider himself as a rose in the midst of a garden, which continually reposes on thorns.

Never despise a man because his employment is mean, or his clothing bad. The bee is an insect which is not very pleasing to the sight, yet its hive affords abundance of honey.

The people enjoy repose when governed by princes who take none. The monarch who watches causes his people to repose in safety.

Confer your opinion with that of another, for truth is more easily discovered by two than one. 1866

Do not rejoice at the death of your enemy; your life is not eternal.

Be always employed, that ye become not slothful, and refer to God all that you acquire by labor, otherwise you shall live in a continual and condemnable idleness.

It is extremely difficult to render him wise who knows nothing; because his ignorance causes him to believe that he knows more than he who attempts to instruct him.

One coat, one house, and one day's food, is enough for you; and should you die at noonday, you will have one half too much.

A covetous man is an enemy to all the poor; and is cursed both in this and the coming world.

Interested friends resemble dogs in public places, who love the bones better than those who throw them.

In order to live well, a man should die to all his passions and every thing that depends on them.

A thousand years of delight do not deserve the risk of our lives for a single moment.

You shall only receive in proportion to what you give.

The service of kings may be compared to a vast sea, where many merchants traffic, some of whom acquire great riches, and others are shipwrecked.

Fear the man who fears you.

Do nothing without design.

Humble yourself in asking, that you may be raised up in obtaining what you request.

A wicked woman in the house of a good man is a hell to him in this world.

It cannot be said of a miser that he possesses his riches, however attached he may be to them.

The yought of evil frequently derives its origin from idleness. 1867

Kings and subjects are equally unhappy, where persons of merit are despised, and where ignorant men occupy the chief places of trust.

Answer those who ask questions of you in such a manner as not to offend them.

The most proper method of punishing an envious person is, to load him with benefits.

Prudence suffers between impossibility and irresolution.

When you speak, let it be in such a manner as not to require an explanation.

The most precious acquisition is that of a friend.

Never trust to appearance. Behold the drum: notwithstanding all its noise, it is empty within.

Keep not an evil conscience: but be diffident, to the end that you be never surprised nor deceived.

Nothing remains with punishment or reward.

A wise man by his speeches does things which a hundred armies conjoined could not execute.

Do not speak till you have yought on what you intend to say.

Those who believe they may gain by seditions and commotions never fail to excite them.

The best friends we have in this world are the spies of our actions, who publish our faults.

Hope for nothing from this world, and your soul will enjoy rest.

He who applies himself to acquire knowledge, puts himself in the capacity of possessing all good things.

He who does not succeed in the business in which he is employed, because he is incapable of it, deserves to be excused; for it is to be believed that he has done all he could to accomplish his end. 1868

Every kind of employment requires a particular sort of genius.

Riches increase in proportion as you give to the poor.

The greatest reputation is frequently an embarrassment.

Do not despise a poor man because he is such: the lion is not less noble because he is chained.

A young man who has the wisdom of an old man is considered as an old man among those who are wise.

A righteous prince is the image and shadow of God upon earth.

As soon as virtue begins to discover itself, vice begins its insolent insults.

Can it be said that a man has wisely considered what he has done, when the end corresponds not with what he proposed?

To the end that what you desire may be advantageous too you, never desire any thing but that which is proper for you.

Those who will not forgive an offense are the most accursed of all men.

Yough it be pretended that no man can shun his destiny, yet it is well to do nothing wiyout precaution.

It is a double present when given with a cheerful countenance.

Nobility is nothing unless supported by good actions.

Evil speaking and calumny never quit their hold till they have destroyed the innocent on whom they have once seized.

Consider your estate, and leave playing and jesting to children.

Soft words may appease an angry man; bitter words never will.

Would you throw fire on a house in flames to extinguish them?

Continue to speak the truth, yough you know it to be hateful.

It is a blessing to a house to have a number of guests at table.

Five things are useless when they are not accompanied each with another thing: advice wiyout effect; riches wiyout economy; science wiyout

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good manners; almsgiving to improper objects, or wiyout a pure intention; and life wiyout health.

If you wish your enemy never to know your secret, never divulge it to your friend.

Art you a man in honor? Wouldst you live wiyout inquietude or remorse? Then do actions worthy of thy character.

When subjects are ill treated by subaltern officers, and cannot make remonstrances to the prince, because the too great authority of ministers of state deprives them of the means; their lot is like to that of a man who, half dead with

thirst, approaches the river Nile to drink; but perceiving a crocodile, is obliged to perish for lack of water, or submit to be devoured.

It is better to perish with hunger, than to deprive the poor of their bread.

If you be reprov'd for your faults, do not be angry with him who does it: but turn your anger against the things for which he has reprov'd you.

Poisonous food is preferable to bad discourse.

Do not discover the faults of others, if you be unwilling to have your own known.

Wage war against yourself, and you will thereby acquire true peace of soul.

One resembles those the company of whom he most frequents.

The best expended riches are those which are given for God's sake.

If you have a dispute with any person, take heed that you say not of him all the evil which you know; otherwise you will leave no room for accommodation.

Your conversation is the index of your intellect, and your actions show the bottom of your heart.

It is more difficult to manage riches well, than to acquire them.

The grandeur of kings is evidenced in the administration of justice.

Honour your parents, and your children will honor you. 1870

Cultivate no friendship with him who loves your enemy.

If you have a friend who takes offense at trifles, break entirely with him, for he is not to be trusted.

The happiness of life is only to be found, when the conscience is pure and clean.

Measure every man with his own measure; i.e., "Do not expect or require from him more than is in him."

Can any man boast who considers what he is come from?

In whatever corner of the world you are, you will have something to suffer.

It will be more profitable for you to adorn thy inside than thy outside.

31:31 Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.