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*Commentaries*

**CLARKE'S COMMENTARY  
PROVERBS — SONG OF  
SOLOMON**

By

*Adam Clarke, LL.D., F.S.A., &c.*

*“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without  
which no man shall see the Lord” Heb 12:14*

**Spreading Scriptural Holiness to the World**

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# **A COMMENTARY AND CRITICAL NOTES**

ON THE

# **HOLY BIBLE**

**OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS**

DESIGNED AS A HELP TO A BETTER UNDERSTANDING  
OF THE SACRED WRITINGS

**BY ADAM CLARKE, LL.D., F.S.A., &c.**

A NEW EDITION, WITH THE  
AUTHOR'S FINAL CORRECTIONS

**For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we  
through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.—Rom. xv. 4.**

**INTRODUCTION  
TO THE  
PROVERBS OF SOLOMON  
THE SON OF DAVID, KING OF ISRAEL**

THERE has scarcely been any dispute concerning either the *author* or *Divine authority* of this book, either in the *Jewish* or *Christian Church*: all allow that it was written by Solomon; and the general belief is, that he wrote the book by *Divine inspiration*.

It has, indeed, been supposed that Solomon *collected* the major part of these proverbs from those who had preceded him, whether *Hebrews* or *heathens*; but the latter opinion has been controverted, as derogating from the *authority* of the book. But this supposition has very little weight; for, whatever of *truth* is found *in* or *among* men, came originally from God; and if he employed an inspired man to collect those *rays of light*, and *embody* them for the use of his Church, he had a right so to do, and to claim his *own* wheresoever found, and, by giving it a *new authentication*, to render it more useful in reference to the end for which it was originally communicated. God is the *Father of lights*, and from him came all true wisdom, not only in its discursive teachings but in all its detached maxims for the government and regulation of life. I think it very likely that Solomon did not *compose* them all; but he collected every thing of this kind within his reach, and what was according to the Spirit of truth, by which he was inspired, he condensed in this book; and as the Divine Spirit gave it, so the providence of God has preserved it, for the use of his Church.

That true Light, which lightens every man that cometh into the world, first taught men to acknowledge himself as the Fountain and Giver of all good; and then by *short maxims*, conveyed in terse, energetic words, taught them to regulate their conduct in life, in respect to the dispensations of his providence, and in reference to each other in domestic, social, and civil life; and this was done by such *proverbs* as we find collected in this book. The different changes that take place in society; the new relations which in process of time men would bear to each other; the invention of arts and sciences; and the *experience* of those who had particularly considered the ways of the Lord, and marked the operations of his hands; would give rise to many maxims, differing from the original stock only in their application to those *new relations* and *varying circumstances*.

The *heathen* who had any connection with the first worshippers of the Almighty would observe the maxims by which *they* regulated the affairs of life, and would naturally borrow from them; and hence those *original teachings* became diffused throughout the world; and we find there is not an ancient nation on earth that is without its *code of proverbs* or proverbial maxims. The ancient SANSKRIT is full of them; and they abound in the *Persian* and *Arabic* languages, and in all the *dialects* formed from these, in all the countries of the East. The HEETOPADESA of Vishnoo Sarma, the *Anvari Soheili*, the *Bahar Danush*, *Kalia we Durnna*, and all the other *forms* of that *original* work; the fables of *Lockman*, *Æsop*, *Phædrus*, *Avienus*, &c., are collections of proverbs, illustrated by their application to the most important purposes of domestic, social, and civil life.

Those nations with which we are best acquainted have their collections of proverbs; and perhaps those with which we are unacquainted have theirs also. Messrs. *Visdelou* and *Galand* formed a collection of *Asiatic* proverbs, and published it in their supplement to the *Bibliothèque Orientale* of *D'Herbelot*. This is a collection of very great worth, curiosity, and importance. Mr. J. Ray, F.R.S., formed a collection of this kind, particularly of such as are or have been in use in Great Britain: this is as curious as it is entertaining and useful.

The term PROVERB, *proverbium*, compounded of *pro*, for, and *verbum*, a word, speech, or saying, leads us to an original meaning of the thing itself. It was an *allegorical* saying, where "more was meant than met the eye"—a *short saying* that stood for a *whole discourse*, the words of which are metaphorical; e.g., this of the rabbins: "I have given thee my lamp: give me thy lamp. If thou keep my lamp, I will keep thy lamp; but if thou quench my lamp, I will quench thy lamp." Here the word *lamp* is a metaphor: 1. For *Divine revelation*. 2. For the *human soul*. I have given thee my *word* and *Spirit*; give me thy *soul* and *heart*. If thou *observe* my *word*, and *follow* the dictates of my *Spirit*, I will *regulate* thy *heart*, and *keep* thy *soul* from every evil; but if thou *disobey* my *word*, and *quench* my *Spirit*, I will withdraw my *Spirit*, leave thee to the *hardness* and *darkness* of thy own heart, and send thee at last into outer *darkness*. Such as this is properly the *proverb*; the *word* which stands for a *discourse*.

But the Hebrew מְשָׁלִים *meshalim*, from מָשַׁל *mashal*, to *rule* or *govern*, signifies a set or collection of *weighty*, *wise*, and therefore *authoritative*, *sayings*, whereby a man's whole conduct, civil and religious, is to be governed; sayings containing rules for the government of life. Or, as the Divine author himself expresses it in the beginning of the first chapter, the design is to lead men "to know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding; to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; to give subtilty to the simple, and to the young man knowledge and discretion," #Pr 1:2, 3. This was the design of *proverbs*; and perhaps it would be impossible to find out a better definition of the design and object of those of Solomon, than is contained in the two preceding verses. See my Dissertation on Parabolical Writing, at the end of the notes on #Mt 13:58.

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, 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. His *natural history* of *trees* and *plants*, of *beasts*, *fowls*, and *fishes*, (for on all these he wrote,) is totally lost. *Curiosity*, which never says, *It is enough*, would give up the three we have for those on the *animal* and *vegetable kingdom*, which are lost. What God judged of importance to the eternal interests of mankind, is preserved; and perhaps we know the vegetable and animal kingdoms now as well through *Linnaeus* and *Buffon*, and their *followers*, as we should have known them, had Solomon's books on natural history come down to our time. Others would investigate *nature*, and to them those researches were left. Solomon spoke by inspiration; and therefore to him *Divine doctrines* were communicated, that he might teach them to man. *Every man in his order*.

The book of *Proverbs* has been divided into *five* parts:

I. A *master* is represented as instructing his *scholar*, giving him admonitions, directions, cautions, and excitements to the study of wisdom, **#Pr 1:1-9:18**.

II. This part is supposed to contain the Proverbs of Solomon, *properly so called*; delivered in distinct, independent, general sentences. From **#Pr 9:1-22:16**.

III. In this part the tutor again addresses himself to his pupil, and gives him fresh admonitions to the study of wisdom; which is followed by a set of instructions, delivered *imperatively* to the pupil, who is supposed all the while to be standing before him. From **#Pr 22:17-24:34**.

IV. 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. This part, like the *second*, is composed of distinct, unconnected sentences, and extends from **#Pr 25:1-29:37**.

V. The *fifth* part contains a set of wise expostulations and instructions, which *Agur*, the son of *Jakeh*, delivered to his pupils, *Ithiel* and *Ucal*, **#Pr 30:1-33** And the thirty-first chapter {**#Pr 31:1-31**} contains the instructions which a *mother*, who is not named, gave to *Lemuel* her son, being earnestly desirous to guard him against vice, to establish him in the principles of justice, and to have him married to a wife of the best qualities. These two last chapters may be considered a kind of *Appendix* to the book of Proverbs: see Dr. *Taylor*; but others suppose that the thirty-first chapter contains *Bathsheba's* words to *Solomon*, and his commendation of his mother.

There are many *repetitions* and some *transpositions* in the book of Proverbs, from which it is very probable that they were not all made at the same time; that they are the work of different authors, and have been collected by various hands: but still the sum total is delivered to us by Divine inspiration; and whoever might have been the original authors of *distinct parts*, the Divine Spirit has made them all its own by handing them to us in this form. Some attribute the collection, i.e., the formation of this collection, to *Isaiah*; others, to *Hilkiah*, and *Shebna* the scribe; and others, to *Ezra*.

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, indebted.

It is impossible for any description of persons to read the book of Proverbs without profit. *Kings* and *courtiers*, as well as those engaged in *trade*, *commerce*, *agriculture*, and the *humblest walks* of life, may here read lessons of instruction for the regulation of their conduct in their respective circumstances. *Fathers*, *mothers*, *wives*, *husbands*, *sons*, *daughters*, *masters*, and *servants*, may here also learn their respective duties; and the most excellent rules are laid down, not only in reference to *morality*, but to *civil policy* and *economy*. Many *motives* are employed by the wise man to accomplish the end at which he aims; motives derived from *honour*, *interest*, *love*, *fear*, *natural*

*affection*, and *piety* towards God. The principal object he has in view is, to inspire a deep reverence for GOD, fear of his judgments and an ardent love for wisdom and virtue. He exhibits injustice, impiety, profligacy, idleness, imprudence, drunkenness, and almost every vice, in such lively colours as to render every man ashamed of them who has any true respect for his interest, honour, character, or health. And as there is nothing so directly calculated to ruin young men, as *bad company*, *debauch*, and *irregular connections*, he labours to fortify his disciples with the most convincing reasons against all these vices, and especially against *indolence*, *dissipation*, and the company of *lewd women*.

Maxims to regulate life in all the conditions already mentioned, and to prevent the evils already described, are laid down so copiously, clearly, impressively, and in such *variety*, that every man who wishes to be instructed may take what he chooses, and, among multitudes, those which he likes best.

Besides the original *Hebrew*, the book of Proverbs exists in the following ancient versions: the *Chaldee*, *Septuagint*, *Syriac*, *Vulgate*, and *Arabic*. But the Septuagint takes greater liberty with the sacred text than any of the rest: it often *transposes*, *changes*, and *adds*; and all these to a very considerable extent. This is the version which is quoted in the *New Testament*. Several of these *additions*, as well as the most important *changes*, the reader will find noticed in the following notes; but to mark them all would require a translation of almost the whole *Greek text*. How our *forefathers* understood several passages will be seen by quotations from an ancient MS. in my possession, which begins with this book, and extends to the conclusion of the New Testament. It is well written upon strong vellum, in very large folio, and highly illuminated in the beginning of each book, and first letter of each chapter. The language is more antiquated than in the translation commonly attributed to Wiclif. It was once the property of *Thomas a Woodstock*, youngest son of Edward III., and brother of John of Gaunt and the Black Prince. I have often quoted this MS. in my notes on the New Testament.

**A. CLARKE.**

## THE PROVERBS

- Year from the Creation, 3004.
- Year before the birth of Christ, 996.
- Year before the vulgar era of Christ's nativity, 1000.
- Year since the Deluge, according to Archbishop Usher and the English Bible, 1348.
- Year from the destruction of Troy, 185.
- Year before the first Olympiad, 224.
- Year before the building of Rome, 247.

### CHAPTER I

*The design of the proverbs, 1-6. An exhortation to fear God, and believe his word, because of the benefit to be derived from it, 7-9; to avoid the company of wicked men, who involve themselves in wretchedness and ruin, 10-19. Wisdom, personified, cries in the streets, and complains of the contempt with which she is treated, 20-23. The dreadful punishment that awaits all those who refuse her counsels, 24-33.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. I

Verse 1. **The proverbs of Solomon]** For the meaning of the word *proverb*, see the *introduction*; and the *dissertation upon parabolical writing* at the end of the notes on **#Mt 13:58**. Solomon is the first of the sacred writers whose name stands at the head of his works.

Verse 2. **To know wisdom]** That is, this is the design of parabolical writing in *general*; and the *particular* aim of the present work.

This and the two following verses contain the interpretation of the term *parable*, and the author's design in the whole book. The first verse is the *title*, and the next three verses are an explanation of the nature and design of this very important tract.

**Wisdom]** חכמה *chochmah* may mean here, and in every other part of this book, 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 religion*.

**And instruction]** מוסר *musar*, the *teaching* that discovers all its parts, to *understand*, to *comprehend* the words or doctrines which should be comprehended, in order that we may become wise to salvation.

Verse 3. **To receive the instruction]** השכל *haskel*, the deliberately *weighing* of the points contained in the *teaching*, so as to find out their *importance*.

**Equity]** מְשָׁרִים *mesharim*, *rectitude*. The pupil is to receive *wisdom* and *instruction*, the words of *wisdom* and *understanding*, *justice* and *judgment*, so perfectly as to excel in all. *Wisdom* itself, personified, is his teacher; and when God's wisdom teaches, there is no delay in learning.

Verse 4. **To give subtilty 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 *plaindealing* 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, uncompounded*: 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! I have taken those acceptations which I have marked in Italics out of the *first dictionary* that came to hand—*Martin's*; but if I had gone to *Johnson*, I might have added to *SILLY, not wise, not cunning*. *Simplicity*, that meant at first, as *MARTIN* defines it, *openness, plaindealing, downright honesty*, is now degraded to *weakness, silliness, foolishness*. And these terms will continue thus degraded, till *downright honesty* and *plaindealing* 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*, פֶּתַיִם *pethaim*, and פֶּתִים or פֶּתַיִים *pethayim*; the former comes from פֶּתַח *patha*, to be *rash, hasty*; the latter, from פָּתַח *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*, as my old MS.; or *very babes*, as *Coverdale*. The *Septuagint* renders it ἀκακοίς, those that are *without evil*; and the *versions* in general understand it of those who are *young, giddy, and inexperienced*.

**To the young man]** נָעָר *naar* is frequently used to signify such as are in the *state of adolescence, grown up boys*, very well translated in my old MS. *yunge fultwaxer*; what we would now call the *grown up lads*. These, as being *giddy* and *inexperienced*, stand in especial need of lessons of *wisdom and discretion*. The Hebrew for *discretion*, מְזִמָּה *mezimma*, is taken both in a *good* and *bad* sense, as זָמַם *zam*, its root, signifies to *devise* or *imagine*; for the *device* may be either *mischievous*, or the *contrivance* of some *good purpose*.

Verse 5. **A wise man will hear]** I shall not only give such instructions as may be suitable to the youthful and inexperienced, but also to those who have much knowledge and understanding. So said St. Paul: *We speak wisdom among them that are perfect*. This and the following verse are connected in the old MS. and in *Coverdale*: "By hearynge the wyse man shall come by more wysdome; and by experience he shall be more apte to understonde a parable and the interpretation thereof; the wordes of the wyse and the darke speaches of the same."

Verse 6. **Dark sayings.]** חִדּוֹת *chidoth*, enigmas or riddles, in which the Asiatics abounded. I believe *parables*, such as those delivered by our Lord, nearly express the meaning of the original.

Verse 7. **The fear of the Lord]** In the preceding verses Solomon shows the *advantage* of acting according to the dictates of wisdom; in the following verses he shows the *danger* of acting contrary to them. *The fear of the Lord* signifies that *religious reverence* which every intelligent being owes to his Creator; and is often used to express the *whole of religion*, as we have frequently had occasion to remark in different places. But *what is religion?* The love of God, and the love of man; the *former* producing *all obedience* to the *Divine will*; the *latter*, every *act of benevolence* to one's fellows. The love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit produces the deepest religious reverence, genuine piety, and cheerful obedience. To love one's neighbour as himself is the second great commandment; and as *love worketh no ill* to one's neighbour, *therefore it is said to be the fulfilling of the law*. Without love, there is no *obedience*; without *reverence*, there is neither *caution*, *consistent conduct*, nor *perseverance* in righteousness.

This fear or religious reverence is said to be *the beginning of knowledge*; רֵשִׁית *reshith*, the *principle*, the *first moving influence*, begotten in a tender conscience by the Spirit of God. No man can ever become *truly wise*, who does not begin with God, the fountain of knowledge; and he whose mind is influenced by the fear and love of God will learn more in a month than others will in a year.

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

Verse 8. **My son, hear]** *Father* was the title of *preceptor*, and *son*, that of *disciple* or *scholar*, among the Jews. But here the reference appears to be to the *children of a family*; the *father* and the *mother* have the principal charge, in the first instance, of their children's instruction. It is supposed that these 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. In vain do parents give *good advice* if their own conduct be not consistent. The *father* occasionally gives *instruction*; but he is not always in the *family*, many of those occupations which are necessary for the family support being carried on abroad. The *mother*-she is constantly *within doors*, and to her the regulation of the family belongs; therefore she has and gives *laws*. The wise man says in effect to every child, "Be obedient to thy mother within, and carefully attend to the instructions of thy father, that thou mayest the better see the *reasons* of obedience; and learn from him how thou art to get thy bread honestly in the world."

Verse 9. **An ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains]** That is, filial respect and obedience will be as ornamental to thee as *crowns*, *diadems*, and golden chains and pearls are to others.

Political dignity has been distinguished in many nations by a *chain of gold about the neck*. Solomon seems here to intimate, 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 God*.

Verse 10. **If sinners entice thee, consent thou not.]** אַל תִּבְּאֵ *al tobe*, *WILL-not*. They can do thee no harm unless thy 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 forceable 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?

Verse 11. **If they say, Come with us**] From all accounts, this is precisely the way in which the workers of iniquity form their partisans, and constitute their marauding societies to the present day.

**Let us lay wait for blood**] Let us rob and murder.

**Let us lurk privily**] Let us lie in ambush for our prey.

Verse 12. **Let us swallow them up alive**] Give them as hasty a death as if the earth were suddenly to swallow them up. This seems to refer to the destruction of a whole village. Let us destroy man, woman, and child; and then we may seize on and carry away the whole of their property, and the booty will be great.

Verse 14. **Cast in thy lot**] Be a *frater conjuratus*, a sworn brother, and thou shalt 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 cutthroats, pickpockets, &c., are associated together.

Verse 16. **For their feet run to evil**] The whole of this verse is wanting in the *Septuagint*, and in the *Arabic*.

Verse 17. **Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird.**] 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 *thee*.

Verse 18. **They lay wait for their own blood**] I believe it is the *innocent* who are spoken of here, for whose *blood* and *lives* these *lay wait* and *lurk privily*; certainly not their *own*, by any mode of construction.

Verse 19. Which **taketh away the life**] A *covetous* man is in effect, and in the sight of God, a murderer; he wishes to get all the *gain* that can accrue to any or all who are in the same business that he follows-no matter to him 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 neighbourhood, in which he carries on the same business, and endeavours to *undersell* others in the same trade, that he may get all into his own hand.

Verse 20. **Wisdom crieth]** Here wisdom is again *personified*, as it is frequently, throughout this book; where nothing is meant but the *teachings* given to man, either by *Divine revelation* or the voice of the Holy Spirit in the heart. And this voice of *wisdom* is opposed to the *seducing language* of the wicked mentioned above. This voice is everywhere heard, in public, in private, in the streets, and in the house. Common sense, universal experience, and the law of justice written on the heart, as well as the law of God, testify against rapine and wrong of every kind.

Verse 22. **Ye simple ones]** פתאים *pethayim*, ye who have been *seduced* and *deceived*. See on #Pr 1:4.

Verse 23. **Turn you at my reproof]** לתוכחה *lethochachti*, at my *convincing mode of arguing*; attend to my *demonstrations*. This is properly the meaning of the original word.

**I will pour out my spirit unto you]** "I wil expresse my mynde unto you;" COVERDALE. **Loe I shall bryngen to you my Spirit;** *Old MS. Bible*. If you will hear, ye shall have ample instruction.

Verse 24. **Because I have called]** These and the following words appear to be spoken of the persons who are described, #Pr 1:11-19, who have refused to return from their evil ways till arrested by the hand of justice; and here the wise man points out their deplorable state.

They are now about to suffer according to the demands of the law, for their depredations. They now wish they had been guided by wisdom, and had chosen the fear of the Lord; but it is too late: die they must, for their crimes are proved against them, and *justice* knows nothing of *mercy*.

This, or something like this, must be the wise man's meaning; nor can any thing spoken here be considered as applying or applicable to the *eternal* state of the persons in question, much less to the case of any man convinced of sin, who is crying to God for mercy. Such persons as the above, condemned to die, may call upon justice for pardon, and they may do this *early, earnestly*; but they will call in vain. But no poor penitent sinner on this side of eternity can call upon God early, or seek him through Christ Jesus earnestly for the pardon of his sins, without being heard. Life is the time of probation, and while it lasts the vilest of the vile is within the reach of mercy. It is only in *eternity* that the state is irreversibly fixed, and where that which was guilty must be guilty still. But let none harden his heart because of this longsuffering of God, for if he die in his sin, where God is he shall never come. 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.

Verse 27. **Your destruction cometh as a whirlwind]** כסופה *kesuphah*, as the all-prostrating blast. *Sense* and *sound* are here well expressed. *Suphah* here is the gust of wind.

Verse 29. **They hated knowledge]** This argues the deepest degree of intellectual and moral depravity.

Verse 32. **For the turning away of the simple]** This difficult place seems to refer to such a case as we term *turning king's evidence*; where an accomplice saves his own life by impeaching the rest of his gang. This is called his *turning* or *repentance*, משובה *meshubah*; and he was the most likely

to turn, because he was of the פתים *pethayim*, *seduced* or *deceived* persons. And this evidence was given against them when they were in their prosperity, שלוה *shalvah*, their *security*, enjoying the fruits of their depredations; and being thus in a state of fancied *security*, they were the more easily taken and brought to justice.

Verse 33. **But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely]** The man who hears the voice of wisdom in preference to the *enticements* of the *wicked*. He shall dwell in *safety*, ישכן בטח *yishcan betach*, he shall *inhabit safety* itself; he shall be completely safe and secure; and *shall be quiet from the fear of evil*, having a full consciousness of his own innocence and God's protection. *Coverdale* translates, "And have ynough without eney feare of evell." What the just man has he got honestly; and he has the blessing of God upon it. It is the reverse with the thief, the knave, the cheat, and the extortioner: Male parta pejus dilabuntur; "Ill gotten, worse spent."

# PROVERBS

## CHAPTER II

*The teacher promises his pupil the highest advantages, if he will follow the dictates of wisdom, 1-9. He shall be happy in its enjoyment, 10, 11; shall be saved from wicked men, 12-15; and from the snares of bad women, 16-19; be a companion of the good and upright; and be in safety in the land, when the wicked shall be rooted out of it, 20-22.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. II.

Verse 1. **My son]** Here the *tutor* still continues to instruct his *disciple*.

**Hide my commandments with thee]** Treasure them up in thy heart, and then act from them through the medium of thy *affections*. He who has the rule of his *duty* only in his *Bible* and in his *head*, is not likely to be a steady, consistent character; his heart is not engaged, and his obedience, in any case, can be only *forced*, or done from a *sense of duty*: it is not the obedience of a *loving, dutiful child*, to an *affectionate father*. But 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*. See #Pr 3:3.

Verse 4. **If thou seekest her as silver]** How do men seek money? What will they not do to get rich? Reader, seek the salvation of thy soul as earnestly as the covetous man seeks wealth; and be ashamed of thyself, if thou be less in earnest after the *true riches* than he is after *perishing wealth*.

**Hid treasures]** The original word 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? Learn from the following circumstance: In the Brazils *slaves* are employed to scrape up the soil from the bed of the Rio Janeiro, and wash it carefully, in order to find particles of *gold* and *diamonds*; and it is a law of the state, that he who finds a diamond of so many carats shall have his *freedom*. This causes the greatest ardour and diligence in searching, washing out the soil, picking, &c., in order to find such diamonds, and the greatest anxiety for success; so precious is *liberty* to the human heart. This method of searching for gold and precious stones is alluded to in #Pr 3:13-15. In this way Solomon wishes men to seek for wisdom, knowledge, and understanding; and he who succeeds finds the *liberty* of the children of God, and is saved from the *slavery* of *sin* and the *empire of death*.

Verse 7. **He layeth up sound wisdom]** תושייה *tushiyah*. We have met with this word in Job; see #Job 5:12; 6:13; 11:6; 12:16. See especially Clarke's note on "Job 11:6", where the different acceptations of the word are given. Coverdale translates, "He preserveth the welfare of the righteous." It is difficult to find, in any language, a term proper to express the original meaning of the word; it seems to mean generally the *essence* or *substance* of a thing, THE thing itself-that which is *chief* of its kind. *He layeth up* WHAT IS ESSENTIAL *for the righteous*.

Verse 9. **Then shalt thou 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 practise or profit by them.

Verse 11. **Discretion shall preserve thee]** מְזִמָּה *mezimmah*. See on #Pr 1:4. Here the word is taken in a good sense, a *good device*. 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 deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things he shall stand. *Coverdale* translates, "Then shall COUNSEL preserve thee." A very good translation, much better than the present.

Verse 12. **The man that speaketh froward things.]** תַּהְפֹּכוֹת *tahpuchoth*, things of *subversion*; from תַּפַּח *taphach*, to *turn or change the course of a thing*. Men who wish to *subvert the state* of things, whether *civil or religious*; who are seditious themselves, and wish to make others so. These speak much of *liberty and oppression*, deal greatly in *broad assertions*, and endeavour especially to corrupt the minds of *youth*.

Verse 16. **The stranger which flattereth with her words]** הַחֵלִיקָה *hechelikah*, she that *smooths* with her words. The original intimates the *glib, oily* speeches of a *prostitute*. The English *lick* is supposed to be derived from the original word.

Verse 17. **Which forsaketh the guide of her youth]** Leaves her father's house and instructions, and abandons herself to the public.

**The covenant of her God.]** Renounces the *true religion*, and mixes with *idolaters*; for among them prostitution was enormous. Or by the *covenant* may be meant the *matrimonial contract*, which is a *covenant made in the presence of God between the contracting parties*, in which they bind themselves to be faithful to each other.

Verse 18. **For her house inclineth 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*, רֵפְאִים *repheim*, 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*. Therefore it is said,

Verse 19. **None that go unto her return again]** 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, חַיִּים *chayim*, 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*.

Verse 20. **That thou mayest mark]** Therefore thou shalt walk.

Verse 22. **Transgressors]** בִּוּגְדִים *bogedim*. 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.

# PROVERBS

## CHAPTER III

*An exhortation to obedience, 1-4; trust in God's providence, 5, 6; to humility, 7, 8; to charity, 9, 10; to submission to God's chastening, 11, 12. 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. Brotherly love and forbearance should be exercised, 29, 30. 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.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. III

Verse 1. **My son]** The preceptor continues to deliver his lessons.

**Forget not my law]** *Remember* what thou hast *heard*, and *practise* what thou dost *remember*; and let all obedience be *from the heart*: "Let thy heart keep my commandments."

Verse 2. **For length of days]** THREE eminent *blessings* are promised here: 1. ארך ימים *orech yamim*, long days; 2. שנות חיים *shenoth chiyim*, years of lives; 3. שלום *shalom*, prosperity; i.e. health, long life, and abundance.

Verse 3. **Let not mercy and truth forsake thee]** Let these be thy constant *companions* through life.

**Bind them about thy neck]** Keep them constantly *in view*. *Write them upon the table of thine heart*—let them be thy *moving principles*; *feel* them as well as *see* them.

Verse 4. **So shalt thou find favour]** Thou shalt be acceptable to God, and thou shalt enjoy a sense of his approbation.

**And good understanding]** Men shall *weigh* thy character and conduct; and by this *appreciate* thy motives, and give thee credit for sincerity and uprightness. Though religion is frequently persecuted, and religious people suffer at first where they are not fully *known*; yet a truly religious and benevolent character will in general be prized wherever it is well known. The envy of men is a proof of the excellence of that which they envy.

Verse 5. **Trust in the Lord with all thine heart]** This is a most important precept: 1. God is the *Fountain* of all good. 2. He has made his intelligent creatures *dependent* upon himself. 3. He requires them to be *conscious* of that dependence. 4. He has *promised* to communicate what they need. 5. He commands them to *believe* his promise, and look for its fulfilment. 6. And to do this without doubt, fear, or distrust; "with their whole heart."

**Lean not unto thine own understanding]** אל השען *al tishshaen*, do not *prop* thyself. It is on GOD, not on *thyself*, that thou art commanded to *depend*. He who trusts in his own heart is a fool.

Verse 6. **In all thy ways acknowledge him.**] Begin, continue, and end every work, purpose, and device, with God. Earnestly pray for his *direction* at the *commencement*; look for his continual *support* in the *progress*; and so begin and continue that all may terminate in his glory: and then it will certainly be to thy good; for we never *honour* God, without *servicing ourselves*. This passage is well rendered in my old MS. Bible:—*Have trost in the Lord of all thin herte and ne lene thou to thi prudence: in all thi weys think hym, and he shal right rulen thi goynges; ne be thou wiis anentis thiself. Self-sufficiency and self-dependence* have been the ruin of mankind ever since the fall of Adam. The grand sin of the human race is their continual endeavour to *live independently of God*, i.e., to be *without God in the world*. *True religion* consists in considering God the fountain of all good, and expecting all good from him.

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  $\text{רש}$  *shor* 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, &c., 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. I need not push this illustration farther: the good sense of the reader will supply what *he knows*. I might add much on the subject.

**And marrow to thy bones.**] This metaphor is not less proper than the preceding. All the larger *bones* of the body have either a large *cavity*, or they are *spongy*, and full of little cells: in both the one and the other the *oleaginous* substance, called *marrow*, is contained in proper vesicles, like the fat. In the larger *bones*, the *fine oil*, by the gentle heat of the body, is exhaled through the pores of its small vesicles, and enters some narrow passages which lead to certain fine canals excavated in the substance of the bone, that the marrow may supply the *fibres of the bones*, and render them less liable to break. *Blood-vessels* also penetrate the *bones* to supply this *marrow* and this *blood*; and consequently the *marrow* is supplied in the infant by means of the *umbilical cord*. From the *marrow* diffused, as mentioned above, through the *bones*, they derive their *solidity* and *strength*. A simple experiment will cast considerable light on the use of the *marrow* to the *bones*:—Calcine a *bone*, so as to destroy all the *marrow* from the cells, you will find it exceedingly *brittle*. Immerse the same bone in *oil* so that the cells may be all replenished, which will be done in a few minutes; and the bone reacquires a considerable measure of its *solidity* and *strength*; and would acquire the *whole*, if the *marrow* could be *extracted* without otherwise injuring the texture of the *bone*. After the calcination, the bone may be reduced to powder by the hand; after the *impregnation with the oil*, it becomes *hard, compact, and strong*. What the marrow is to the *support* and *strength* of the *bones*, and the *bones* to the *support* and *strength* of the *body*; that, *faith* in God, is to the *support, strength, energy, and salvation* of the *soul*. Behold, then, the force and elegance of the wise man's metaphor.

Some have rendered the last clause, *a lotion for the bones*. What is this? How are the *bones washed*? What a pitiful destruction of a most beautiful metaphor!

Verse 9. **Honour the Lord with thy substance**] The מִנְחָה *MINCHAH* or gratitude-offering to God, commanded under the *law*, is of endless obligation. It would be well to give a portion of the *produce of every article* by which we get our support to *God*, or to the *poor*, the representatives of Christ. This might be done either in *kind*, or by the *worth in money*. Whatever God sends us in the way of secular prosperity, there is a *portion of it* always for the poor, and for God's cause. When that *portion* is thus disposed of, the rest is *sanctified*; when it is *withheld*, God's curse is upon the whole. Give to the *poor*, and God will give to *thee*.

Verse 11. **Despise not the chastening of the Lord**] The word מוֹסֵר *musar* signifies *correction*, *discipline*, and *instruction*. *Teaching* is essentially necessary to show the man the *way* in which he is to go; *discipline* is necessary to render that *teaching effectual*; and, often, *correction* is requisite in order to bring the mind into *submission*, without which it cannot acquire *knowledge*. Do not therefore reject this procedure of God; humble thyself under his mighty hand, and open thy eyes to thy own interest; and then thou wilt learn *especially* and *effectually*. It is of no use to *rebel*; if thou do, thou *kickest against the pricks*, and every act of rebellion against him is a *wound* to thine own *soul*. God will either *end* thee or *mend* thee; wilt thou then *kick* on?

Verse 12. **Whom the Lord loveth**] To encourage thee to bear correction, know that it is a proof of God's love to thee; and thereby he shows that he treats thee as a father does his son, even that one to whom he bears the fondest affection.

The last clause the *Septuagint* translate μαστιγοι δε παντα υιου ου παραδεχεται, "and chasteneth every son whom he receiveth;" and the *apostle*, #**Heb 12:6**, quotes this *literatim*. Both clauses certainly amount to the same sense. *Every son whom he receiveth*, and *the son in whom he delighteth*, have very little difference of meaning.

Verse 13. **Happy is the man that findeth wisdom**] This refers to the advice given in #**Pr 2:4**; where see the note. **See Clarke "Pr 2:4"**.

Verse 14. **For the merchandise**] סַחַר *sachar*, the *traffic*, the *trade* that is carried on by *going through countries* and *provinces* with such articles as they could carry on the backs of camels, &c.; from סָחַר *sachar*, to *go about*, *traverse*. **Chaffarunge**; Old MS. Bible.

**And the gain thereof**] תְּבוּאָתָהּ *tebuathah*, its *produce*; what is gained by the articles after all expenses are paid. The *slaves*, as we have already seen, got their *liberty* if they were so lucky as to find a diamond of so many carats' weight; he who *finds wisdom*-the *knowledge* and *salvation of God*-gets a greater prize; for he obtains the *liberty of the Gospel*, is adopted into the *family of God*, and made an *heir* according to the hope of an eternal life.

Verse 15. **She is more precious than rubies**] מִפְּנֵינִים *mippeninim*. The word principally means *pearls*, but may be taken for *precious stones* in general. The root is פָּנָה *panah*, he *looked*, *beheld*;

and as it gives the idea of the eye always being turned towards the observer, Mr. Parkhurst thinks that it means the *loadstone*; see **Clarke's note on "Job 28:18"**, where this subject is considered at large. If the oriental *ruby*, or any other precious stone, be intended here, the word may refer to their being *cut* and *polished*, so that they present different *faces*, and reflect the light to you in whatever direction you may look at them.

**All the things thou canst desire]** Superior to every thing that can be an object of desire here below. But who believes this?

Verse 16. **Length of days is in her right hand]** A wicked man shortens his days by *excesses*; a righteous man prolongs his by *temperance*.

**In her left hand riches and honour.]** That is, her hands are full of the choicest benefits. There is nothing to be understood here by the *right hand* in preference to the *left*.

Verse 17. **Her ways are ways of pleasantness]** These blessings of true religion require little comment. They are well expressed by the poet in the following elegant verses:—

"*Wisdom Divine!* Who tells the price  
Of Wisdom's costly merchandise?  
*Wisdom to silver we prefer,*  
And *gold is dross* compared to her.  
*Her hands are fill'd with length of days,*  
*True riches, and immortal praise;—*  
Riches of Christ, on all bestow'd,  
And honour that descends from God.

To purest joys she all invites,  
Chaste, holy, spiritual *delights*;  
*Her ways are ways of pleasantness,*  
And *all her flowery paths are peace.*  
*Happy the man* that finds the grace,  
The blessing of God's chosen race;  
The *wisdom coming from above,*  
The *faith* that sweetly *works by love!*"

WESLEY.

Verse 18. **She is a tree of life]** עץ חיים *ets chaiyim*, "the tree of lives," alluding most manifestly to the tree so called which God in the beginning planted in the garden of Paradise, by eating the fruit of which all the wastes of nature might have been continually repaired, so as to prevent death for ever. This is an opinion which appears probable enough. The blessings which wisdom—true religion—gives to men, preserve them *in* life, comfort them *through* life, cause them to triumph *in* death, and ensure them a glorious *immortality*.

Verse 19. **The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth]** Here wisdom is taken in its proper acceptance, for that infinite knowledge and skill which God has manifested in the creation and composition of the earth, and in the structure and economy of the heavens. He has established the *order* as well as the *essence* of all things; so that though they *vary* in their *positions*, &c., yet they never *change* either their *places*, or their *properties*. *Composition* and *analysis* are not *essential changes*; the original *particles*, their *forms* and *properties*, remain the same.

Verse 20. **By his knowledge the depths are broken up]** He determined in his wisdom how to *break up* the *fountains of the great deep*, so as to *bring a flood of waters upon the earth*; and by his knowledge those fissures in the earth through which *springs* of water arise have been appointed and determined; and it is by his skill and influence that *vapours* are exhaled, suspended in the *atmosphere*, and afterwards precipitated on the earth in *rain, dews, &c.* Thus the wisest of men attributes those effects which we suppose to spring from *natural causes* to the Supreme Being himself.

Verse 21. **Let not them depart from thine eyes]** Never forget that God, who is the author of nature, directs and governs it in all things; for it is no self-determining agent.

**Keep sound wisdom and discretion]** תושיה ומזממה *tushiyah umezimmah*. We have met with both these words before. *Tushiyah* is the *essence* or *substance* of a thing; *mezimmah* is the *resolution* or *purpose* formed in reference to something good or excellent. To acknowledge God as the author of all good, is the *tushiyah*, the *essence*, of a godly man's creed; to *resolve* to *act according* to the directions of his wisdom, is the *mezimmah*, the *religious purpose*, that will bring good to ourselves and glory to God. These bring *life to the soul*, and are *ornamental* to the man who acts in this way, **#Pr 3:22**.

Verse 24. **When thou liest down]** In these verses (**#Pr 3:23-26**) the wise man describes the confidence, security, and safety, which proceed from a consciousness of innocence. Most people are afraid of *sleep*, lest they should never awake, because they feel they are not prepared to appear before God. They are neither innocent nor pardoned. True believers know that God is their keeper night and day; they have strong confidence in him that he will be their director and not suffer them to take any *false step* in life, **#Pr 3:23**. They go to rest in perfect confidence that God will watch over them; hence their *sleep*, being undisturbed with foreboding and evil dreams, is *sweet* and refreshing, **#Pr 3:24**. They are not apprehensive of any *sudden destruction*, because they know that all things are under the control of God; and they are satisfied that if *sudden destruction* should fall upon their wicked neighbour, yet God knows well how to preserve *them*, **#Pr 3:25**. And all this naturally flows from the Lord being their confidence, **#Pr 3:26**.

Verse 27. **Withhold not good from them to whom it is due]** מבעליי *mibbealaiv*, from the *lords of it*. But who are they? The *poor*. And what art thou, O rich man? Why, thou art a *steward*, to whom God has given substance that thou mayest divide with the poor. They are the right owners of every farthing thou hast to spare from thy own support, and that of thy family; and God has given the surplus for their sakes. Dost thou, by hoarding up this treasure, deprive the *right owners* of their property? If this were a *civil case*, the law would take thee by the throat, and lay thee up in prison;

but it is a case in which GOD alone judges. And what will he do to thee? Hear! "He shall have judgment without mercy, who hath showed no mercy;" #Jas 2:13. *Read, feel, tremble, and act justly.*

Verse 28. **Say not unto thy neighbour]** Do not refuse a kindness when it is in thy power to perform it. If thou have the means *by thee*, and thy neighbour's necessities be pressing, do not put him off till the *morrow*. Death may take either him or thee before that time.

Verse 30. **Strive not with a man]** Do not be of a litigious, quarrelsome spirit. Be not under the influence of too nice a sense of honour. If thou must appeal to judicial authority to bring him that wrongs thee to reason, avoid all enmity, and do nothing in a spirit of revenge. But, if he *have done thee no harm*, why contend with him? May not others in the same way contend with and injure thee!

Verse 31. **Envy thou not the oppressor]** O how bewitching is *power*! Every man desires it; and yet all hate *tyrants*. But query, if all had *power*, would not the major part be *tyrants*?

Verse 32. **But his secret]** ⲓⲛⲓⲟⲩ *sodo, his secret assembly*; godly people meet there, and God dwells there.

Verse 33. **The curse of the Lord]** No godly people meet in such a house; nor is God ever an *inmate* there.

**But he blesseth the habitation of the just.]** He considers it as his *own temple*. There he is worshipped in spirit and in truth; and hence God makes it his *dwelling-place*.

Verse 34. **Surely he scorneth the scorners; but he giveth grace unto the lowly.]** The *Septuagint* has ΚΥΡΙΟΣ ΥΠΕΡΗΦΑΝΟΙΣ ΑΝΤΙΤΑΣΣΕΤΑΙ, ΤΑΠΕΙΝΟΙΣ ΔΕ ΔΙΔΩΣΙ ΧΑΡΙΝ. *The Lord resisteth the proud; but giveth grace to the humble*. These words are quoted by St. Peter, #1Pe 5:5, and by St. James, #Jas 4:6, just as they stand in the *Septuagint*, with the change of ο Θεος, *God*, for Κυριος, *the Lord*.

Verse 35. **The wise]** The person who follows the dictates of wisdom, as mentioned above, *shall inherit glory*; because, being one of the *heavenly family*, a *child of God*, he has thereby heaven for his *inheritance*; but *fools*, such as those mentioned #Pr 1:7 and #Pr 2:12, 22, shall have *ignominy* for their exaltation. Many such fools as Solomon speaks of are exalted to the *gibbet* and *gallows*. The way to prevent this and the like evils, is to attend to the voice of wisdom.

# PROVERBS

## CHAPTER IV

*The preceptor calls his pupils, and tells them how himself was educated, 1-4; specifies the teachings he received, 5-19; and exhorts his pupil to persevere in well-doing, and to avoid evil, 20-27.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. IV

Verse 1. **Hear, ye children]** Come, my pupils, and hear how a father instructed his child. 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, a peculiar object of his regards, and also those of a *fond mother*.

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.

Verse 4. **He taught me also, and said]** Open thy heart to receive my instructions—receive them with affection; when heard, retain and practise them; and thou shalt live—the great purpose of thy being brought into the world shall be accomplished in thee.

Verse 5. **Get wisdom]** True religion is essential to thy happiness; never *forget* its teachings, nor go *aside* from the path it prescribes.

Verse 6. **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.

Verse 7. **Wisdom is the principal thing]** רֵאשִׁית חִכְמָה *reshith chochmah*, "wisdom is the principle." It is the *punctum saliens* in all religion to know the true God, and *what* he requires of man, and *for what* he has made man; and to this must be added, under the Christian dispensation, *to know Jesus Christ whom he hath sent*, and for *what end* HE was sent, the *necessity* of his being sent, and the *nature* of that *salvation* which he has *bought by his own blood*.

**Get wisdom]** Consider this as thy *chief gain*; that in reference to which all *thy* wisdom, knowledge, and endeavours should be directed.

**And with all thy getting]** Let this be thy *chief property*. While thou art passing through things temporal, do not lose those things which are eternal; and, while *diligent in business*, be *fervent in spirit, serving the Lord*.

**Get understanding.]** Do not be contented with the lessons of wisdom merely; do not be satisfied with having a sound religious creed; *devils* believe and tremble; but see that thou properly *comprehend* all that thou hast learnt; and see that thou rightly apply all that thou hast been taught.

*Wisdom* prescribes the best end, and the means best calculated for its attainment. *Understanding* directs to the ways, times, places, and opportunities of practicing the lessons of wisdom. *Wisdom* points out the *thing requisite*; *understanding* sees to the *accomplishment* and *attainment*. *Wisdom* sees; but *understanding* feels. One *discovers*, the other *possesses*.

*Coverdale* translates this whole verse in a very remarkable manner: "The chefe poynte of wyssdome is, that thou be wyllynge to opteyne wyssdome; and before all thy goodes to get the understandynge." This is *paraphrase*, not *translation*. In this version *paraphrase* abounds.

The translation in my old MS. Bible is very simple: *Begynnyng of wisdam, welle thou wisdam; in al thi wisdam, and in al thi possioun, purchas prudence*. He is already wise who seeks wisdom; and he is wise who knows its value, seeks to possess it. The whole of this verse is wanting in the *Arabic*, and in the best copies of the *Septuagint*.

Instead of קנה חכמה קנה *keneh chochmah, get wisdom*, the *Complutensian Polyglot* has קנה בינה *keneh binah, get understanding*; so that in it the verse stands, "Wisdom is the principle, get understanding; and in all this getting, get understanding." This is not an error either of the scribe, or of the press, for it is supported by seven of the MSS. of *Kennicott* and *De Rossi*.

The *Complutensian*, *Antwerp*, and *Paris Polyglots* have the *seventh* verse in the *Greek* text; but the two latter, in general, copy the former.

Verse 8. **She shall bring thee to honour]** There is nothing, a strict life of piety and benevolence excepted, that has such a direct tendency to *reflect honour* upon a man, as the careful *cultivation of his mind*. One of *Bacon's* aphorisms was, *Knowledge is power*; and it is truly astonishing to see what *influence* true learning has. Nothing is so universally respected, provided the learned man be a *consistent moral character*, and be not proud and overbearing; which is a disgrace to genuine literature.

Verse 9. **A crown of glory]** A tiara, diadem, or crown, shall not be more honourable to the princely wearer, than sound wisdom-true religion-coupled with deep learning, shall be to the Christian and the scholar.

Verse 10. **The years of thy life shall be many.]** Vice and intemperance impair the health and shorten the days of the wicked; while true religion, sobriety, and temperance, prolong them. The principal part of our diseases springs from "indolence, intemperance, and disorderly passions." Religion excites to *industry*, promotes *sober habits*, and destroys *evil passions*, and *harmonizes* the soul; and thus, by preventing many diseases, necessarily prolongs life.

Verse 12. **Thy steps shall not be straitened]** True wisdom will teach thee to keep out of embarrassments. A man under the influence of true religion *ponders* his paths, and carefully *poises occurring circumstances*; and as the fear of God will ever lead him to act an upright and honest part, so his way in business and life is both *clear* and *large*. He has no *by-ends* to serve; he *speculates* not; he uses neither *trick* nor *cunning* to effect any purpose. Such a man can never be embarrassed. *His*

*steps are not straitened*; he sees his way always plain; and when a favourable tide of Providence shows him the necessity of increased *exertion*, he *runs*, and is in no danger of *stumbling*.

Verse 13. **Take fast hold**] קַח חֵזק *hachazek*, *seize it strongly*, and keep the hold; and do this *for life*. Learn all thou canst, retain what thou hast learnt, and keep the reason continually in view—*it is for thy life*.

Verse 14. **Enter not into the path of the wicked**] Never *associate* with those whose life is irregular and sinful; never *accompany* them in any of their acts of transgression.

Verse 15. **Avoid it**] Let it be the serious purpose of thy soul to shun every appearance of evil.

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

**Turn from it**] If, through *unwatchfulness* or *unfaithfulness*, thou 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 thou hast a being.

Verse 16. **Except they have done mischief**] The *night* is their time for spoil and depredation. And they must gain some *booty*, before they *go to rest*. This I believe to be the meaning of the passage. I grant, also, that there may be some of so malevolent a disposition that they cannot be easy unless they can injure others, and are put to excessive pain when they perceive any man in *prosperity*, or receiving a kindness. The address in *Virgil*, to an ill-natured shepherd is well known:—

Et cum vidisti puero donata, dolebas:  
Et si non aliqua nocuisses, mortuus esses.  
ECLOG. iii. 14.

"When thou sawest the gifts given to the lad, thou wast distressed; and hadst thou not found some means of doing him a mischief, thou hadst died."

Verse 17. **For they eat the bread of wickedness**] By *privately* stealing.

**And drink the wine of violence.**] By *highway robbery*.

Verse 18. **But the path of the just**] The path of the wicked is gloomy, dark, and dangerous; that of the righteous is open, luminous, and instructive. This verse contains a fine metaphor; it refers to the *sun* rising above the horizon, and the increasing twilight, till his beams shine full upon the earth. The original, הוֹלֵךְ וְאוֹרֵר עַד נִכּוֹן הַיּוֹם *holech vaor ad nechon haiyom*, may be translated, "going and illuminating unto the prepared day." This seems plainly to refer to the progress of the rising *sun* while below the horizon; and the gradual increase of the light occasioned by the reflection

of his rays by means of the *atmosphere*, till at last he is completely elevated above the horizon, and then the *prepared day* has fully taken place, the sun having risen *at the determined time*. So, the truly wise man is but in his twilight here below; but he is in a state of glorious *preparation* for the realms of everlasting light; till at last, emerging from darkness and the shadows of death, he is ushered into the full blaze of endless felicity. Yet previously to his enjoyment of this glory, which is prepared for him, he is *going-walking* in the commandments of his God blameless; and *illuminating-reflecting* the light of the salvation which he has received on all those who form the circle of his acquaintance.

Verse 21. **Keep them in the midst of thine heart.**] Let them be wrapped up in the very *centre of thy affections*; that they may give spring and energy to every desire, word, and wish.

Verse 23. **Keep thy heart with all diligence**] "Above all keeping," guard thy heart. He who knows any thing of himself, knows how apt his affections are to go astray.

**For out of it are the issues of life.**] תוצאות חיים *totseoth chaiyim*, "the goings out of lives." Is not this a plain allusion to the *arteries* which carry the blood from the heart through the whole body, and to the utmost extremities? As long as the heart is capable of receiving and propelling the blood, so long *life* is continued. Now as the heart is the fountain whence all the streams of life proceed, care must be taken that the fountain be not stopped up nor injured. A double watch for its safety must be kept up. So in spiritual things: the heart is the seat of the Lord of life and glory; and the streams of spiritual life proceed from him to all the powers and faculties of the soul. Watch with all diligence, that this fountain be not sealed up, nor these streams of life be cut off. Therefore "put away from thee a froward mouth and perverse lips—and let thy eyes look straight on." Or, in other words, look *inward*—look *onward*—look *upward*.

I know that the *twenty-third* verse is understood as principally referring to the evils which proceed from the heart, and which must be guarded against; and the good purposes that must be formed in it, from which *life* takes its colouring. The former should be opposed; the latter should be encouraged and strengthened. If the heart be pure and holy, all its purposes will be just and good. If it be impure and defiled, nothing will proceed from it but abomination. But though all this be true, I have preferred following what I believe to be the *metaphor* in the text.

Verse 24. **A froward mouth**] Beware of hastiness, 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 neighbour.

Verse 26. **Ponder the path of thy feet**] *Weigh* well the part thou shouldst act in life. See that thou contract no bad *habits*.

Verse 27. **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.

To this the *Septuagint* and *Vulgate* add the following verse: *Αυτος δε ορθας ποιησει τας τροχιας σου, τας δε πορειας σου εν ειρηνη προαξει*. Ipse autem rectos faciet cursus tuos; itinera autem tua

in pace productet. "For himself will make thy paths straight and thy journeyings will he conduct in prosperity." The *Arabic* has also a clause to the same effect. But nothing like this is found in the *Hebrew*, *Chaldee*, or *Syriac*; nor in the *Vulgate*, as printed in the *Complutensian* Polyglot; nor in that of *Antwerp* or of *Paris*; but it is in the Greek text of those editions, in the *editio princeps* of the *Vulgate*, in *five* of my own MSS., and in the old MS. Bible. *De Lyra* rejects the clause as a *gloss* that stands on no authority. If an *addition*, it is certainly *very ancient*; and the promise it contains is true whether the clause be authentic or not.

# PROVERBS

## CHAPTER V

*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 chastity and moderation, 15-21. The miserable end of the wicked, 22, 23.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. V

Verse 1. **Attend unto my wisdom]** Take the following lessons from my *own experience*.

Verse 3. **The lips of a strange woman]** One that is not *thy own*, whether Jewess or heathen.

**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.

Verse 4. **Bitter as wormwood]** כֶּלְעָנָה Kelanah, like the *detestable* herb *wormwood*, or something analogous to it: something as excessive in its *bitterness*, as *honey* is in its *sweetness*.

Verse 5. **Her feet go down to death]** 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*.

**Her steps take hold on hell.]** First, the *death of the body*; and then the damnation of the soul. These are the *tendencies* of connections with such women.

Verse 6. **Lest thou shouldest ponder]** To prevent thee from reflecting on thy present conduct, and its consequences, *her ways are moveable*—she continually varies her allurements.

**Thou canst not know them.]** It is impossible to conceive all her tricks and wiles: to learn these in all their varieties, is a part of the *science* first taught in that infernal trade.

Verse 7. **Hear me-O ye children]** בָּנִים *banim*, *sons*, *young men* in general: for these are the most likely to be deceived and led astray.

Verse 8. **Come not nigh the door of her house]** Where there are generally such exhibitions as have a natural tendency to excite impure thoughts, and irregular passions.

Verse 9. **Lest thou give thine honour]** The *character* of a *debauchee* is universally detested: by this, even those of *noble blood* lose their *honour* and *respect*.

**Thy years unto the cruel]** Though all the blandishments of love dwell on the tongue, and the excess of fondness appear in the whole demeanour of the *harlot* and the *prostitute*; yet *cruelty* has its throne in their hearts; and they will *rob* and *murder* (when it appears to answer their ends) those who give their *strength*, their *wealth*, and their *years* to them. The unfaithful *wife* has often murdered

her own husband for the sake of her paramour, and has given *him* over to justice in order to save herself. Murders have often taken place in brothels, as well as robberies; for the vice of *prostitution* is one of the parents of *cruelty*.

Verse 11. **When thy flesh and thy body are consumed**] The word **שֶׁאֵר** *shear*, which we render body, signifies properly the *remains, residue, or remnant* of a thing: and is applied here to denote the *breathing carcass, putrid with the concomitant disease* of debauchery: a public reproach which the justice of God entails on this species of iniquity. The *mourning* here spoken of is of the most excessive kind: the word **נָהַם** *naham* is often applied to the *growling of a lion*, and the *hoarse incessant murmuring* of the sea. In the line of my duty, I have been often called to attend the death-bed of such persons, where *groans* and *shrieks* were incessant through the *jaculating* pains in their bones and flesh. Whoever has witnessed a closing scene like this will at once perceive with what force and propriety the wise man speaks. And *How have I hated instruction, and despised the voice of my teachers!* is the unavailing cry in that terrific time. Reader, whosoever thou art, lay these things to heart. Do not *enter* into their sin: once *entered*, thy *return* is nearly hopeless.

Verse 14. **I was almost in all evil**] This vice, like a whirlpool, sweeps all others into its vortex.

**In the midst of the congregation and assembly.]** *In the mydel of the Curche and of the Synagoge*—Old MS. Bible. Such persons, however sacred the place, carry about with *them eyes full of adultery, which cannot cease from sin*.

Verse 15. **Drink waters out of thine own cistern**] Be satisfied with thy own wife; and let the wife see that she reverence her husband; and not tempt him by inattention or unkindness to seek elsewhere what he has a right to expect, but cannot find, at *home*.

Verse 16. **Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad**] Let thy children lawfully begotten be numerous.

Verse 17. **Let them be only thine own**] The off-spring of a legitimate connection; a *bastard brood*, however numerous, is no credit to any man.

Verse 18. **Let thy fountain be blessed**] **יְהִי מְקוֹרְךָ בְּרוּךְ** *yehi mekorecha baruch. Sit vena tua benedicta*. Thy *vein*; that which carries off streams from the fountain of *animal life*, in order to *disperse them abroad, and through the streets*. How *delicate* and correct is the *allusion* here! But anatomical allusions must not be pressed into detail in a commentary on Scripture.

Verse 19. **The loving hind and pleasant roe**] By **אֵי לָהּ** *aiyeleth*, the *deer*; by **יַעֲלָהּ** *yaalah*, the *ibex* or mountain *goat*, may be meant.

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

Verse 21. **For the ways of a man**] Whether they are public or private, God sees all the steps thou takest in life.

Verse 22. **He shall be holden with the cords of his sins.**] Most people who follow unlawful pleasures, think *they can give them up whenever they please*; but sin *repeated* becomes *customary*; custom soon engenders *habit*; and habit in the end assumes the form of *necessity*; the man becomes *bound with his own cords*, and so is *led captive by the devil at his will*.

Verse 23. **He shall die without instruction**] This is *most likely*, and it is a *general* case; but even *these* may repent and live.

# PROVERBS

## CHAPTER VI

*Exhortations against becoming surety for others, 1-5; against idleness, from the example of the ant, 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 bad women, and especially against adultery, 24-33; what may be expected from jealousy, 34, 35.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. VI

Verse 1. **If thou be surety for thy friend]** לרעד *lereacha*, for thy *neighbour*; i.e., any person. If thou pledge thyself in behalf of another, thou takest the burden off him, and placest it on thine own shoulders; and when he knows he has got one to stand between him and the demands of law and justice, he will feel little responsibility; his spirit of exertion will become crippled, and listlessness as to the event will be the consequence. His own character will suffer little; his property nothing, for his friend bears all the burden: and perhaps the very person for whom he bore this burden treats him with neglect; and, lest the restoration of the pledge should be required, will avoid both the sight and presence of his friend. *Give* what thou canst; but, except in extreme cases, be *surety* for no man. *Striking or shaking hands* when the *mouth had once made the promise*, was considered as the *ratification* of the engagement; and thus the man became *ensnared with the words of his mouth*.

Verse 3. **Do this-deliver thyself]** Continue to press him for whom thou art become surety, to pay his creditor; give him no rest till he do it, else thou mayest fully expect to be left to pay the debt.

Verse 5. **Deliver thyself as a roe]** צבי *tsebi*, the antelope. If thou art got into the snare, get out if thou possibly canst; make every *struggle* and *exertion*, as the antelope taken in the net, and the bird taken in the snare would, in order to get free from thy captivity.

Verse 6. **Go to the ant, thou sluggard]** נמלה *nemalah*, 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 #Pr 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 labour; and their conduct affords a bright example to men.

Verse 10. **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.

Verse 11. **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 thou art not prepared to oppose it. The *Vulgate*, *Septuagint*, and *Arabic* add the following clause to this verse:—

"But if thou wilt be diligent, thy harvest shall be as a fountain; and poverty shall flee far away from thee."

It is also thus in the Old MS. Bible: *¶t forsothe unslow thou shul ben; shul comen as a welle thi rip; and nede fer shal fleen fro thee.*

Verse 12. **A naughty person]** אדם בלי עול *adam beliyal*, "Adam good for nothing." When he lost his innocence. *¶* A man apostata; Old MS. Bible.

**A wicked man]** איש און *ish aven*. He soon became a general transgressor after having departed from his God. All his posterity, unless restored by Divine grace, are men of Belial, and sinners by trade; and most of them, in one form or other, answer the character here given. They yield their members instruments of unrighteousness unto sin.

Verse 13. **He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers]** These things seem to be spoken of debauchees; and the following quotation from Ovid, *Amor. lib. i., El. iv., ver. 15*, shows the whole process of the villany spoken of by Solomon:—

Cum premit ille torum, vultu comes ipsa modesto  
Ibis, ut accumbas: clam mihi *tange pedem*.  
Me specta, *nutusque* meos, *vultum que loquacem*  
Excipe *furtivas*, et refer ipsa, *notas*.  
*Verba superciliis sine voce loquentia dicam*  
*Verba leges digitis, verba notata mero*.  
Cum tibi succurrit Veneris lascivia nostræ,  
*Purpureas tenero pollice tange genas, &c., &c.*

The whole *elegy* is in the same strain: it is translated in *Garth's Ovid*, but cannot be introduced here.

Verse 14. **He deviseth mischief]** 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.

Verse 15. **Suddenly shall he be broken**] 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.

Verse 16. **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 wicked 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**] נפשו *naphsho*, "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.

Verse 20. **Keep thy father's commandment**] See on #Pr 1:8.

Verse 21. **Bind them continually upon thine heart**] See on #Pr 3:3. And see a similar command, to which this is an allusion, #De 6:6-8.

Verse 22. **When thou goest, it shall lead thee**] 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 thou 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.

Verse 23. **For the commandment is a lamp**] It illuminates our path. It shows us how *we should walk and praise God*.

**And the law is light**] 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.

Verse 24. **To keep thee from the evil 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.

Verse 25. **Neither let her take thee with her eye-lids.**] 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."

Verse 26. **By means of a whorish woman**] In following lewd women, a man is soon reduced to poverty and disease. The *Septuagint* gives this a strange turn: Τιμη γαρ πορνης, οση και ενος αρτου. "For the price or hire of a whore is about one loaf." So *many* were they in the land, that they hired themselves out for a *bare subsistence*. The *Vulgate*, *Syriac*, and *Arabic*, give the same sense. The old MS. Bible has it thus: **The price forsothe of a strumpet is unmeth oon lof: the woman forsothe taketh the precious liif of a man.** The sense of which is, and probably the sense of the *Hebrew* too, While the man hires the whore for a *single loaf* of bread; the woman thus hired taketh his *precious life*. She extracts his energy, and poisons his constitution. In the first clause זונה אשה ishshah zonah is plainly a *prostitute*; but should we render אשת אשה esheth, in the second clause, an *adulteress*? I think not. The versions in general join אשה אשה esheth ish, together, which, thus connected, signify no more than *the wife of a man*; and out of this we have made *adulteress*, and *Coverdale* a *married woman*. I do not think that the Old MS. Bible gives a good sense; and it requires a good deal of paraphrase to extract the common meaning from the text. Though the following verses seem to countenance the common interpretation, yet they may contain a complete sense of themselves; but, taken in either way, the sense is good, though the construction is a little violent.

Verse 27. **Can a man take fire**] These were proverbial expressions, the meaning of which was plain to every capacity.

Verse 29. **So he that goeth in to his neighbour'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.

Verse 30. **Men do not despise a thief if he steal**] Every man pities the poor culprit who was perishing for lack of food, and stole to *satisfy his hunger*; yet no law *clears* him: he is bound to make restitution; in some cases *double*, in others *quadruple* and *quintuple*; and if he have not property enough to make restitution, to be sold for a *bondsman*; #Ex 22:1-4; #Le 25:39.

Verse 32. **But whoso committeth adultery**] The case understood is that of a *married man*: he has a wife; and therefore is not in the circumstances of the *poor thief*, who stole to *appease his hunger*, *having nothing to eat*. In this alone the *opposition* between the two cases is found: the *thief had no food*, and he stole some; the married man had a *wife*, and yet went in to *the wife of his neighbour*.

**Destroyeth his own soul.**] Sins against *his life*, for, under the law of Moses, adultery was punished with *death*; #Le 20:10; #De 22:22.

Verse 33. **A wound and dishonour shall he get**] 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.

Verse 34. **Jealousy is the rage of a man: therefore he will not spare]** He will not, when he has detected the adulterer in the fact, wait for the slow progress of the law: it is then to him the *day of vengeance*; and in general, he avenges himself on the spot, as we see above.

Verse 35. **He will not regard any ransom]** This is an injury that admits of *no compensation*. No *gifts* can satisfy a man for the injury his honour has sustained; and to take a *bribe* or a *ransom*, would be setting up *chastity* at a price.

# PROVERBS

## CHAPTER VII

*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. VII

Verse 1. **My son, keep my words]** See #Pr 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 #Pr 3:3.

Verse 4. **Thou art my sister]** Thou 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]** חסר לב *chasar leb*, "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*.

**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, #Ge 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, #Pr 7:19, 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**] **הַמִּיָּה** *homiyah*, she is never *at rest*, always *agitated*; busily employed to gain her end, and this is *to go into the path of error*: **סָרְרָה** *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 without**] 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**] **הַעֲזָה פְּנֵיהָ** *heezzah paneyha*, "she strengthened her countenance," assumed the most confident look she could; endeavoured 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*, **שְׁלָמִים** *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 **Clarke's notes on "Le 7:38"**, 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 **#Le 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, **#Pr 7:15**. 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**] **עֲרָשִׁי** *arsi*, "my couch or sofa;" distinguished from **מִשְׁכְּבִי** *mishcabi*, "my bed," **#Pr 7:17**, *the place to sleep on*, as the other was *the place to recline on at meals*. The *tapestry*, **מַרְבְּדִים** *marbaddim*, mentioned here seems to refer to the covering of the *sofa*; exquisitely woven and figured cloth. **חַטְבוֹת אֶטוּן** *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]** מֹר *mor*, "aloes," אהלים *ahalim*, and "cinnamon," קינמון *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]** נרעה דודים *nirveh dodim*, "Let us revel in the breasts;" and then it is added, "Let us solace ourselves with loves," נהעלסה באהבים *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: Ελθε, και απολαυσωμεν φιλιας-δευρο, και εγκυλισθωμεν ερωτι. "Veni, et fruamur amicitia—Veni, et colluctemur cupidine." Though 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 lital bed, and spred with peyntid tapetis of Egypt: I have springid my ligginge place with mirre and aloes and canelcum, and be we inwardly drunken with Tetis, and use we the cobeytied clippingsis 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.]** ליום הכסא *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 hasteneth 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 many. חללים *chalalim*, which we render

wounded, also signifies *soldiers* or men of war; and **עצמים** *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]** **שארל** *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.

# PROVERBS

## CHAPTER VIII

*The fame and excellence of wisdom, and its manner of teaching, 1-4; the matter of its exhortations, 5-12; its influence among men, 13-21; its antiquity, 22-31; the blessedness of attending to its counsels, 32-35; the misery of those who do not, 36.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. VIII.

Verse 1. **Doth not wisdom cry?**] Here wisdom is again *personified*; but the *prosopopoeia* is carried on to a greater length than before, and with much more variety. It is represented in this chapter in a *twofold* point of view: 1. Wisdom, the *power of judging rightly*, implying *the knowledge of Divine and human things*. 2. As an attribute of God, particularly displayed in the various and astonishing works of *creation*. Nor has it *any other meaning* in this whole chapter, whatever some of the fathers may have dreamed, who find allegorical meanings every where. The wise man seems as if suddenly awakened from the distressful contemplation which he had before him,—of the ruin of young persons in both worlds by means of debauchery,—by the voice of wisdom, who has *lifted up her voice* in the most public places, where was the *greatest concourse* of the people, to warn the yet unenslaved, that they might avoid the way of seduction and sin; and cause those who love her to *inherit substance*, and to have their *treasuries filled* with durable riches.

Verse 2. **In the places of the paths.**] בֵּית נֶתִיבוֹת נִצְבָּה *beith nethiboth nitstsabah*, "The constituted house of the paths." Does not this mean the house of public worship? the tabernacle or temple, which stands a centre to the surrounding villages, the paths from all the parts leading to and terminating at it? In such a place, where the holy word of God is read or preached, there in a particular manner does wisdom *cry*, and *understanding lift up her voice*. There are the warnings, the precepts, and the promises of eternal truth; there the *bread of God* is broken to his children, and thither they that *will* may come and take the *water of life* freely.

Verse 3. **She crieth at the gates**] This might be well applied to the preaching of Jesus Christ and his apostles, and their faithful successors in the Christian ministry. He went to the *temple*, and proclaimed the righteousness of the Most High: he did the same in the *synagogues*, on the *mountains*, by the *sea-side*, in the *villages*, in the *streets* of the *cities*, and in *private houses*. His disciples followed his track: in the *same way*, and in the *same spirit*, they proclaimed the unsearchable riches of Christ. God's *wisdom* in the hearts of his true ministers directs them to go and to seek sinners. There are, it is true, temples, synagogues, churches, chapels, &c.; but hundreds of thousands never frequent them, and therefore do not hear the voice of truth: *wisdom*, therefore, *must go to them*, if she wishes them to receive her instructions. Hence the zealous ministers of Christ go still to the *highways* and *hedges*, to the *mountains* and *plains*, to the *ships* and the *cottages*, to persuade sinners to turn from the error of their ways, and accept that redemption which was procured by the sacrificial offering of Jesus Christ.

Verse 4. **Unto you, O men**] אִישִׁים *ishim*, men of *wealth* and *power*, *will I call*; and not to you alone, for my voice is אֵל בְּנֵי אָדָם *al beney Adam*, "to all the descendants of Adam;" to the whole

human race. As Jesus Christ tasted death for every man, so the Gospel proclaims salvation to all: *to YOU*—to every individual, my voice is addressed. *Thou* hast sinned; and *thou* must perish, if not saved by grace.

Verse 5. **O ye simple**] פתאים *pethaim*, ye that are *deceived*, and with flattering words and fair speeches deluded and *drawn away*.

**Ye fools**] כסילים *kesilim*, ye stupid, stiffnecked, senseless people. That *preaching* is never likely to do much good, that is not *pointed*; specifying and describing vices, and charging them home on the consciences of transgressors. Where this is *not done*, the congregation is unconcerned; no man supposes he has any thing to do in the business, especially if the preacher takes care to tell them, "These were the crimes of Jews, Romans, Greeks, of the people at Corinth, Philippi, Thessalonica, Laodicea, and of heathens in general; but I hope better things of you, who have been born in a Christian land, and baptized in the Christian faith." Thus he arms their *consciences* in double brass against the good effects of his own teaching.

Verse 6. **Hear; for I will speak of excellent things**] נגידים *negidim*, things which are pre-eminent, and manifestly superior to all others. The teaching is not *trifling*, though addressed to *triflers*.

**The opening of my lips shall be right things.**] מישרים *meysarim*, things which are calculated to correct your false notions, and set straight your crooked ways. Hence she declares,

Verse 7. **My mouth shall speak truth**] TRUTH, without *falsity*, or any mixture of *error*, shall be the whole matter of my discourse.

Verse 8. **All the words-are in righteousness**] בצדק *betsedek*, in justice and equity, testifying what man *owes* to his God, to his neighbour, and to himself; giving to each his *due*. This is the true import of צדק *tsadak*.

There is **nothing froward**] נפתל *niphtal*, tortuous, involved, or difficult.

**Or perverse**] עקש *ikkesh*, distorted, leading to obstinacy. On the contrary,

Verse 9. **They are all plain**] נכחים *nechochim*, straight forward, over against every man, level to every capacity. This is true of all that concerns the salvation of the soul.

**To them that find knowledge.**] When a man gets the *knowledge of himself*, then he sees all the *threatenings* of God to be *right*. When he obtains the knowledge of GOD in *Christ*, then he finds that all the *promises* of God are *right*-yea and amen.

Verse 10. **Receive my instruction, and not silver**] A Hebrew idiom; *receive my instruction* in preference to silver.

Verse 11. **Wisdom is better than rubies]** See on #Pr 3:15.

Verse 12. **I wisdom dwell with prudence]** Prudence is defined, *wisdom applied to practice*; so wherever true wisdom is, it will lead to action, and its activity will be always in reference to the *accomplishment of the best ends by the use of the most appropriate means*. Hence comes what is here called *knowledge of witty inventions*, דעת מזמרת אמצא *daath mezimmoth emtsa*, "I have found out knowledge and contrivance." The farther wisdom proceeds in man, the more *practical* knowledge it gains; and finding out the nature and properties of things, and the general course of providence, it can contrive by new combinations to produce new results.

Verse 13. **The fear of the Lord is to hate evil]** As it is impossible to hate *evil* without loving *good*; and as hatred to *evil* will lead a man to abandon the *evil way*; and *love to goodness* will lead him to do what is *right* in the sight of God, under the influence of that Spirit which has given the *hatred to evil*, and inspired the *love of goodness*: hence this implies the sum and substance of *true religion*, which is here termed *the fear of the Lord*.

Verse 14. **Counsel is mine]** *Direction* how to act in all circumstances and on all occasions must come from *wisdom*: the *foolish* man can give no *counsel*, cannot show another how he is to act in the various changes and chances of life. The wise man alone can give this counsel; and he can give it only as continually receiving instruction from God: for this Divine wisdom can say, תושיה תושיה TUSHIYAH, *substance, reality, essence*, all belong to me: I am the *Fountain* whence all are derived. Man may be wise, and good, and prudent, and ingenious; but these he derives from me, and they are *dependently* in him. But in *me* all these are *independently* and *essentially* inherent.

**And sound wisdom]** See above. This is a totally false translation: תושיה *tushiyah* means essence, substance, reality; the source and substance of good. How ridiculous the support derived by certain authors from this translation in behalf of their system! See the writers on and quoters of Prov viii.

**I have strength.]** Speaking still of wisdom, as communicating rays of its light to man, it enables him to bring every thing to his aid; to construct machines by which *one man* can do the work of *hundreds*. From it comes all *mathematical learning*, all *mechanical knowledge*; from it originally came the *inclined plane*, the *wedge*, the *screw*, the *pulley*, in all its *multiplications*; and the *lever*, in all its *combinations* and *varieties*, came from this wisdom. And as all these can produce prodigies of *power*, far surpassing all kinds of *animal energy*, and all the effects of the utmost efforts of muscular force; hence the maxim of Lord Bacon, "Knowledge is power," built on the maxim of the *tushiyah* itself; לי גבורה *li geburah*, MINE IS STRENGTH.

Verse 15. **By me kings reign]** Every wise and prudent king is such through the influence of Divine wisdom. And just laws and their righteous administration come from this source. In this and the following verse *five degrees* of *civil power* and *authority* are mentioned. 1. מלכים *melachim*, KINGS. 2. רוזנים *rozenim*, CONSULS. 3. שרים *sarim*, PRINCES, CHIEFS of the people. 4. נדיבים *nedibim*, NOBLES. And 5. שפטים *shophetim*, JUDGES or CIVIL MAGISTRATES. All orders of government are from God. Instead of שפטי ארץ *shophetey arets*, "judges of the earth,"

שֹׁפֵטֵי צֶדֶק *shophetey tsedek*, "righteous judges," or "judges of righteousness," is the reading of *one hundred and sixty-two* of Kennicott's and De Rossi's MSS., both in the text and in the margin, and of several ancient editions. And this is the reading of the *Vulgate*, the *Chaldee*, and the *Syriac*, and should undoubtedly supersede the other.

Verse 17. **I love them that love me]** Wisdom shows itself; teaches man the knowledge of himself; shows him also the will of God concerning him; manifests the snares and dangers of life, the allurements and unsatisfactory nature of all sensual and sinful pleasures, the blessedness of true religion, and the solid happiness which an upright soul derives from the peace and approbation of its Maker. If, then, the heart embraces this wisdom, follows this Divine teaching, and gives itself to God, his love will be shed abroad in it by the influence of the Holy Spirit. Thus we love God because he hath first loved us and the more we love him, the more we shall feel of his love, which will enable us to love him *yet more and more*; and thus we may go on increasing to eternity. Blessed be God!

**And those that seek me early shall find me.]** Not merely *betimes in the morning*, though he who does so shall find it greatly to his advantage; (see on **#Ps 4:1-8**;) but *early in life-in youth*, and as near as possible to the first dawn of *reason*. To the *young* this gracious promise is particularly made: if *they seek, they shall find*. Others, who are old, may seek and find; but *never to such advantage* as they would have done, had they sought *early*. Youth is the *time of advantage* in every respect: it is the time of *learning*, the time of *discipline*; the time of *improvement*, the time of *acquiring useful, solid, and gracious habits*. As the *first-fruits* always belong to God, it is *God's time*; the time in which he is peculiarly gracious; and in which, to sincere youthful seekers, he pours out his benefits with great profusion. "They that seek me early shall find me."

Hear, ye *young*, and ye *little ones*! God offers himself now to *you*, with all his treasures of grace and glory. Thank him for his ineffable mercy, and embrace it without delay.

Verse 18. **Riches and honour are with me]** Often the wise, prudent, and discreet man arrives literally to *riches* and *honour*; but this is not *always* the case. But there are *other riches* of which he *never fails*; and these seem to be what Solomon has particularly in view, *durable riches* and *righteousness*; the treasure deposited by God in earthen vessels.

Verse 20. **I lead in the way of righteousness]** Nothing but the teaching that comes from God by his *word* and *Spirit* can do this.

Verse 22. **The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way]** Wisdom is not *acquired* by the Divine Being; *man*, and even *angels, learn it by slow and progressive degrees*; but in God it is as eternally inherent as any other essential attribute of his nature. The *Targum* makes this wisdom a *creature*, by thus translating the passage: אֱלֹהִים בָּרְאֵנִי בְרֵישׁ בְּרִיתֵיהֶּא *Elaha barani bereish biriteiah*, "God created me in the beginning of his creatures." The *Syriac* is the same. This is as absurd and heretical as some modern glosses on the same passage.

Verse 23. **I was set up from everlasting]** נִסְכַּחְתִּי *nissachti*, "I was diffused or poured out," from נָסַח *nasach*, "to diffuse, pour abroad, as a spirit or disposition," **#Isa 29:10**. See *Parkhurst*. Or from

יָסַח, "to cover, overspread, smear over, as with *oil*;" to be *anointed* king. Hence some have translated it, *principatum habui*, I had the principality, or was a ruler, governor, and director, from eternity. All the schemes, plans, and circumstances, relative to creation, government, providence, and to all being, *material, animal, and intellectual*, were conceived in the Divine mind, by the Divine wisdom, from eternity, *or ever the earth was*. There was no *fortuitous creation*, no *jumbling concourse of original atoms*, that entered into the composition of *created beings*; all was the effect of the plans before conceived, laid down, and at last acted upon by God's eternal wisdom.

Verse 24. **When there were no depths]** תְּהוֹמוֹת *tehomoth*, before the original chaotic mass was formed. See #Ge 1:2.

**I was brought forth]** חוֹלַלְתִּי *cholalti*, "I was produced as by labouring throes." Mr. *Parkhurst* thinks that the heathen poets derived their idea of *Minerva's* (wisdom's) being born of Jupiter's brain, from some such high poetic personification as that in the text.

Verse 26. **The highest part of the dust of the world]** רֹאשׁ עֲפְרוֹת הַבָּל *rosh aphroth tebel*, "the first particle of matter." The *prima materia*, the primitive atom. All these verses (#Pr 8:3-29) are a periphrasis for *I existed before creation*; consequently before *time* was. I dwelt in God as a principle which might be communicated in its influences to intellectual beings when formed.

Verse 27. **When he prepared the heavens, I was there]** For there is no part of the creation of God in which wisdom, skill, contrivance, are more manifest, than in the construction of the visible heavens.

**When he set a compass upon the face of the depth]** Does not this refer to the establishment of the *law of gravitation*? by which all the particles of matter, tending to a *common centre*, would produce in all bodies the *orbicular* form, which we see them have; so that even the *waters* are not only retained within their boundaries, but are subjected to the *circular form*, in their great aggregate of seas, as other parts of matter are. This is called here *making a compass*, בְּחֻקֵי חוּג *bechukko chug*, sweeping a circle; and even this on *the face of the deep*, to bring the chaotic mass into *form*, regularity, and order.

Verse 28. **The clouds above]** שְׁחַקִּים *shechakim*, "the ethereal regions," taking in the whole of the atmosphere, with all its meteors, clouds, vapours, &c.

Verse 29. **When he gave to the sea his decree]** When he assigned its limits, adjusted its saltness, and proportioned the *extent of the surface* to the quantity of *vapours* to be raised from it, for the irrigation of the *terrene surface*.

**The foundations of the earth]** Those irreversible laws by which all its motions are governed; its annual and diurnal rotation, and particularly its *centrifugal* and *centripetal forces*; by the former of which it has its *annual motion* round the sun like all other planets; and by the *latter* all its particles are prevented from *flying off*, notwithstanding the great *velocity* of its motion round its own axis, which causes one thousand and forty-two miles of its equator to pass under any given point in the

heavens in the course of a single hour! These are, properly speaking, the foundations of the earth; the principles on which it is constructed, and the laws by which it is governed.

Verse 30. **Then I was with him, as one brought up]** אָמוֹן *amon*, a *nursling*, a *darling* child. Wisdom continues its parable, says *Calmet*; and represents itself as a new-born child which is ever near its parent, and takes pleasure to see him act, and to sport in his presence. This is poetical and highly figurative; and they who think they find the deity of Jesus Christ in these metaphors should be very cautious how they apply such terms as these; so that while they are endeavouring to defend the truth, they *may do nothing against the truth*, in which most of them unhappily fail.

**Rejoicing always before him]** All the images in this verse are borrowed from the state and circumstances of a *darling*, affectionate, playful child; as any one will be convinced who examines the *Hebrew text*.

Verse 31. **Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth]** There God displays especially his wisdom in ordering and directing *human beings*, and in providing for their wants. The *wisdom* of God is in an especial manner manifested in his *providence*.

**My delights were with the sons of men.]** This Divine wisdom, as it delighted in the creation of man, so it continues to delight in his *instruction*. Hence it is represented as offering its lessons of instruction continually, and using every means and opportunity to call men from folly and vice to sound knowledge, holiness, and happiness. It is to man that God especially gives *wisdom*; and he has it in the form of *reason* beyond all other creatures; therefore it is said, "My delights are with the sons of men;" to them I open my choicest treasures. They alone are capable of *sapience*, *intelligence*, and *discursive reason*.

Verse 32. **Now therefore]** Since I delight so much in conveying instruction; since I have the happiness of the *children of Adam* so much at heart, *hearken unto me*; and this is for your own interest, for *blessed* are they who *keep my ways*.

Verse 34. **Watching daily at my gates]** Wisdom is represented as having a *school* for the instruction of men; and seems to point out some of the most *forward* of her *scholars* coming, through their intense desire to learn, even *before the gates were opened*, and waiting there for admission, that they might hear *every word* that was uttered, and not lose one accent of the heavenly teaching. *Blessed are such*.

Verse 35. **Whoso findeth me]** The wisdom that comes from God, teaching to avoid evil and cleave to that which is good; *findeth life*-gets that knowledge which qualifies him to answer the *purposes* for which he was *made*; for he is *quickened with Christ*, and made a partaker of the Divine life. *Christ dwells in his heart by faith*; he *lives a new life*, for *Christ liveth in him*; the law of the *spirit of life* in Christ Jesus makes him free from the law of *sin* and *death*. *And shall obtain favour of the Lord*. The more he walks after the Divine counsel, the more he obtains of the Divine image; and the more he resembles his Maker, the more he partakes of the Divine favour.

Verse 36. **Wrongeth his own soul]** It is not *Satan*, it is not *sin*, properly speaking, that hurts him; it is *himself*. If he received the teaching of God, *sin would have no dominion over him*; if he *resisted the devil*, the devil would *flee from him*.

**Love death.]** They do it in *effect*, if not in *fact*; for as they love sin, that leads to *death*, so they may be justly said to love *death*, the wages of sin. He that works in this case, works for wages; and he must love the *wages*, seeing he *labours* so hard in the *work*.

I HAVE gone through this fine chapter, and given the best exposition of it in my power. I have also, as well as others, *weighed every word*, and closely examined their *radical* import, their connection among themselves, and the connection of the subject of the chapter with what has gone before, and with what follows after; and I cannot come, conscientiously, to *any other* interpretation than that which I have given. I am thoroughly satisfied that it speaks not one word either about the *Divine* or *human nature of Christ*, much less of any *eternal filiation* of his *Divinity*. And I am fully persuaded, had there not been a preconceived creed, no soul of man, by fair criticism, would have ever found out that fond opinion of the eternal sonship of the Divine nature, which so many commentators persuade us they find here. That it has been thus applied in *early ages*, as well as in *modern times*, I am sufficiently aware; and that many other portions of the Divine records have been appealed to, in order to support a particular opinion, and many that were false in themselves, must be known to those who are acquainted with the *fathers*. But many quote *them* who know nothing of them. As to the fathers in general, they were not all agreed on this subject, some supposing *Christ*, others the *Holy Spirit*, was meant in this chapter. But of these we may safely state, that there is not a *truth* in the most orthodox creed, that cannot be proved by their authority, nor a *heresy* that has disgraced the Romish Church, that may not challenge them as its abettors. In points of *doctrine*, their authority is, *with me*, nothing. The WORD of GOD alone contains my creed. On a number of points I can go to the Greek and Latin fathers of the Church, to know what *they believed*, and what the *people of their respective communions* believed; but after all this I must return to *God's word*, to know what he would have ME to believe. No part of a *Protestant creed* stands on the decision of *fathers* and *councils*. By appealing to the Bible alone, as the only rule for the faith and practice of Christians, they confounded and defeated their papistical adversaries, who could not prove their doctrines but by *fathers* and *councils*. Hence their peculiar doctrines stand in their ultimate proof upon THESE; and those of Protestantism on the BIBLE. Some late writers upon this subject, whose names I spare, have presumed much on *what they have said on this subject*; but before any man, who seeks for sober truth, will receive any of their *conclusions*, he will naturally look whether their *premises* be sound, or whether from *sound principles* they have drawn *legitimate conclusions*. They say this chapter is a sufficient foundation to build their doctrine on. I say it is no foundation at all; that it never has been proved, and never can be proved, that it speaks at all of the doctrine in question. It has nothing to do with it. On this conviction of mine, their proofs drawn from this chapter must go with *me* for *nothing*. I have been even shocked with reading over some things that have been *lately written* on the subject. I have said in my heart, They have taken away my ETERNAL LORD, and I know not where they have laid him. I cannot believe their doctrine; I never did; I hope I never shall. I believe in the holy Trinity; in three persons in the Godhead, of which none is before or after another. I believe JEHOVAH, JESUS, the HOLY GHOST to be one infinite, eternal GODHEAD, subsisting ineffably in *three persons*. I believe Jesus the Christ to be, as to his *Divine nature*, as *unoriginated* and *eternal* as JEHOVAH himself; and with the *Holy Ghost* to be one infinite Godhead, *neither person being created*,

*begotten, nor proceeding*, more than another: as to its *essence*, but *one* TRINITY, in an infinite, eternal and inseparable UNITY. And this TRIUNE GOD is the object of my faith, my adoration, and my confidence. But I believe not in an eternal sonship or generation of the Divine nature of Jesus Christ. *Here* I have long stood, *here* I now stand, and *here* I trust to stand in the hour of death, in the day of judgment, and to all eternity. Taking the Scriptures in general, I find a *plurality* in the Divine nature; taking the grand *part* mentioned, #Mt 3:16, 17, I find that *plurality* restrained to a *trinity*, in the most unequivocal and evident manner: Jesus, who was baptized in Jordan; the HOLY GHOST, who descended upon him who was baptized; and the FATHER, manifested by the VOICE from heaven that said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And how that person called JESUS the CHRIST, in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, could be called the *Son of God*, I have shown in my note, see Clarke on "Lu 1:35".

Some writers, in their defense of the doctrine above, which I venture to say *I do not believe*, have made reflections, in real or pretended pity, on the belief of their Trinitarian brethren, which have very little to do with candour: viz., "How the supporters of this hypothesis can avoid either the error of Tritheism on the one hand, or Sabellianism on the other, is difficult to conceive." Now, the supporters of the doctrine of the underived and unbegotten eternity of Christ's Divine nature might as well say of them: How the supporters of the eternal sonship of Christ can avoid the error of Arianism on the one hand, and Arianism on the other, it is difficult to conceive. But I would not say so; for though I know Arians who hold that doctrine, and express their belief nearly in the same words; yet I know many most conscientious Trinitarians who hold the doctrine of the eternal sonship, and yet believe in the proper deity, or eternal godhead, of Jesus Christ. After all, as a very wise and excellent man lately said: "While we have every reason to be satisfied of the soundness of each other's faith, we must allow each to explain his own sentiments in his own *words*: here, in the *words* used in explanation, a little latitude may be safely allowed." To this correct sentiment I only add:—

Scimus; et hanc veniam petimusque damusque vicissim.

—HORACE.

"I grant it; and the license give and take."

I have passed the *waters of strife*, and do not wish to recross them: the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. I will have nothing to do with ill-tempered, abusive men; I wish them more light and better manners.

And while I am on this subject, let me add one thing, which I am sure will not please all the generation of his people; and it is this: that Jesus Christ, having taken upon him human nature, which was afterwards crucified, and expired upon the cross, did by those acts make a full, perfect, and sufficient offering, sacrifice, and atonement for the sin of the whole world. That he died, paid down the *redemption price*, for *every soul of man*, that *was ever born* into the world, and *shall ever be born* into it. That all who lay hold on the hope set before them shall be saved; (and all *may* thus lay hold;) and none shall perish but those who would not come to Christ that they might have life. And that men perish, not because they were not redeemed, but because they would not accept of the redemption.

To conclude on this subject, it will be necessary to refer the reader to the remarkable *opposition* that subsists between *this* and the *preceding chapter*. There, the *prostitute* is represented as *going out into the streets* to seek her prey; and the *alluring words of carnal wisdom* to excite the animal appetite to sinful gratification, which she uses: *here*, heavenly *wisdom* is represented as *going out into the streets*, to the *high places*, the *gates of the city*, to counteract her designs, and lead back the simple to God and truth.

These *personifications* were frequent among the Jews. In the Book of *Ecclesiasticus* we find a similar personification, and expressed in almost similar terms; and surely none will suppose that the writer of that Apocryphal book had either the Christian doctrine of the *Trinity*, or the *sonship of Christ* in view.

I will give a few passages:—

"WISDOM shall *glory in the midst of her people*; in the *congregation* of the Most High shall *she open her mouth*, and triumph before his power. *I came out of the mouth of the Most High*, and covered the earth as a cloud. *I dwelt in the high places*; I alone *compassed the circuit of the heaven*, and walked in the *bottom of the deep*, in the waves of the sea, and in all the earth. *He created me from the beginning, before the world*; and I shall never fail. I am the mother of fair love, and fear, and knowledge, and holy hope. I therefore, *being eternal*, am given to all my children which are named of him. *Come unto me*, and fill yourselves with my fruits. I also came out as a brook from a river, and a conduit into a garden," &c., &c., **Ecc1 24:1**, &c. This kind of personification of wisdom we have had in the preceding chapters; and in the following chapter we shall find the figure still kept up.

# PROVERBS

## CHAPTER IX

*Wisdom builds her house, makes her provision for a great feast, calls her guests, and exhorts them to partake of her entertainment, 14. Different admonitions relative to the acquisition of wisdom, 7-12. The character and conduct of a bad woman, 13-18.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. IX.

The same Wisdom speaks here who spoke in the preceding chapter. *There* she represented herself as manifest in all the *works of God* in the natural world; all being constructed according to counsels proceeding from an infinite understanding. *Here*, she represents herself as the great *potentate*, who was to rule all that she had constructed; and having an immense *family* to provide for, had made an abundant *provision*, and calls all to partake of it. This, says *Calmet*, is the continuation of the parable begun in the preceding chapter, where wisdom is represented as a venerable lady, whose real beauties and solid promises are opposed to the false allurements of PLEASURE, who was represented in the seventh chapter under the idea of a debauched and impudent woman. *This one*, to draw young people into her snares, describes the *perfumes*, the *bed*, and the *festival* which she has prepared. WISDOM acts in the same way: but, instead of the debauchery, the false pleasures, and the criminal connections which *pleasure* had promised, offers her guests a strong, well-built, magnificent palace, chaste and solid pleasures, salutary instructions, and a life crowned with blessedness. This is the sum and the substance of the parable; but as in the preceding part, so in this, men have produced strange creatures of their own brain, by way of explanation. One specimen of this mode of interpretation may suffice.

The house built by wisdom is the holy *humanity of Jesus Christ*; the *seven pillars* are the *seven sacraments*, or the *seven gifts of the Holy Ghost*, or the *whole of the apostles, preachers, and ministers of the Church*; the *slain beasts* are the *sacrifice of Christ's body* upon the cross; and the *bread and mingled wine* are the *bread and wine* in the *sacrament of the Lord's Supper!*—FATHERS and DOCTORS.

If we have recourse to any other particulars than those given above in the summary of the chapter, let us follow the first part of the parable, where wisdom is represented as laying the plan of the creation; and then perhaps we may say with safety, that wisdom, having *produced* the grand *ichnograph* or *ground plot* of the whole, with all the requisite *elevations* and *specifications* of *materials*, comes to show us, in this part, that the whole has been *constructed on this plan*; and specifies the *end* for which this august building has been raised.

Verse 1. **Wisdom hath builded her house**] The eternal counsel of God has framed the *universe*.

**She hath hewn out her seven pillars**] Every thing has been so constructed as to exhibit a scene of grandeur, stability, and durability.

Verse 2. **She hath killed her beasts**] God has made the most ample provision for the innumerable tribes of animal and intellectual beings, which people the whole vortex of created nature.

Verse 3. **She hath sent forth her maidens**] The wisdom of God has made use of the *most proper means* to communicate Divine knowledge to the inhabitants of the earth; as a good and gracious Creator wills to teach them *whence they came*, how they are *supported*, *whither they are going*, and for what *end* they were formed. 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.

Verse 4. **Whoso is simple**] Let the young, heedless, and giddy attend to my teaching.

**Him that wanteth understanding**] Literally, *he that wanteth a heart*; who is without *courage*, is *feeble* and *fickle*, and *easily drawn* aside from the holy commandment.

Verse 5. **Come, eat of my bread**] Not only receive my instructions, but *act* according to my directions.

**Drink of the wine—I have mingled.**] Enter into my counsels; be not contented with *superficial knowledge* on any subject, where any thing *deeper* may be attained. Go by the *streams* to the *fountain head*. Look into the *principles* on which they were formed; investigate their *nature*, examine their *properties*, acquaint thyself with their *relations*, *connections*, *influences*, and various *uses*. See the *skill*, *power*, and *goodness* of God in their creation. And when thou hast learned all within thy reach, know that thou knowest but little of the manifold wisdom of God. Let what thou hast learned humble thee, by showing thee how very little thou dost know. Thou hast drunk of the *provided wine*; but that *wine* was mingled with *water*, for God will hide pride from man. He dwells only on the surface of religious and philosophical learning, who does not perceive and feel that he is yet but a *child* in knowledge; that he *see through a glass darkly*; that he *perceives men like trees walking*; and that there are lengths, breadths, depths, and heights, in the works and ways of God, which it will require an eternity to fathom. Here below the pure wine is mingled with water: but this is God's work. Yet there is enough; do not therefore be contented with a little. To this subject the words of the poet may be well applied:—

A little learning is a dangerous thing;  
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring:  
For scanty draughts intoxicate the brain,  
But drinking largely sobers us again.

POPE

Among the ancient *Jews*, *Greeks*, 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*. But probably the 𐤆𐤓𐤁 𐤆𐤓𐤁 *yayin 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.

If we consider the *mixed wine* as meaning this *strong wine*, then the import of the metaphor will be, a thorough investigation of the works of God will invigorate the soul, strengthen all the mental powers, enlarge their capacity, and enable the mind to take the most exalted views of the *wonders of God's skill* manifested in the *operations of his hand*.

Verse 6. **Forsake the foolish]** For the companion of fools must be a fool.

**And live]** Answer the *end* for which thou wert *born*.

Verse 7. **He that reproveth a scorner]** רָבֵץ *lets*, the person who *mocks* at sacred things; the *libertine*, the *infidel*; who turns the most serious things into ridicule, and, by his *wit*, often succeeds in rendering the person who reproves him ridiculous. Wisdom seems here to intimate that it is vain to attempt by reproof to amend such: and yet we must not suffer sin upon our neighbour; at all hazards, we must deliver our own soul. But no reproof should be given to any, but in the *spirit of love* and deep concern; and when they contradict and blaspheme, leave them to God.

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.

Verse 10. **The fear of the Lord]** See on #Pr 1:7. The knowledge of the holy; קְדוּשִׁים *kedoshim*, of the holy ones: *Sanctorum*, of the saints.—*Vulgate*. Βουλή αγίων, the counsel of the holy persons.

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 yieldeth no fruit."

Verse 12. **If thou be wise]** It is thy own interest to be religious. Though thy example may be very useful to thy neighbours and friends, yet the chief benefit is to *thyself*. But if thou scorn-refuse to receive-the doctrines of wisdom, and die in thy sins, *thou alone* shalt suffer the vengeance of an offended God.

Verse 13. **A foolish woman is clamorous]** Vain, empty women, are those that make *most noise*. And she that is *full* of clamour, has generally *little* or no *sense*. We have had this character already, see #Pr 7:11. The translation of the *Septuagint* is very remarkable: Γυνη αφρων και θρασεια, ευδης ψωμου γινεται, "A lewd and foolish woman shall be in need of a morsel of bread."

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 #Pr 7:6, &c., where the reader will find a similar character.

Verse 16. **Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither]** FOLLY or PLEASURE here personified, uses the very same expressions as employed by *Wisdom*, #Pr 9:4. *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*."  
DE FOE.

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 multitudes shows that they are ruled by this adage. On it are built all the *adulterous intercourses* in the land.

Verse 18. **But he knoweth not that the dead are there]** See on #Pr 2:18. He does not know that it was in this way the first apostates from God and truth walked. רֵפְאִים *rephaim*; γίγαντες, 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 Clarke's notes on "Ge 6:1", &c.

**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 thou back, that thou mayest not die in this place; neither fix thy eyes upon her; so shalt thou pass by those strange waters. But abstain thou from strange waters, and drink not of another's fountain, that thou 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 forsoth schal ben joyned 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.

# PROVERBS

## CHAPTER X

*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.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. X

Verse 1. **The proverbs of Solomon**] Some ancient MSS. of the *Vulgate* have *Proverbiorum liber secundus*, "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**] The parallels in this and several of the succeeding chapters are those which *Bishop Lowth* calls the *antithetic*; when two lines correspond with each other by an opposition of *terms* and *sentiments*; when the second is contrasted with the first; sometimes in *expression*, sometimes in *sense* only. Accordingly the degrees of antithesis are various; from an exact contraposition of *word to word*, through a whole sentence, down to a general *disparity*, with something of a *contrariety* in the two propositions, as:—

*A wise son rejoiceth in his father.  
But a foolish son is the grief of his mother.*

Where *every word* has its *opposite*; for the terms *father* and *mother* are, as the logicians say, relatively opposite.

Verse 2. **Treasures of wickedness**] Property gained by wicked means.

**Delivered from death**] Treasures gained by robbery often bring their possessors to an untimely death; but those gained by righteous dealing bring with them no such consequences.

Verse 3. **But he casteth away the substance of the wicked.**] But instead of רשעים *reshaim*, the wicked, בוגדים *bogedim*, hypocrites, or perfidious persons, is the reading of *twelve* or *fourteen* of *Kennicott's* and *De Rossi's* MSS., and some *editions*; but it is not acknowledged by any of the ancient versions.

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.

Verse 4. **He becometh poor]** God has ordered, in the course of his providence, that he who will not *work* shall not *eat*. And he always blesses the work of the *industrious* man.

Verse 5. **He that gathereth in summer]** All the work of the field should be done in the *season suitable to it*. If *summer* and *harvest* be neglected, in vain does a man expect the fruits of *autumn*.

Verse 6. **Violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.]** As *blessings shall be on the head of the just*, so the *violence of the wicked shall cover their face* with shame and confusion. Their own violent dealings shall be visited upon them. ~~The mouth forsoth of unpitious men wickidnesse covereth.~~—*Old MS. Bible*. "The forehead of the ungodly is past shame, and presumptuous."—*Coverdale*.

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.

Verse 8. **A prating fool shall fall.]** This clause is repeated in the *tenth* verse. The *wise man will receive the commandment: but the shallow blabbing fool shall be cast down*. See #Pr 10:10.

Verse 9. **He that walketh uprightly]** 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*.

Verse 10. **He that winketh with the eye]** Instead of the latter clause, on which see #Pr 10:8, the *Septuagint* has, ο δε ελεγχων μετα παρησιας ειρηνοποιει "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.

Verse 11. **The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life]** מֵקוֹר חַיִּים mekor chaiyim, is the *vein of lives*; an allusion to the *great aorta*, which conveys the blood from the heart to every part of the body. The latter clause of this verse is the same with that of #Pr 10:6.

Verse 12. **Hatred stirreth up strifes]** 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*.

Verse 13. **A rod is for the back of him]** 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*.

Verse 14. **Wise men lay up knowledge]** 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 neighbour.

Verse 15. **The rich man's wealth is his strong city]** Behold a mystery in providence; there is not a *rich man* on earth but becomes such by means of the *poor*! Property comes from the *labour* of the *poor*, and *the king himself is served of the field*. How unjust, diabolically so, is it to *despise* or *oppress* those by whose labour all property is acquired!

**The destruction of the poor is their poverty.]** A man in abject poverty never arises out of this pit. They have no nucleus about which property may aggregate. The poet spoke well:—

Haud facile emergunt, quorum virtutibus obstat  
Res angusta domi.

"They rarely emerge from poverty, whose exertions are cramped by want at home."

Verse 16. **The labour of the righteous]** The good man labours 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.

Verse 17. **He is in the way of life]** The truly religious man accumulates knowledge that he may the better know how to live to God, and do most good among men.

Verse 18. **He that hideth]** 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 *thought nothing of the injury they had sustained*; had *passed by the insult*, &c.! Thus *lying lips* covered the malevolence of a wicked heart.

Verse 19. **In the multitude of words]** It is impossible to speak much, and yet speak nothing but truth; and injure no man's character in the mean while.

Verse 20. **The heart of the wicked is little worth]** כִּמְעוּט *kimat*, is like little or nothing; or is *like dross*, while the tongue of the just is like *silver*. A sinner's heart is worth nothing, and is good for nothing; and yet because it is his most *hidden part*, he vaunts of its *honesty, goodness*, &c.! Yes, yes; it is very honest and good, only the devil is in it! that is all.

Verse 22. **The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich]** Whatever we receive in the way of providence, has God's blessing in it, and will do us good. Cares, troubles, and difficulties come with all property not acquired in this way; but God's blessing gives simple enjoyment, and levies no tax upon the comfort.

Verse 23. It is **a sport to a fool to do mischief**] What a millstone weight of iniquity hangs about the necks of most of the *jesters, facetious and witty* people! "How many lies do they tell in jest, to go to the devil in earnest!"

Verse 24. **The fear of the wicked**] 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.

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*, **יסוד עולם** *yesod olam*, shall never be shaken.

Verse 26. **As vinegar to the teeth**] The *acid* softening and dissolving the *alkali* of the bone, so as to impair their texture, and render them incapable of *masticating*; and as *smoke* affects the eyes, irritating their tender vessels, so as to give pain and prevent distinct vision; so the sluggard, the lounging, thriftless messenger, who never returns in time with the desired answer.

Verse 28. **The expectation of the wicked shall perish.**] A wicked man is always imposing on himself by the *hope of God's mercy and final happiness*; and he continues *hoping*, till he dies without receiving that *mercy* which alone would entitle him to that *glory*.

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 *labours* the *stronger* he grows. The same sentiment as that in **#Isa 40:31**.

Verse 30. **The righteous shall never be removed**] Because he is built on the *eternal foundation*. See on **#Pr 10:25**.

Verse 31. **The froward tongue shall be cut out.**] This probably alludes to the punishment of *cutting out the tongue for blasphemy, treasonable speeches, profane swearing*, or such like. **The tunge of schrewis schal perishe**.—Old MS. Bible. Were the tongue of every *shrew* or *scold* to be extracted, we should soon have much less *noise* in the world.

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 speaketh forth. As the love of God is not in his heart, so the law of kindness is not on his lips.

# PROVERBS

## CHAPTER XI

*A parallel of the advantages of the righteous and wise, opposed to the miseries of the wicked and the foolish. True and false riches.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. XI

Verse 1. **A false balance is abomination]** 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.

**But a just weight]** אֶבֶן שְׁלֵמָה *eben shelemah*, the *perfect stone* probably because weights were first made of stone; see the law, #De 25:13-16.

Verse 2. When **pride cometh]** The proud man thinks much more of himself than any other can do; and, expecting to be treated according to his own supposed worth, which treatment he seldom meets with, he is repeatedly mortified, ashamed, confounded, and rendered indignant.

**With the lowly]** צְנוּעִים *tsenuim*, ταπεινους, the *humble*, the *modest*, as opposed to the *proud*, referred to in the first clause. The humble man looks for nothing but justice; has the meanest opinion of himself; expects nothing in the way of commendation or praise; and can never be disappointed but in receiving praise, which he neither expects nor desires.

Verse 4. **Riches profit not in the day of wrath]** 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.

Verse 7. **When a wicked man dieth]** HOPE is a great blessing to man in his present state of trial and suffering; because it leads him to expect a favourable 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!

Verse 8. **The wicked cometh in his stead.]** Often God makes this distinction; in public calamities and in sudden accidents he rescues the righteous, and leaves the wicked, who has filled up the measure of his iniquities, to be seized by the hand of death. *Justice*, then, does its own work; for *mercy* has been rejected.

Verse 9. **A hypocrite with his mouth]** חָנֵף *chaneph* might be better translated *infidel* than *hypocrite*. The latter is one that pretends to religion; that uses it for *secular purposes*. The former is one who *disbelieves* Divine revelation, and accordingly is *polluted*, and lives in *pollution*. This is

properly the force of the original word. Such persons deal in calumny and lies, and often thus destroy the character of their neighbour. Besides, they are very zealous in propagating their own infidel notions; and thus, by this means, destroy their neighbour; but the experimental knowledge which the *just* have of God and his salvation prevents them from being ensnared.

Verse 10. **When it goeth well]** An upright, pious, sensible man is a great blessing to the neighbourhood where he resides, by his example, his advice, and his prayers. The considerate prize him on these accounts, and rejoice in his prosperity. But when the *wicked perish*, who has been a general curse by the contagion of his example and conversation, there is not only no regret expressed for his decease, but a *general joy* because God has removed him.

Verse 12. **He that is void of wisdom]** A foolish man is generally abundant in his censures; he dwells on the *defects* of his neighbour, and is sure to bring them into the most prominent view. But a *man of understanding*—a prudent, sensible man, hides those defects wherever he can, and puts the most charitable construction on those which he cannot conceal.

Verse 13. **A talebearer]** הוֹלֵךְ רַחִיל *holech rachil*, the walking busybody, the trader in scandal.

**Revealeth secrets]** Whatever was confided to him he is sure to publish abroad. The word means a *hawker*, or *travelling chapman*. Such are always great newsmongers; and will tell even their *own secrets*, rather than have nothing to say.

Verse 15. **He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it]** He shall find evil upon evil in it. See on **#Pr 6:1**.

Verse 16. **A gracious woman retaineth honor]** Instead of this clause, the *Septuagint* have, Γυνή ευχαριστος εγειρει ανδρι δοξαν, "A gracious woman raiseth up honour to the man;" Θρονος δε ατιμιας γυνη μισουσα δικαια, "But she that hateth righteous things is a throne of dishonour." A good wife is an honour 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!

Verse 17. **The merciful man doeth good to his own soul]** Every gracious disposition is increased while a man is exercised in showing mercy. No man can show an act of disinterested mercy without benefiting his own soul, by improving his moral feeling.

**But he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh.]** We seldom see a peevish, fretful, vindictive man either in good health, or good plight of body. I have often heard it observed of such, "He frets his flesh off his bones."

Verse 18. **Worketh a deceitful work]** An *unstable* work; nothing is durable that he does, except his crimes.

Verse 19. **Righteousness tendeth to life]** True godliness promotes health, and is the best means of lengthening out life; but wicked men live not out half their days.



# PROVERBS

## CHAPTER XII

*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, &c.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. XII

Verse 1. **Whoso loveth instruction]** מוֹסֵר *musar*, discipline or correction, *loves knowledge*; for correction is the way to knowledge.

**But he that hateth reproof is brutish.]** בַּעַר *baar*, he is a bear; and expects no more benefit from correction than the *ox* does from the *goad*.

Verse 2. **A good man obtaineth favour]** 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 *favour of the Lord*.

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*.

Verse 4. **A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband]** אִשָּׁה חַיִּל *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 labours 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 *labour* 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, &c. 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 **rotteness 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 *rotteness 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."

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*.

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 indigens 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*, &c., would rather starve, than put their hands to menial labour. Though they may be *lords*, how much to be preferred is the *simple peasant*, who supports himself and family by the drudgery of life!

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 labouring 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: **יודע צדיק נפש בהמה** *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.** **אחזרי** *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.

Verse 11. **He that tilleth his land]** God's blessing will be in the labour 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: 'Ὅς ἐστὶν ἡδύς ἐν οἴνων διατριβαίς, ἐν τοῖς αὐτοῦ οὐχὼρωμασι καταλείψει ἀτιμίαν. "He who is a boon companion in banquets, shall leave dishonour 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*.

Verse 12. **The wicked desireth the net of evil men]** They applaud their ways, and are careful to imitate them in their wiles.

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*.

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.

Verse 18. **There is that speaketh]** Instead of בֹּטֵה *boteh, blabbing out, blustering*, several MSS. have בֹּטֵחַ *boteach*, TRUSTING: and instead of כִּמְדַקְרוֹת *kemadkeroth, AS the piercings*, seven MSS., with the *Complutensian Polyglot*, have בִּמְדַקְרוֹת *bemadkeroth, IN the piercings*. "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.

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*.

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.

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*.

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.

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 favourable word will remove despondency; and that word, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee," will instantly remove despair.

Verse 26. **The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour]** That is, if the neighbour be a wicked man. The spirit of the proverb lies here: The *POOR righteous man is more excellent* than his *sinful neighbour*, though *affluent* and *noble*. The *Syriac* has it, "The righteous deviseth good to his neighbour." A late commentator has translated it, "The righteous explore their pastures." How **מֵרַעְהוּ** 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 neighbour as himself.

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 wynnynge: and the substance of a man schal ben the pris of gold.**

By translating **רֵמִיָּהּ** *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 **רֵמִיָּהּ** *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.

Verse 28. **In the way of righteousness is life]** חַיִּים *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 *labour 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.

# PROVERBS

## CHAPTER XIII

*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, &c.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. XIII

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 fulfil *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 labours hard to acquire money, *yet hath nothing*; his excessive *covetousness* not being satisfied 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 #1Ki 11:36: "And unto his son will I give one tribe, that David my servant may have a *light* (נֵר, a lamp) always before me." #1Ki 15:4: "Nevertheless for David's sake did the Lord give them a *lamp*, to set up his *son* after him." See also #Ps 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 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*.

Verse 11. **Wealth gotten by vanity]** Wealth that is not the result of *honest industry* and *hard labour* is seldom permanent. All fortunes acquired by speculation, lucky hits, and ministering to the pride or luxury of others, &c., 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, עֵץ חַיִּים 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 יְשׁוּעָה 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," מְקוֹר חַיִּים

*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 15. **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*: Βασιλευς θρασυς, 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 honour and safety to the commonwealth.

Verse 19. **The desire accomplished**] See on #Pr 13:12.

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 quæsitis non gaudet tertius hæres.

"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 Rev. 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.

# PROVERBS

## CHAPTER XIV

*Various moral sentiments. The antithesis between wisdom and folly, and the different effects of each.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. XIV

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 *thrifless* 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*.

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*.

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 labour 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 labour of the ox*.

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.

Verse 7. **When thou perceivest not—the lips of knowledge.]** Instead of דעה daath, *knowledge*, several MSS. have שקר 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.

Verse 8. Is **to understand his way]** Instead of הבין habin, *to understand*, החין hachin, *to DIRECT* his way, is found in one MS. It makes a very good sense.

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.

Verse 10. **The heart knoweth his own bitterness]** מֵרַת נַפְשׁוֹ *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.

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 favour and their Church's gratitude. But cruelty and murder are the *short road*, the *near way*, to eternal perdition.

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*.

Verse 14. **The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways]** 1. Who is the *backslider*? סוּג *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 twingings 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? (אִישׁ טוֹב *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.

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.

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*.

Verse 17. **He that is soon angry]** קצר אפיים *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*.

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.

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: Ut hirundines festivo tempore præsto sunt, frigore pulsæ recedunt: ita falsi amici sereno tempore præsto sunt: simul atque fortunæ hiemem viderint, evolant omnes.—Lib. iv., ad Herenn. "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:—

Donec eris felix, multos numerabis amicos:  
Nullus ad amissas ibit amicus opes.

"As long as thou art prosperous, thou shalt have many friends: but who of them will regard thee when thou hast lost thy wealth?"

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*.

Verse 23. **In all labour 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 *labours*, so will be his *profit*: but he who *talks* much *labours* little. And a man of *words* is seldom a man of *deeds*. *Less talk and more work*, is one of our own ancient advices.

Verse 24. **But the foolishness of fools is folly.]** The *Targum* reads, *The honour of fools is folly*. The fool, from his foolishness, produces acts of folly. This appears to be the meaning.

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.

Verse 27. **The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life]** מֵקוֹרַי חַיִּים mekor chaim, 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 #Pr 4:23; 10:12.

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, 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.

Verse 29. That is **hasty of spirit]** קֵצָר רוּחַ 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 אֵרֶךְ אֲפִימָם erech appayim, *long of nostrils*; see on #Pr 14:17; and of the same import with St. Paul's μακροθυμια, *longsuffering, longmindedness*. See on #Eph 4:2.

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.

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.

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.

Verse 34. **But sin is a reproach to any people.]** I am satisfied this is not the sense of the original, **וְחֶסֶד לְאֲמִים חַטָּאת** *vechesed leummim chattath*; which would be better rendered, *And mercy is a sin-offering for the people*. The *Vulgate* has, *Miseros autem facit populos peccatum*, "sin makes the people wretched." **Ἐλασσονουσι δε φυλας αμαρτιαι**; "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.

Verse 35. **The king's favour 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 endeavouring 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!*

# PROVERBS

## CHAPTER XV

*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.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. XV

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.

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.

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.

Verse 4. **A wholesome tongue is a tree of life]** Here again is an allusion to the paradisiacal tree, עץ חיים *ets chaiyim*, "the tree of lives."

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."

Verse 11. **Hell and destruction]** שׂוֹל וְאֲבַדּוֹן *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.

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*.

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.

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.

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*.

Verse 22. **But in the multitude of counsellors**] See Clarke's note on "Pr 11:14". But יוֹעֲצִים רֹבֹבֹב *rob yoatsim* might be translated, chief or master of the council, the prime minister.

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*.

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*.

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*.

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.

Verse 29. **The Lord is far from the wicked**] He is neither near to *hear*, nor near to *help*.

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.

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.

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.

Verse 33. **The fear of the Lord] See Clarke's note on "Pr 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 honour is humility.]** That is, few persons ever arrive at *honour* 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.

# PROVERBS

## CHAPTER XVI

*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.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. XVI

Verse 1. **The preparations of the heart in man]** The Hebrew is **לֵאדָם מְעַרְכֵי לֵב** *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*, **מְעַרְכֵי** *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.

Hominis est animam preparare; et Domini gubernare linguam.—VULGATE. "It is the part of man to prepare his soul: it is the prerogative of the Lord to govern the tongue." **אֲדָם מְעַרְכֵי לֵב וְיְהוָה מְעַרְכֵי לֵשׁוֹן** *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. **Καρδια ανδρος λογζεσθω δικαγια, ινα υπο του Θεου διορθωθη τα διαβηματα αυτη**.—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 is to maken redy the intwitt: and of the Lorde to governe the tungge**.—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.

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.

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.]** רעה ליום רשע וגם vegam rasha leynom raah. 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 רעה 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 *Syriac*: 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 doth 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.

Verse 5. 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 #Pr 11:21.

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: **בחסד ואמת יכפר עון** *bechased veemeth yechapper avon*; "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 **יכפר** *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 œuvres 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, l'equite dans le commerce. Voyez #Pr 3:3; 14:22; 20:28." "Iniquity is redeemed by mercy and truth.' We expiate our sins by works of *mercy* towards our neighbour; 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 neighbours*, 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, &c., 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.

Verse 7. **When a man's ways please the Lord]** God is the guardian and defence 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.

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.

Verse 10. **A divine sentence]** **קסם** *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.

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.

Verse 12. It is **an abomination to kings, &c.]** In all these verses the wise man refers to *monarchical government rightly administered*. And the proverbs on this subject are all plain.

Verse 16. **How much better—to get wisdom than gold?]** Who believes this, though spoken by the wisest of men, under Divine inspiration?

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*.

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. חצי הספר *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.

Verse 22. **Understanding is a well-spring of life]** מקור חיים *mekor chaiyim*; another allusion to the *artery* that carries the blood from the heart to distribute it to all the extremities of the body.

Verse 23. **The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth]** He has a wise heart; he speaks as it dictates; and therefore his speeches are all speeches of wisdom.

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.

Verse 25. **There is a way that seemeth right]** This whole verse is precisely the same as that #Pr 14:12.

Verse 26. **He that laboureth]** No thanks to a man for his labour and industry; if he do not work he must *starve*.

Verse 27. **An ungodly man diggeth up evil]** How will the following suit?

Effodiuntur opes irritamenta malorum

"*Wealth, the incitement to all evil, is digged up out the earth.*"

A wicked man labours 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 neighbours, as *fire* is in igniting dry stubble.

Verse 30. **He shutteth his eyes to devise, &c.]** 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.

Verse 31. **The hoary head is a crown of glory]** The latter part of the verse is very well added, for many a *sinner* has a *hoary head*.

Verse 32. **He that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh 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.

The spirit of this maxim is so self-evident, that most nations have formed similar proverbs. The classical reader will remember the following in HOR., Odar. lib. ii., Od. 2:—

Latius regnes, avidum domando  
Spiritus, quam si Libyam remotis  
Gadibus jungas, et uterque Pœnus  
Serviat uni.

"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."

FRANCIS.

And the following from OVID is not less striking:

—————Fortior est qui se, quam qui fortissima vincit  
*Moenia, nec virtus altius ire potest.*

"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.

Verse 33. **The lot is cast into the lap]** On the *lot*, see Clarke's note on "**Nu 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*.

# PROVERBS

## CHAPTER XVII

*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.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. XVII

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*.

Verse 3. **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.

Verse 4. **A wicked doer giveth heed]** An evil heart is disposed and ever ready to receive evil; and liars delight in lies.

Verse 5. **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.

Verse 7. **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.

Verse 8. **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*.

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.

Verse 12. **Let a bear robbed of her whelps]** At which times such animals are peculiarly fierce. See Clarke's note on "2Sa 17:8".

Verse 13. **Whoso rewardeth evil for good]** 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.

Verse 14. **The beginning of strife is as when one letteth 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, &c.

**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*, הִתְגַּלְעַ *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.

Verse 17. **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*.

Verse 18. **Striketh hands]** *Striking* each other's hands, or *shaking hands*, was anciently the *form* in concluding a contract. See Clarke's notes on "Pr 6:1".

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.

Verse 22. **A merry heart doeth good like a medicine]** Instead of גֵּהַח *gehah*, a *medicine*, it appears that the *Chaldee* and *Syriac* had read in their copies גֵּוָה *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, &c. All these work *death*.

Verse 23. **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.

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.

Verse 26. Nor **to strike princes for equity.**] To fall out with the ruler of the people, and to take off his head under pretence 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.

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.

# PROVERBS

## CHAPTER XVIII

*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.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. XVIII

Verse 1. **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."

My old MS. Bible translates, *Occasioun seeketh that wil go awai fro a freend: at al tyme he schal ben wariable.*

*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 Hebrew: **לתאווה יבקש נפרד בכל תושיה יתגלע** *lethaavah yebakkesh niphrad, bechol tushiyah yithgalla*. 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.

Verse 2. **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:" so I understand **כי אם בהתגלותה** *ki im behithgalloth*. 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.

Verse 3. **When the wicked cometh, &c.]** 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*.

Verse 4. **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, **מְקוֹר חַכְמָה** *mekor chochmah*, "the vein of wisdom," ever throwing out its healthy streams: but **מְקוֹר חַיִּים** *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*, **πηγή ζωής**, "the fountain of life." And so the Arabic, [Arabic]. 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 **Clarke's note on "Ps 36:9"; "Pr 10:11"**, &c.

Verse 5. **To accept the person of the wicked]** We must not, in judicial cases, pay any attention to a man's *riches, influence, friends, offices, &c.*, 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.

Verse 8. **The words of a tale-bearer]** **דִּבְרֵי נִרְגָן** *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 **כִּמְתֵלְהַמִּים** *kemithlahamim*; they are as *soft* or *simple*, or *undesigning*. But *Schultens* gives another meaning. He observes that [Arabic] *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 colour*, *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."

Verse 9. **He also that is slothful]** A *slothful* man neglects his *work*, and the *materials* go to ruin: the *waster*, he destroys the *materials*. They are both destroyers.

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.

Verse 11. **The rich man's wealth]** See **#Pr 10:15**.

Verse 12. **Before destruction]** See on **#Pr 11:2; 16:18**.

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 *wounded*, 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.

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 favour, 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:—

Munera, crede mihi, capiunt hominesque deosque;  
Placatur donis Jupiter ipse suis.

OVID

"Believe me, gifts prevail much with both gods and men:  
even Jupiter himself is pleased with his own offerings."

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 neighbour cometh and searcheth him, he examines all, dissects all, swears and cross-questions every witness, and brings out truth and fact.

Verse 18. **The lot causeth contentions to cease]** See Clarke's note on "Pr 16:33".

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.

Verse 20. **With the fruit of his mouth]** Our own words frequently shape our good or evil fortune in life.

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*.

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 טוֹבָה *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*: "He that findeth a wife findeth a good thing." So St. Paul: "Marriage is honourable 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*.

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, &c.*, 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. אִישׁ רֵעִים לְהִתְרוּעֵעַ *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, אֹהֵב *oheb*, a *lover*, that sticketh closer, דָּבֵק *dabek*, is *glued* or *cemented*, מְאֹד

*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:—

Amicus certus in re incerta cernitur.

"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.

HOLDEN.

"A frende that delyteth in love, doth a man more frendship, and sticketh faster unto him, than a brother."—*Coverdale*.

"A man that hath friends *ought* to show himself friendly, for a friend is nearer than a brother."—BARKER'S *Bible*, 1615.

"**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.

# PROVERBS

## CHAPTER XIX

*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.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. XIX

Verse 1. **Better is the poor]** The upright poor man is always to be preferred to the rich or *self-sufficient* fool.

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.

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!

Verse 4. **The poor is separated from his neighbour.]** Because he has the "disease of all-shunned 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. שׂנא *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.

Verse 10. **Delight is not seemly for a fool]** תענוג *taanug*, splendid or luxurious living, rank, equipage, &c. 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 honour*; "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*.

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.

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*!

Verse 14. **A prudent wife is from the Lord.**] One who has a good understanding, אשה משכלת *ishshah mascaleth*; who avoids complaining, though she may often have cause for it.

Verse 15. **Into a deep sleep** תרדמה *tardemah*, 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.

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.

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*.

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.

Verse 21. There are **many devices, &c.**] The same sentiment as in #Pr 16:1, where see the note. See Clarke "Pr 16:1".

Verse 24. **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.

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*.

Verse 27. **Cease, my son]** Hear nothing that would lead thee away from God and his truth.

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.

# PROVERBS

## CHAPTER XX

*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.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. XX

Verse 1. **Wine is a mocker**] It *deceives* by its *fragrance*, *intoxicates* by its *strength*, and renders the intoxicated *ridiculous*.

**Strong drink**] שכר *shechar*, any strong fermented liquor, whether of the *vine*, *date*, or *palm* species.

Verse 2. **The fear of a king**] Almost the same with #Pr 19:12, which see.

Verse 3. It is **an honour for a man**] The same sentiment as #Pr 19:11.

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 pretence of unfavourable weather, neglects cultivating his land till the proper time is elapsed.

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.

Verse 6. **Most men will proclaim**] Many men merciful ben clepid: a faithful man forsoth, who schal finde?—Old MS. Bible.

Verse 8. **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.

Verse 9. **Who can say, I have made my 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.

Verse 10. **Divers weights and divers measures]** *À 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.

Verse 11. **Even a child is known by his doings]** That is, in general terms, the *effect* shows the nature of the cause. "A childe 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.

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.

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.

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 theatre, 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:—

VILI vultis EMERE, et CARO VENDERE.

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.

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.

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, greater caution should be used, and such security taken from this *stranger* as would prevent him from running away from his engagements.

Verse 17. **Bread of deceit is sweet]** Property acquired by *falsehood*, *speculation*, &c., without labour, is pleasant to the unprincipled, slothful man; but there is a *curse* in it, and the issue will prove it.

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.

Verse 20. **Whoso curseth his father]** Such persons were put to death under the law; see #Ex 21:17; #Le 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*.

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!

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.

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; but he does it to his own damage. An old writer quaintly says: "They who will carve for themselves shall cut their fingers."

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 bowen to seyntis, and after, the bowe is agen brawen*. Is it possible that *Wiclif* could have translated this verse thus? as it strongly countenances *vows to* and *invocations of saints*.

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.

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.

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.

Verse 29. **The glory of young men is their strength]** Scarcely any young man affects to be wise, learned, &c.; 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*, &c., and are fond of being *reputed wise*, and of having respect paid to their *understanding* and *experience*.

Verse 30. **The blueness of a wound]** חַבּוּרוֹת *chabburoth*, from חַבַּר *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.

# PROVERBS

## CHAPTER XXI

*The king's heart is in the hand of God. We should practise 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.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. XXI

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 favour. 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*.

Verse 2. **The Lord pondereth the hearts.]** Every man feels strongly attached to his own opinions, modes of acting, &c.; and though he will not easily give up any thing to the judgment of a neighbour, 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 endeavour to see that what he does is acceptable in the eye of his Maker and Judge.

Verse 3. **To do justice and judgment]** The words of Samuel to Saul. See **Clarke's note on "1Sa 15:23"**.

Verse 4. **A high look]** The evidence of pride, self-conceit, and vanity. *A proud heart*, from which the *high look*, &c., come.

And **the ploughing]** נֶר, *ner*, *lucerna*, the *lamp*, the prosperity and posterity of the wicked; *is sin*—it is evil in the *seed*, and evil in the *root*, evil in the *branch*, and evil in the *fruit*. They are full of sin themselves, and what they do is sinful.

Verse 6. **Of them that seek death]** Instead of מְבַקְשֵׁי *mebakshey*, "them that seek," several MSS., some ancient editions, with *Symmachus*, the *Septuagint*, *Vulgate*, and *Arabic*, have מְקַשֵׁי *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*, endeavours 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.

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.

Verse 9. **In a corner of the housetop]** A shed raised on the *flat roof*:—*a wide house*; בֵּית חֶבֶר *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*.

Verse 11. **When the scorner is punished]** When those who mock at religion, blaspheme against its Author, and endeavour 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.

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 endeavours by his *instructions* to bring into the way of knowledge and peace.

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.

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*; רֵפְאִים *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 favour; 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 felowschhip of geantis schal women.**

Verse 17. **He that loveth pleasure]** That follows gaming, fowling, hunting, coursing, &c., 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.

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.

Verse 22. **A wise man scaleth the city of the mighty]** Wisdom is in many respects preferable to strength, even in the case of defence. See what skill does in the fortification and reduction of strong places.

Verse 25. **The desire of the slothful killeth him]** He desires to eat, drink, and be clothed: but as he does *not labour*, hence he dies with this desire in his heart, envying those who possess plenty through their labour and industry. Hence he is said to *covet greedily all the day long*, #Pr 21:26, while the *righteous*, who has been *laborious* and diligent, has enough to *eat*, and some to *spare*.

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*, &c., they are doubly abominable.

Verse 29. **He directeth his way]** Instead of יָכִין *yachin*, he *directeth*, upwards of *fifty* of *Kennicott's* and *De Rossi's* MSS., several ancient *editions* with some of the *versions*, read יָבִין *yabin*, *he understands*; and because he *understands* his way, he is able to *direct* himself in walking in it.

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, #De 17:16; but *Solomon* transgressed it; see #1Ki 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* laboured 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*.

# PROVERBS

## CHAPTER XXII

*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 favoured.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. XXII

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." תוֹבָה *toba*, καλον, [Arabic] *hamood*, and *bonum*, are added by the *Chaldee*, *Septuagint*, *Arabic*, 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.

Verse 2. **The rich and poor meet together]** אֲשִׁיר *ashir* the *opulent*, whether in money, land, or property; רָשׁ *rash*, the man that is destitute of these, and lives by his labour, 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 labouring classes of society: and without the *rich*, the *poor* could get no *vent* for the *produce* of their *laborer*, nor, in many cases, *labour* itself. The *poor* have more *time* to labour 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 labour* 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 *necessaries 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 *labourer* 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 greatly 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!

Verse 3. **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.

Verse 5. **Thorns and snares]** Various difficulties, trials, and sufferings.

Verse 6. **Train up a child in the way he should go]** The Hebrew of this clause is curious: **חִנּוּךְ לְנֶעֱר עַל פִּי דַרְכּוֹ** *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 *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.

**חִנּוּךְ** *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:—

Fingit equum tenera docilem cervice magister  
Ire viam, quam monstrat eques; venaticus, ex quo  
Tempore cervinam pellem latravit in aula,  
Militat in sylvis catulus. Nunc adbibe puro  
Pectore verba, puer; nunc te melioribus offer.  
Quo semel est imbuta recens, servabit odorem  
Testa diu.

HOR. Ep. lib. i., ep. 2, ver. 64.

"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.

Verse 7. **The rich ruleth over the poor**] So it is in the order of God, and may be a blessing to *both*.

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*?

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.

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*.

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*.

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*.

Verse 14. **The mouth of strange women is a deep pit]** In #Pr 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:—

—————*Sate sanguine Divum,*  
*Tros Anchisiade, facilis decensus Averni;*  
*Noctes atque dies patet atri janua Ditis:*  
*Sed revocare gradum, superasque evadere ad auras,*  
HOC OPUS, hic LABOR *est.* Pauci quos *æquus amavit*  
*Jupiter, aut ardens evexit ad æthera virtus,*  
Dis geniti potuere.  
VIRG. *Æn.* lib. vi., ver. 125.

"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 favouring 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.*  
PITT.

Verse 16. **He that oppresseth the poor]** He who, in order to obtain the favour 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 *honour* and *reputation*, what he should have given to the *poor*, *shall surely come to want.*

Verse 17. **Bow down thine ear]** From this to the end of #Pr 22:21 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 #Pr 22:6.

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."

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."

Verse 19. **That thy trust may be in the Lord, I have made known, &c.]**

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;" שְׁלִישִׁים *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 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 #Am 1:11; #2Co 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 שְׁלִישִׁים *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, מַעֲצוֹת *moetsoth*, from יָצַא *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, דַּעַת *daath*, from יָדָע *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.

#### 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 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, &c., &c.? *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."

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.

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.

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?

**Why should he take away thy bed from under thee?]** The *creditor* will not pursue the *debtor* whom he knows to be worth nothing; but he will sue the *bail* or *bondsman*. And why shouldst thou put thyself in such circumstances as to expose thyself to the loss even of thy bed?

Verse 28. **Remove not the ancient landmark]** Do not take the advantage, in ploughing or breaking up a field contiguous to that of thy neighbour, to set the dividing stones *farther* into his *field* that thou mayest *enlarge thy own*. Take not what is not *thy own* in any case. Let all ancient *divisions*, and the *usages* connected with them, be held sacred. Bring in no new *dogmas*, nor *rites*, nor *ceremonies*, into *religion*, or the worship of God, that are not clearly laid down in the *sacred writings*. "Stand in the way; and see, and ask for the old paths, which is the good way, and walk therein; and ye shall find rest for your souls;" #**Jer 6:16**. But if any *Church* have lost sight of the *genuine doctrines* of the Gospel, calling them back to these is not *removing the ancient landmarks*, as some have falsely asserted. God gave a law against removing the ancient landmarks, by which the inheritances of tribes and families were distinguished. See #**De 19:14**, from which these words of Solomon appear to be taken.

Even among the *heathens* the *landmark* was sacred; so sacred that they made a *deity* of it. *Terminus* signifies the *stone* or *post* that served as a *landmark*. And *Terminus* was reputed a *god*, and had offerings made to him. Hence OVID:—

Tu quoque sacrorum, Termine, finis eras.  
FAST. lib. i., ver. 50.

Nox ubi transierit, solito celebratur honore,  
 Separat indicio qui Deus arva suo.  
 Termine, sive lapis, sive es defossus in agro  
 Stipes, ab antiquis sic quoque Numen habes.  
 Te duo diversa domini pro parte coronant;  
 Binaque sarta tibi, binaque liba ferunt.—  
 Conveniunt, celebrantque dapes vicinia simplex;  
 Et cantant laudes, Termine sancte, tuas.  
 Tu populos, urbesque, et regna ingentia finis:  
 Omnis erit, sine te, litigiosus ager.  
 FAST. lib. ii., ver. 639.

Here we find the owners of both fields bringing each his *garland* and *libation* to the honour 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 honour. 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.

Verse 29. **He shalt not stand before mean men.**] חַשׁוּכִים *chashukkim*, dark or obscure persons; men of no repute. ~~Na he schal ben before un-noble men.~~—Old MS. Bible. "Not among the symple people."—*Coverdale*.

The general meaning of the proverb is, "Every diligent, active man, shall be at once independent and respectable."

# PROVERBS

## CHAPTER XXIII

*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.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. XXIII

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.

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*.

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.]** בִּינִיחָךְ *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.

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."

Verse 8. **The morsel which thou hast eaten]** On reflection thou wilt even blame thyself for having accepted his invitation.

Verse 10. **Remove not the old landmark]** See the preceding chapter, #Pr 22:28.

**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.

Verse 11. **For their redeemer is mighty]** גאֹלָם *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.

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.

Verse 18. **Surely there is an end]** ישׁ אַחַר־יָת *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 shalt hav hop in the last: and thyn abiding schal not ben taken awai.** "For the ende is not yet come; and thy pacient abydinge shal not be in vayne."—COVERDALE.

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.

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.

Verse 23. **Buy the truth]** Acquire the *knowledge of God* at all events; and in order to do this, too much pains, industry, and labour 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."

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.

Verse 27. **For a whore is a deep ditch]** See on #Pr 22:14.

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*.

Verse 29. **Who hath wo?]** I believe Solomon refers here to the natural effects of drunkenness. And perhaps **וֵי** *oi*, which we translate *wo*, and **אֲבוֹי** *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 *compotations*, as naturally to follow from them. So that they who *tarry long at wine*, and use *mixed wine* to make it more inebriating, (see #Pr 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.

Verse 31. **Look not thou upon the wine]** Let neither the *colour*, the *odour*, the *sparkling*, &c., 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.

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*.  
HERBERT'S *Poems*.—*The Church Porch*.

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.

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?

# PROVERBS

## CHAPTER XXIV

*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.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. XXIV

Verse 3. **Through wisdom is a house blinded]** That is, a family; household affairs. See Clarke's notes on "Pr 9:1", &c.

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 labour 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."

Verse 6. **By wise counsel thou shalt make thy war]** See Clarke's note on "Pr 20:18".

Verse 7. **A fool-openeth not his mouth in the gate.]** Is not put into public offices of trust and responsibility.

Verse 9. **The thought of foolishness is sin]** זמת ארלה חטאה *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, ἀφρων) 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.

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.] צר כחכה** *tsar cochachah*, thy strength is contracted. So the old MS. Bible excellently: *¶if sliden thou dispeire, in the dai of anguyfs, schal be made lital thy strength.* In times of trial we should endeavour to be doubly courageous; when a man loses his courage, his strength avails him nothing.

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.

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 **#Lu 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 **#1Sa 14:27; #Ps 19:10; #Pr 5:3; 16:24; 27:7; #So 4:11; 5:1**; and the place before us.

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.

**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, **#Pr 23:18**, where see the note. See Clarke "**Pr 23:18**". The word אחרית *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 אחר *achar*, which always refers to *behind, after, extremity, latter part, time, &c.*, 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*.



Verse 18. *And he turn away his wrath from him.*] Wrath is here taken for the effect of wrath, punishment; and the meaning must be as paraphrased above-lest he take the punishment from *him*, and inflict it upon *thee*. And in this way *Coverdale* understood it: "Lest the Lorde be angry, and turn his wrath from him unto thee." Or we may understand it thus: Lest the Lord inflict on thee a *similar punishment*; for if thou get into his *spirit*, rejoicing in the calamities of another, thou deservest punishment.

Verse 20. **For there shall be no reward to the evil man**] אַחַרִּיתָּה *acharith*. There shall not be the *future state* of blessedness to the wicked. See **Clarke's note on "Pr 24:14"**. *His candle shall be put out*; his *prosperity* shall finally cease, or he shall have no *posterity*. Some have thought that this text intimates the *annihilation* of sinners; but it refers not to *being*, but to the *state* or *condition* of that being. The wicked shall *be*; but they shall not *be* HAPPY.

Verse 21. **My son, fear thou the Lord and the king**] Pay to each the homage due: to the LORD, Divine honour and adoration; to the *king*, civil respect, civil honour, and political obedience.

**Meddle not with them that are given to change**] עִם שׁוֹנִיִּים אֵל תִּתְעַרֵּב *im shonim al titharab*: "And with the changelings mingle not thyself." The *innovators*; those who are always for making experiments on modes of government, forms of religion, &c. The most dangerous spirit that can infect the human mind.

Verse 22. **The ruin of them both?**] Of them who do not *fear* the LORD; and of *them* that do not *revere* the KING.

Verse 23. **These things also belong to the wise.**] גַּם אֵלֶּה לַחֲכָמִים *gam elleh lachachamim*, "These also to wise." This appears to be a *new section*; and perhaps, what follows belongs to *another collection*. Probably fragments of sayings collected by wise men from the Proverbs of Solomon.

It is **not good to have respect**] Judgment and justice should never be perverted.

Verse 26. **Kiss his lips**] Shall treat him with affection and respect.

Verse 27. **Prepare thy work without**] Do nothing without a *plan*. In *winter* prepare seed, implements, tackle, geers, &c., for *seed-time and harvest*.

Verse 28. **Be not a witness**] Do not be forward to offer thyself to bear testimony against a neighbour, 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.

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 honourable, 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 labourer*. From such men they formed their most valiant generals and intrepid soldiers. CATO *De Re Rustica*, cap. 1. 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. See CICERO *De Officiis*, lib. 1. 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 אִישׁ עֲצֹל *ish atsel*, the loitering, sluggish, slothful man. 2. He was אָדָם חָסֵר לֵב *adam chasar leb*, a man that wanted heart; destitute of courage, alacrity, and decision of mind.

II. His circumstances. This man had, 1st, שָׂדֵה *sadeh*, a sowed field, arable ground. This was the character of his estate. It was *meadow* and *corn* land. 2. He had כֶּרֶם *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, #Pr 24:31.

IV. The *effect* all this had on the attentive observer. 1. *I saw it*, אֶחְזֶה אֲנֹכִי *echezeh anochi*, I fixed my attention on it. I found it was no mere report. It is a fact. I myself was an eyewitness of it. 2. *I considered it well*, אֲשִׁית לִבִּי *ashith libbi*, I put my heart on it. All my feelings were interested. 3. *I looked upon it*, רַעִיתִי *raithi*, I took an *intellectual* view of it. And 4. Thus *I received instruction*, לָקַחְתִּי מוֹסֵר *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." #Pr 24:33. "Hugged himself in his sloth and carelessness."

V. The consequences of this conduct. 1. *Poverty* described as coming like a *traveller*, making sure steps every hour coming nearer and nearer to the door. 2. *Want*, מַחְסוֹר *machsor*, total destitution; want of all the *necessaries*, *conveniencies*, and *comforts* of life; and this is described as coming *like an armed man* כֵּישׁ מַגֵּן *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.

# PROVERBS

## CHAPTER XXV

*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.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. XXV

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.

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*, &c. 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, 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.\*

\* 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 ardour, 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.

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*.

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.

Verse 7. **Come up hither]** Our Lord refers to this, see #**Lu 14:8**, and the notes there. Be humble; affect not high things; let those who are desperate climb dangerous precipices; keep thyself quiet, and thou shalt live at ease, and in peace. Hear the speech of a wise *heathen* on this subject:—

Quid fuit, ut tutas agitare Dædalus alas;  
Icarus immensas nomine signet aquas?  
Nempe quod hic alte, dimissus ille volabat.  
Nam pennas ambo nonne habuere suas?  
Crede mihi; bene qui latuit, bene vixit; et infra  
Fortunam debet quisque manere suam.  
Vive sine invidia; mollesque inglorius annos  
Exige: amicitias et tibi junge pares.  
OVID, *Trist.* lib. iii., El. 4, ver. 21.

"Why was it that Dædalus 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, though it should not be dignified. Seek a friend, and associate with thy equals."

Verse 8. **Go not forth hastily to strive]** לִרְבּ *lerib*, to enter into a *lawsuit*. Keep from this *pit of the bottomless deep*, unless urged by the direst necessity.

Verse 9. **Debate thy cause with thy neighbour]** 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 skilful 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!

Verse 11. **A word fitly spoken]** על אפניו *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 without *design*, to rise out of the conversation, and though 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 though 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*.

Verse 12. **As an ear-ring of gold]** I believe נזם *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.

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 deposited 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 *labourers in the harvest field*. I think the text favours this supposition; for כצנה שלג *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.

Verse 14. **A false gift]** מתת שקר *mattath shaker*, a *lying gift*, one *promised*, but never *bestowed*. "Whoso maketh greate boastes, and giveth nothing;" COVERDALE. So the VULGATE: "Vir gloriosus, et promissa non complens;" "A bragging man, who does not fulfil his promises," is like *clouds* which appear to be laden with vapour, and like the *wind* which, though it blow from a rainy quarter, brings no moistness with it. So the vain boaster; he is big with promise, but performs nothing.

Verse 15. **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*.

Verse 16. **Hast thou found honey?**] Make a moderate use of all thy enjoyments. "Let thy moderation be known unto all, and appear in all things."

Verse 17. **Withdraw thy foot**] Another proverb will illustrate this: "Too much familiarity breeds contempt."

Verse 20. **As vinegar upon nitre**] The original word נִתְרַן *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 colour; 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 נִתְרַן *nathar*, to *dissolve* or *loosen*: because a solution of it in water is *abstersive*, taking out *spots*, &c. 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 bynegar upon chalke.—COVERDALE. This also will occasion an *effervescence*. See #**Jer 2:22**.

Verse 21. **If thine enemy be hungry**] See this and the next verse explained, #**Ro 12:20**.

Verse 22. **Thou 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.

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*.

Verse 24. It is **better to dwell in a corner**] See Clarke's note on "**Pr 21:9**".

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 hevy 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.

# PROVERBS

## CHAPTER XXVI

*Honour 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.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. XXVI

Verse 1. **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 *honour* is *unbecoming*.

Verse 2. **As the bird]** צפוף *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 neighbourhood 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.

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.

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."

"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 dishonour of having his own principles turned against himself, and shown to be destructive of his own conclusions."—*Treatise on Grace. Preface.*

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."

Verse 8. **As he that bindeth a stone in a sling**, so is **he that giveth honour 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 honour 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 honour to a fool."

*As he that sendith a stoon into a hepe of monee; so he that gebeth to an untwitsman 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 honour 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 traveller. Hence those lines of Dr. *Young*:—

"Death stands like Mercuries in every way;  
And kindly points us to our journey's end."

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  $\aleph$   $\beth$  *rab* may mean either the great God, or a great man: hence the two renderings, in the *text* and in the *margin*.

Verse 11. **As a dog returneth to his vomit**] See *Clarke's note on "2Pe 2:22"*.

Verse 13. **The slothful man saith**] See *Clarke's note on "Pr 22:13"*.

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*.

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*.

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," &c. *Sportive* as such persons may think their conduct to be, it is as ruinous as that of the *madman* who shoots *arrows*, throws *firebrands*, and projects in all directions *instruments of death*, so that some are wounded, some burnt, and some slain.

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*.

Verse 22. **The words of a tale-bearer]** The same with #Pr 18:8, where see the note. See Clarke "Pr 18:8".

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*.

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*.

Verse 27. **Whoso diggeth a pit]** See Clarke's note on "Ps 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*.

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.

# PROVERBS

## CHAPTER XXVII

*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 neighbour. 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.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. XXVII

Verse 1. **Boast not thyself of to-morrow**] See Clarke's note on "**Jas 4:13**", &c. Do not depend on any future moment for spiritual good which at present thou needest, and God is willing to give, and without which, should death surprise thee, thou 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 thou into the morewening*. Here we see the derivation of our word *morning*; **morewening**, from *more*, and *wen* or *won*, to  *dwell*, 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.

Verse 2. **Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth**] We have a similar proverb, which illustrates this: "Self-praise is no commendation."

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 neighbour. However, at last he requested that *one* of his eyes should be taken out, in order that his neighbour might lose both.

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."

Verse 8. **As 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, &c. 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 thou shalt be fed."

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, &c.

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.

Verse 12. **A prudent man foreseeth the evil**] The very same as #Pr 22:3.

Verse 13. **Take his garment**] The same as #Pr 20:16.

Verse 14. **He that blesseth his friend**] He who makes loud and public protestations of acknowledgments to his friend for favours 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.

Verse 15. **A continual dropping**] See #Pr 19:13.

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.

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, without 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.

"But let me sharpen others, as the hone  
Gives edge to razors, though itself have none."

FRANCIS.

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.

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 splendour, 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.

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*.

Verse 22. **Though thou shouldst 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 labour 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.

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.

Verse 24. **For riches are not for ever]** All other kinds of property are very transitory. Money and the highest civil honours 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.

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, without 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, &c., were then worth.

Verse 26. **The lambs are for thy clothing]** So many *fleeces* are given in some places as *rent* to the landlord.

Verse 27. **Goats' milk enough for thy food]** ללחמך *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.

# PROVERBS

## CHAPTER XXVIII

*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.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. XXVIII

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 unpitious 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*.

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 favour, 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.

Verse 3. **A poor man that oppresseth the poor]** Our Lord illustrates this proverb most beautifully, by the parable of the *two debtors*, #Mt 18:23, &c. 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.

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*.

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," #1Jo 2:20, every thing that is essentially needful for them to know, in reference to both worlds.

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.

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.

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 endeavoured to lead the other.

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 I. Popery, cruelty, and knavery, under her, nearly destroyed the Church and the State in these islands.

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.

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 labour to do that which is lawful and right in the sight of God his Saviour.

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 without understanding. He does not know his own interest, and does not regard that of his people. But these things, though general truths, apply more particularly to those despotic governments which prevail in Asiatic countries.

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.

Verse 18. **Shall fall at once]** Shall fall *without resource, altogether*.

Verse 19. **He that tilleth his land]** See #Pr 12:11.

Verse 20. **He that maketh haste to be rich]** See #Pr 13:11; 20:21.

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 *stranger*. 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.

Verse 25. **Shall be made fat.]** Shall be prosperous.

Verse 26. **He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool]** For his heart, which is deceitful and desperately wicked, will infallibly deceive him.

Verse 27. **He that giveth unto the poor]** See the notes on the passages referred to in the margin.

# PROVERBS

## CHAPTER XXIX

*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.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. XXIX

Verse 1. **Hardeneth his neck**] Becomes *stubborn* and *obstinate*.

Verse 3. **But he that keepeth company**] רעהו *roeh*, he that *feedeth harlots*, יאבד *yeabed*, shall *utterly destroy* his substance. Has there ever been a single case to the *contrary*?

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 favour.

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*.

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."

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*.

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.

Verse 13. **The poor and the deceitful man**] It is difficult to fix the meaning of תככים *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 #Pr 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.

Verse 18. **Where there is no vision]** My old MS. Bible, following the *Vulgate*, translates: *¶¶¶han prophete 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."

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.

Verse 22. **An angry man stirreth up strife]** His spirit begets its *like* wherever he goes.

**And a furious man aboundeth in transgression.]** His furious spirit is always carrying him into *extremes*, and each of these is a *transgression*.

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]** נפשו *naphsho*, his *life*, as the outraged law may at any time seize on and put him to *death*.

**He heareth cursing]** אלה *alah*, the *execration* or *adjuration*, (for all culprits were *charged, as before God, to tell the truth,*) יגד אלו *velo yaggid*, 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.

Verse 25. **The fear of man bringeth a snare]** How often has this led weak men, though *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, *thou* wilt fall, unless thou 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 thou knowest *him*, art joined to *them*, and art counted worthy to bear it.

Verse 26. **Many seek the ruler's favour]** To be screened from the punishment determined by the law; but should *he* grant the favour sought, and pardon the criminal, this takes not away his guilt in the sight of God, from whom all just judgment proceeds.

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 perdition.** I believe *verbum* here is intended for the Divine *word*; the revelation from God.

# PROVERBS

## CHAPTER XXX

*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.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. XXX

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 *Ucal* are epithets of *Christ*.

The *Vulgate* translates, *Verba congregantis filii vomentis: visio, quam locutus est sir, cum quod 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 הגבר *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."

*The visioun 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 #Pr 30:2, 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 Ucal*, 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 *prophecy*. It was what the prophets generally term אִשָּׁרָה *massa*, an ORACLE, something immediately delivered by the *Holy Spirit* for the benefit of 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*, without education, and without 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*.

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*, קְדוֹשִׁים *kedoshim*, of the *saints* or *holy persons*.

The *Septuagint* give this a different turn: Θεος δεδίδαχε με σοφιαν, και γνωσιν αγιων εγνωκα; "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.

Verse 4. **Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended?]** Calmet paraphrases this passage thus: "*Who hath descended, &c.* 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 thee this day is not hidden from thee; neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?' #De 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 thou canst.

**What is his son's name]** Some copies of the *Septuagint* have  $\eta \tau \iota \sigma \alpha \nu \gamma \epsilon \lambda \omega \nu \tau \omega \nu \tau \omega \nu \alpha \upsilon \tau \omicron \upsilon$ ; "Or the name of his sons;" meaning, I suppose, the *holy angels*, called his *saints* or *holy ones*, #Pr 30:3.

The *Arabic* has, *What is his name?* [Arabic] *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 ever-blessed 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 favour. 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 labour, in order to establish the sense of a text which we intend to allege in favour 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 5. **Every word of God is pure]**  $\text{כל אמרה אלוה צרופה}$  *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, without mixture of error, without 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*.

**He is a shield unto them]** And *this* oracle among the rest. "He is the defence of *all* them that put their trust in him."  $\text{לכל}$  *lechol*, *to all*, is added here by *nineteen* of *Kennicott's* and *De Rossi's* MSS.; for instead of  $\text{לחסים}$  *lachosim*, *to the trusters*, they read  $\text{לכל החוסים}$  *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 without *paraphrase*.

Verse 6. **Add not thou 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 thee]** 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 thou 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 *reproved*, 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 thee]** 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. שוא *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, דבר כזב *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 *dishonoured* 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. שוא *shau* is used for an *idol*, a *false god*. #Jer 18:15: "My people have forsaken me; they have burnt incense to VANITY;" לשוא *lashshav*, "to an IDOL." #Ps 31:6: "I have hated them that regard lying VANITIES;" שוא הבל *shave habley*, "vain IDOLS." See also #Ho 12:11; #Jon 2:8. And כזב *cazab*, a thing that *fails* or *deceives*, may well apply to the *vain pretensions*, *false promises*, and *deceptive religious rites* of *idolatry*. So #Jer 15:18: "Wilt thou be unto me as a liar," כמו אכזב *kemo achzob*, like the false, failing *promises* of the *false gods*; "and as waters that fail;" לא נאמנו *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; תפסתי *taphasti*, "I catch at the name of God." Or, by swearing falsely, endeavour to make myself pass for innocent. *Forswere 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 thee*, 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*, הַטְרִיפְנִי לַחֵם חֶקֶי *hatripheni lechem 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*.

Verse 10. **Accuse not a servant**] Do not bring a *false* accusation against a *servant*, lest *thou be found guilty* of the falsehood, and he *curse thee* for having traduced his character, and in his turn traduce thine. In general, do not meddle with other people's servants.

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 *honour*, but who *evil-treated*, their *parents*.

Verse 12. The *second*, Those who were *self-righteous*, supposing themselves *pure*, and were *not so*.

Verse 13. The *third*, Those who were *full of vanity, pride, and insolence*.

Verse 14. The *fourth*, The *greedy, cruel, and oppressive*, and, especially, *oppressive to the poor*.

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 עֲלוּקָה *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.

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 אֲלוּקָה *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 similarity 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*, &c.

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: Τη Βδέλλη θυγατερες ησαν αγαπησει αγαπωμεναι, και αι τρεις αυται ουκ ενεπιμπλασαν αυτην, και η τεταρτη ουκ ηρκεσθη ειπειν· Ίκανον; "The horseleech had three well-beloved daughters; and these three were not able to satisfy her desire: and the fourth was not satisfied, so as to say, It is enough."

After all, I think my own conjecture the most probable. *Alukah* is a proper name, and the two daughters were of the description I have mentioned.

Verse 17. **The eye that mocketh at his father]** This seems to be spoken against those who *curse their father*, and *do not bless their mother*, #Pr 30:11.

**The ravens of the valley]** Those which frequent the places where dead carcasses and offal are most likely to be found. The *raven*, the *crow*, the *rook*, the *daw*, the *carrion crow*, and the *Cornish chough*, appear to be all of the same genus. Some of them live on *pulse* and *insects*; others, the *raven* in particular, live on *carrion*.

**The young eagles shall eat it.]** The mother eagle shall scoop out such an eye, and carry it to the nest to feed her young. Many of the *disobedient to parents* have come to an *untimely end*, and, in the *field of battle*, where many a profligate has fallen, and upon *gibbets*, have actually become the prey of ravenous birds.

Verse 19. **The way of an eagle]** I borrow, with thanks, the very sensible note of the Rev. Mr. Holden on this passage.

"The particle כֵּן *ken* plainly shows that #Pr 30:19, 20 are to be taken in connection; consequently, it is a comparison between the *way of an adulterous woman*, and the *way of the things* here described.

"The *adulterous woman* goes about in search of her deluded victim, like as the *eagle* takes its flight into the air to spy out its prey. She uses every species of blandishment and insinuation to allure and beguile, as the *serpent* employs its windings and sinuous motions to pass along the *rocks*; she pursues a course surrounded with danger, as a *ship in the midst of the sea* is continually exposed to the fury of the tempest, and the hazard of shipwreck; and she tries every means, and exercises all her sagacity, to prevent the discovery of her illicit enjoyments, as a man attempts to conceal his clandestine intercourse *with a maid*. Such is the conduct of a lewd woman, marked by specious dissimulation and traitorous blandishment; *she eateth and wipeth her mouth*-she indulges her adulterous lust, yet artfully endeavours to conceal it, and with unblushing countenance asserts her innocence, exclaiming, *I have done no wickedness*."

CHAUCER'S *January* and *May* is an excellent comment on such *wiles* and *protestations*.

**The way of a man with a maid.]** כְּעַלְמָה *bealmah*, with, or in a maid; but one of *De Rossi's* MSS. has כְּעַלְמָיו *bealmaiv*, in his youth; and with this the SEPTUAGINT, ἐν νεότητι, the VULGATE, in *adolescencia*, the SYRIAC and the ARABIC agree; and so also my own MS. Bible:—**The *twie* of a man in his waxing youth.** Dr. *Kennicott*, in a *sermon preached at Oxford*, 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 **Clarke's note on "Mt 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.

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*, &c., 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.

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 Clarke's note on "**Pr 6:6**". The *ants* are a *people*; they have their *houses*, *towns*, *cities*, *public roads*, &c. 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 שפן *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. Though 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, &c., of these and such like must be sought in works on *natural history*.

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*. זרזיר מהנים *zarzir 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*, טַיִשׁ *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 rising 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, מֶלֶךְ אֱלֹקִים *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*, #Pr 30:15. 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 אֵל *al*, "not," and קָם *kum*, "he arose," we may make the interpretation above given.

Verse 32. **If thou 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 offence, 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.

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."

# PROVERBS

## CHAPTER XXXI

*The words and prophecy of King Lemuel, and 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 labour, 10-29. Frailty of beauty, 30, 31.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. XXXI

Verse 1. **The words of King Lemuel]** דִּבְרֵי לִמְוֵאל מֶלֶךְ *dibrey lemuel melech*, "The words of Muel the king." So the *Syriac*; and so I think it should be read, the ל *lamed* being the article or *preposition*.

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 בֶּרֶךְ בִּטְנִי *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 בֶּרֶךְ נִדְרָי *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.]** מִשָּׂא *massa* may here signify the *oracle*; the subject that came by *Divine inspiration*; see on #Pr 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."

Verse 2. **What, my son?]** The Chaldee בֶּרֶךְ *bar* is used twice in this verse, instead of the Hebrew בֶּן *ben*, son. This verse is very elliptical; and commentators, according to their different tastes, have inserted *words*, indeed some of them a whole *sentence*, to make up the sense. 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, thou 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*.

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*, מלכין *melachin*, the *Chaldee* termination instead of the *Hebrew*.

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.

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 Clarke's note on "Ps 104:15"**.

Verse 8. **Open thy mouth for the dumb]** For such accused persons as have no counsellors, and cannot plead for themselves.

**Are appointed to destruction.]** בני חלופי *beney chaloph*, variously translated, *children of passage*—indigent travellers; *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.

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*: #Pr 31:10, א *aleph*; #Pr 31:11, ב *beth*; #Pr 31:12, ג *gimel*; and so on to the end of the chapter, the last verse of which has the letter ט *tau*. From this to the end of the chapter we have the *character* of a woman of *genuine worth laid down*; *first, in general, #Pr 31:10-12*; *secondly, in its particular or component parts, #Pr 31:13-29*; and, *thirdly, the summing up of the character, #Pr 31:30, 31*.

#### I. Her *general character*.

1. She is a *virtuous woman*—a woman of power and strength. אשת חיל *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.

#### 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 neighbouring tribes.

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*. 1. 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.

Verse 13. **She seeketh wood and flax, and worketh willingly, &c.]**

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 labour 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.

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 neighbouring tribes.

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 labour, but they all arise *before daylight*, and prepare the *day's food*, that they may not have their labour interrupted. To those who are going to the *fields*, and to the *flocks*, she gives the food necessary for the day: תֶּרֶף *teref*, *prey*, a term taken from *hunting*, the object of which was, the supplying their natural wants: hence applied to *daily food*. See Clarke's notes on "Pr 30:8". And to the women who are to be employed within, she gives חֹק *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*.

**Verse 16. She considereth a field and buyeth it]**

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 *necessaries* 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 labour. Whatever *goes out* brings its worth *in*; and *barter*, not *buying*, is her chief mode of traffic.

**Verse 17. She girdeth her loins with strength]**

7. She takes care of her own health and strength, not only by means of useful labour, 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*.

**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 labour 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.

**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 כִּישׁוֹר *kishor*, and פֶּלֶךְ *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.

**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* (יָד יָד) *yad* she relieves the *general poor*, with *both hands* (יָד יָד יָד) *yadeyha* she gives to the *needy*, לְעֵנִי *leaney*, to the *afflicted poor*.

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 *colour* can avail nothing in keeping off the cold; nor would it be a proper colour for the bogs and dirt of winter. But שָׁנִים *shanim*, from שָׁנָה *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 householde 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* colour, is used in the *winter* dresses.

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, מַרְבָּדִים *marbaddim*, either tapestry, carpeting, or quilted work for her *beds*; and her own *clothing* is שֵׁשׁ *shesh*, fine 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.

Verse 23. **Her husband is known in the gates]**

14. She is a loving wife, and feels for the *respectability* and *honour* 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.

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, #Pr 31:13, for "a coarser manufacture," The סִדוֹן *sidon* is supposed to come from [Arabic] 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 litil girdil sche toke to Chanane*. Perhaps לַכַּנְעָנִים *lakkenaani*, for the merchant, may stand here for לַכַּנְעָנִים *lakkenaanim*, the *Canaanites*.

Verse 25. **Strength and honour 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 honour 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 *neighbours*. But this woman, with all her eminence and excellence, was of a *meek* and *quiet spirit*. Blessed woman!

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 labour. 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*.

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 behaviour. 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.

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 THOU,' my incomparable wife, 'excellent them all;' וַאֲנִי עָלִיהָ עַל כָּלֵנָה *veath alith al cullanah*, but THOU hast ascended above the whole of them-thou 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 Rev. 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 thought, seldom to be found among the daughters of Eve, and not often among the sons of Adam.

Verse 30. **Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain, &c.]**

III. Here is the *summing up* of the character. 1. *Favour*, פָּנִינִי *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 שֶׁקֶר *sheker*, 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*, הַיּוֹפִי *haiyophi*, elegance of shape, symmetry of features, dignity of mien, and beauty of countenance, are all הֶבֶל *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.

Verse 31. **Give her of the fruit of her hands]** This may be a *prayer*. May she long enjoy the fruit of her labours! May she see her children's children, and peace upon Israel!

**And let her own works praise her in the gates.]** Let what she has done be spoken of for a memorial of her; let her bright example be held forth in the most *public places*. Let it be set before the eyes of every *female*, particularly of every *wife*, and especially of every *mother*; and let them learn from this exemplar, what men have a right to expect in their *wives*, the *mistresses of their families*, and the *mothers of their children*. Amen.

## MASORETIC NOTES ON THIS BOOK

Number of verses in the book of Proverbs, 915.

Middle verse, #Pr 16:18.

Sections, 8.

The Syriac reckons 1863 verses.

The Arabic concludes thus:—"The discipline of Solomon written out by the friends of Hezekiah, king of Judah, the interpretation or translation of which is extremely difficult, (but) is now completed by the assistance and influence of the Son of God."

IN the *introduction* to the book of Proverbs, among the several *collections* of a similar nature which are mentioned there, I have referred to M. Galand's *Maximes des Orientaux*. From this work, as contained in the supplement to the *Bibliothèque Orientale*, I have translated the following *selection*. They will serve to show the curious reader how many sayings similar to those of Solomon still abound in the East.

See Ancillary Data for ASIATIC PROVERBS

## INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

THE book, entitled *Koheleth*, or *Ecclesiastes*, has ever been received, both by the Jewish and Christian Church, as written under the *inspiration* of the Almighty; and was held to be properly a part of the sacred canon. But while this has been almost universally granted, there has been but little unanimity among learned men and critics as to its *author*. To *Solomon* it has been most generally attributed, both in ancient and modern times.

*Grotius*, however, conjectured that it was written a long time after *Solomon*; and he says, at the close of his notes on it, that it was revised in the days of *Zerubbabel* by some learned man, who in the twelfth verse of the last chapter addresses his son *Abihud*: "And farther, by these, my son, be admonished." But such a conjecture appears to have little foundation. This great man was more successful in his criticism on the *language* of the book; showing that there are many words in it which do not savour of the purity of the Hebrew tongue; and are found in the times of the *captivity* and *afterwards*, and such as appear principally in the books of *Ezra* and *Daniel*.

*Calovius* has on the other hand, not with so much success as he imagined, argued against *Grotius* for the *purity* of the language.

Mr. G. Zirkel of Wurtzburgh published an examination of this book in 1792, in which he endeavours to prove:—

1. That the *style* of *Ecclesiastes* is that of the *later Hebrew writers*, as appears by the *Chaldaisms*, *Syriasm*s, and *Hellenisms* that occur in it.

2. That it may have been written between the years 380 and 130 before *Jesus Christ*, if not later.

The *Jena* reviewers seem to have thought it to be a *translation* from the *Greek*, and to have been written by a *Jew* of *Alexandria*, while the famous *library* was founding by *Ptolemy Philadelphus* king of *Egypt*, about the year 240 before *Christ*. And that it is to this circumstance that **#Ec 12:12** alludes, "Of making many books there is no end;" which could not have entered into the head of a *Palestine Jew*; and such a person might speak with propriety of an *Israel* in *Jerusalem*, **#Ec 1:12**, being acquainted with an *Israel* in *Alexandria*.

The *Jews* in general, and *St. Jerome*, hold the book to be the composition of *Solomon*, and the fruit of his repentance when restored from his idolatry, into which he had fallen through means of the strange or *heathenish women* whom he had taken for *wives* and *concubines*.

Others, of no mean note, who consider *Solomon* as the author, believe that he wrote it *before* his fall; there being no evidence that he wrote it afterwards; nor, indeed, that he ever recovered from his fall. Besides, it was in his *old age* that his wives turned away his heart from *God*; and the book bears

too many evidences of mental *energy* to allow the supposition that in his *declining age*, after so deep a fall from God, he was *capable* of writing such a treatise. This opinion goes far towards destroying the *Divine inspiration* of the book; for if he did recover and repent, there is no evidence that God gave him back that *Divine inspiration* which he before possessed; for we hear of the Lord appearing to him *twice before his fall*, but of a *third* appearance there is no intimation. And lastly, Of the restoration of Solomon to the favour of God there is no proof in the sacred history; for in the *very place* where we are told that "in his old age his wives turned away his heart from the Lord," we are told of his *death*, without the slightest intimation of his *repentance*. See my character of Solomon at the end of #1Ki 11:43.

Nothing, however, of this uncertainty can affect either the character, importance, or utility of the book in question. It is a production of singular worth; and the finest monument we have of the wisdom of the ancients, except the *book of Job*.

But the chief difficulty attending this book is the *principle* on which it should be interpreted. Some have supposed it to be a *dialogue* between a *true believer* and an *infidel*, which makes it to the unwary reader appear abounding with contradiction, and, in some instances, false doctrine; and that the parts must be attributed to their respective speakers, before interpretation can be successfully attempted. I am not convinced that the book has any such structure; though in some places the *opinions* and *sayings* of *infidels* may be quoted; e.g., #Ec 7:16, and in some of the following chapters.

In the year 1763, M. *Desvoeux*, a learned foreigner then resident in England, and who was in the British service, wrote and published a *Philosophical and Poetical Essay* on this book, in which he endeavours to prove, that the design of the author was to *demonstrate the immortality of the soul*; and that it is on this principle alone that the book can be understood and explained.

As a late commentator on the Bible has adopted this plan, and interwoven the major part of this dissertation with his notes on the book, I shall introduce the whole of M. *Desvoeux's analysis of its contents*, the *propositions*, *arguments*, *proofs*, *illustrations*, *corollaries*, &c., on the ground of which he attempts its illustration:—

The whole of the discourse (he says) may be reduced to the three following *propositions*, each of which is attended with its *apparatus of proofs* and *especial observations*.

#### PROPOSITION I

No labour of man in this world can render him contented, or give him true satisfaction of soul.

#### PROPOSITION II

Earthly goods and possessions are so far from making us happy, that they may be even viewed as real obstacles to our ease, quiet, and tranquillity of mind.

## PROPOSITION III

Men known not what is or is not truly advantageous to them; because they are either ignorant or unmindful of that which must come to pass after their death.

The *three propositions*, with their *proofs* and *illustrations*, are contained in the following analysis:—

## PROPOSITION I

- | Chap.   | Ver.    |   |
|---------|---------|---|
| I.      | 2, 3.   | No labour of man, &c.   |
|         | 4-11.   | First proof.—The course of nature.  |
| 12, &c. |         | Second proof.—Men's occupations.  |
|         | 15-18.  | First head.—Wisdom or philosophy.   |
| II.     | 1, 2.   | Second head.—Pleasure.  |
|         | 3-10.   | Both jointly.   |
|         | 11.     | General conclusion of the second proof.<br>A review of the second proof with special conclusions, relating to every particular therein mentioned, viz.,                 |
|         | 12-17.  | I. Wisdom.  |
|         | 18-23.  | II. Riches.   |
|         | 24-26.  | III. Pleasure.  |
| III.    | 1, &c.  | Third proof.—Inconstancy of men's wills.  |
|         | 9.      | Conclusion of the third proof<br>A review of the second and third proofs, considered jointly, with special observations and corollaries.                                |
|         | 10, 11. | First observation.—God is inculpable.   |
|         | 12, 15. | Second observation.—God is the author of whatever befalls us in this world.   |
|         | 16, 17. | First corollary.—God shall redress all grievances.  |
|         | 18-21.  | Second corollary.—God must be exalted, and man humbled.   |
|         | 22.     | Third corollary.—God allows men to enjoy the present life.  |
| IV.     | 1.      | Fourth proof.—Men's neglect of proper opportunities, evidenced in several instances, viz.,  |
|         | 1-3.    | I. Oppression.  |
|         | 4.      | II. Envy.   |
|         | 5, 6.   | III. Idleness.  |
|         | 7-12.   | IV. Avarice.  |
| V.      | 13-19.  | V. Misapplication of esteem and regard.<br>N. B. 1-9 is a digression containing several admonitions, in order to prevent any misconstruction of the fore-going remarks. |
|         | 10-12.  | VI. Expensive living.   |

PROPOSITION II.-Chap. v. 13

- Chap. Ver.  
V. 14-17. First proof. Instability of riches.  
VI. 18. 2. Second proof. Insufficiency of riches to make men happy.  
3-6. Corollary. The fate of an *abortive* is, on the whole, preferable to that of him who lives without enjoying life.  
VI. 7-9. Third proof. Men's insatiableness.  
10, 11. General *conclusion* from the *first* and *second propositions*.

PROPOSITION III.-Chap. vi. 12

- Chap. Ver.  
VII. 1, &c. First proof. Wrong estimation of things.  
A *digression*, intended, like that ver. 1-9, to prevent any misconstruction of the preceding observations; and containing several *advices*, together with a strong commendation of him who gives them, in order to enforce the observation of the *rules* he lays down.  
9-12. First advice. Do not blame Providence.  
13. Second advice. Do not judge of Providence.  
14, 15. Third advice. Submit to Providence.  
16-20. Fourth advice. Avoid excesses.  
21, 22. Fifth advice. Do not heed idle reports.  
23-25. Commendation of the foregoing advices from the author's application of every thing; and especially,  
VII. 26-29. I. Wickedness and ignorance.  
VIII. 1-8. II. Wisdom.  
Second proof. Anticipated judgments.  
9-14. I. That sin shall go unpunished, because it is so in this world.  
IX. 15-6. II. That life is preferable to death.  
7-9. First corollary. Earthly enjoyments are not criminal.  
10. Second corollary. We must make a proper use of our faculties.  
11-15. Third proof. Judgments that are seemingly right, but entirely false.  
16, &c. Fourth proof. Little regard paid to wisdom.  
16. I. Past services are forgotten.  
II. The least fault is noticed.  
X. 5-19. III. Favour gets what is due to merit.  
20. A caution to prevent the abuse of the preceding remarks.

## PRACTICAL INFERENCES

- |       |         |   |
|-------|---------|---|
| Chap. | Ver.    |   |
| XI.   | 1-4.    | I. From the <i>first</i> PROPOSITION,—We must give to earthly goods that stability of which they are capable.   |
|       | 5, 6.   | II. From the <i>first</i> and <i>second</i> PROPOSITIONS,—We must, in all our conduct, conform to the design of Providence, and leave the success to God. |
| XII.  | 7, 8.   | III. From the <i>three</i> PROPOSITIONS, but especially from the third, we must seek for happiness beyond the grave.                                      |
|       | 9-12.   | Commendation of the work, from several considerations.  |
|       | 13, 14. | CONCLUSION of the whole.  |

This is the whole of M. *Desvoeux's Analysis*; and I place it here, that the reader who approves of the *plan* may keep it in view while he is passing through the book. For my own part, I doubt whether the author made any such technical arrangement.

The three propositions which M. Desvoeux lays down, and which are so essential to the interpretation he gives of the book, would have been expressly propounded by the inspired writer had he intended such; but they appear nowhere in it, and M. D. is obliged to *assume* or gather them from the general scope of the work. However, on his plan, he has certainly made a number of judicious observations on different passages, though his translations are *generally* too bold, and *seldom* well supported by the original text.

In 1768 was published "Choheloth, or the Royal Preacher, a Poetical Paraphrase of the Book of Ecclesiastes. Most humbly inscribed to the King." 4to. There is no name to this work. The late Rev. John Wesley gives the following account of the work and its author in his *Journals*:—

"Monday, Feb. 8, 1768. I met with a surprising poem, entitled, Choheloth, or the Preacher: it is a paraphrase in tolerable verse on the book of Ecclesiastes. I really think the author of it (a Turkey merchant) understands both the difficult expressions, and the connection of the whole, better than any other either ancient or modern writer whom I have seen. He was at Lisbon during the great earthquake, just then sitting in his nightgown and slippers. Before he could dress himself, part of the house he was in fell, and blocked him up. By this means his life was saved; for all who had run out were dashed to pieces by the falling houses."

Mr. W. seems to have known the author well, but did not like to tell his name. About the year 1789 that eminent man recommended the work to me, and told me several particulars relative to it, which have escaped my memory. I procured the book the first opportunity, and read it with great satisfaction; and from it derived no small portion of information. Having now examined it anew, I can most cordially subscribe to Mr. Wesley's opinion. I really believe that the author understood both the difficult expressions, and the connection of the whole, better than any other writer, whether ancient or modern, at least known to me. Had it comported with my plan, I should have thought a reprint of his work, with the *text*, which he does not insert, and a few philological notes, would have been quite sufficient to have given my readers a safe and general view of the whole work and its design; though I can by no means adopt the author's hypothesis, that the book was written by

Solomon *after* he was restored from his grievous apostasy. This is an assumption that never was proved and never can be.

From the *preface* to this work I have selected some general observations, which I consider to be important, and subjoin to this introduction; and what I borrow from the *work* itself I mark with a C, not knowing the author's name. Of the *authenticity* of the book of *Ecclesiastes* I have no doubt; but I must say, the *language* and *style* puzzle me not a little. *Chaldaisms* and *Syriasms* are certainly frequent in it, and not a few *Chaldee* words and terminations; and the style is such as may be seen in those writers who lived at or after the captivity. If these can be reconciled with the age of Solomon, I have no objection; but the attempts that have been made to deny this, and overthrow the evidence, are in my view often trifling, and generally ineffectual. That Solomon, son of David, might have been the *author* of the whole *matter* of this, and a *subsequent writer* put it in his own language, is a possible case; and were this to be allowed, it would solve all difficulties. Let us place the supposition thus: Solomon said all these things, and they are highly worthy of his wisdom; and a Divine writer, *after his time*, who does not mention his name, gives us a faithful version of the whole in his own language.

On other subjects relative to this book, the author of *Chohelath* shall speak for me.

"I. Not to perplex our readers with the various expositions of the word *Chohelath*, the title of the book in the original, (for in truth we can find none better or more significant than that commonly received, viz., *Ecclesiastes*, or *the Preacher*,) let us now come to the book itself. Nothing can be more interesting than the subject it treats of, to wit, *the chief or sovereign good* which man, as a rational and accountable being, should here propose to himself. Every human creature, it is certain, naturally aims at happiness; but though all apply themselves with equal ardour to this desirable end, yet such is the violence of passion, and want of reflection in the generality of mankind, that the means they use for obtaining it, instead of conducting them to the safe and direct road, only serve to mislead and bewilder them in dark and intricate labyrinths, where it is impossible to find what they seek for. Now as it was absolutely necessary to convince such men of the vanity of their pursuits, in order to induce them to turn back in the right way, Solomon shows, in the first place, what is *not* happiness, and then what really *is*. Like a skilful physician, he searches deeply into the latent cause of the malady, and then prescribes a radical cure.

"II. In the former disquisition he enumerates all those particulars which mankind are most apt to fix their hearts upon, and shows, from his own dear-bought experience, and the transient and unsatisfactory nature of the things themselves, that no such thing as solid felicity is to be found in any of them. What he asserts on this head carries with it the greater weight, as no man upon earth was ever better qualified to speak decisively on such a subject, considering the opportunities he had of enjoying to the utmost all that this world affords. After having thus cleared away the obstacles to happiness, he enters on the main point, which is to direct us how and where it may be found. This he affirms, at the conclusion of the book, where he recapitulates the sum and substance of the sermon, as some not improperly have styled it, consists in a religious and virtuous life, with which, as he frequently intimates, a man in the lowest circumstances may be happy, and without which one in the highest must be miserable. As the whole book tends to this single point, so, in discussing thereof, many excellent observations are interspersed relating to the various duties of life, from the

highest to the lowest station; the advantages resulting even from poverty, the genuine use of riches, and extreme folly of abusing them; the unequal dispensations of Divine Providence; the immortality of the human soul; and great day of final retribution. All these noble and important subjects are treated of in such a style and manner as nothing among the ancients can parallel.

"We have here given the genuine character of this inestimable piece; yet such has been the ignorance, inattention, or depravity of some persons, that it would be hard to find an instance of any thing written on so serious and interesting a subject, which has been so grossly misrepresented. How often has a handle been taken from certain passages, ill understood, and worse applied, to patronize libertinism, by such as pretend to judge of the whole from a single sentence, independent of the rest, without paying the least regard to the general scope or design! According to which rule the most pious discourse that ever was written may be perverted to atheism. Some fanatics have fallen into the contrary extreme; for, on reading that all here below was vanity, they have been so wrong-headed, as to condemn every thing as evil in itself. This world, according to them, cannot be too bitterly inveighed against; and man has nothing else to do with it, but to spend his days in sighing and mourning. But it is evident that nothing could be farther from the preacher's intention: for notwithstanding he speaks so feelingly of the instability and unsatisfactory nature of all sublunary things, and the vanity of human cares, schemes, and contrivances; yet, lest any one should mistake his meaning, he advises every man, at the same time, to reap the fruit of his honest labours, and take the comfort of what he possesses with a sober freedom and cheerful spirit. Not to harass and disturb his mind with anxious cares and restless solitudes about future events; but to pass the short space which Heaven has allotted him here, as pleasantly as his station will admit, with a quiet conscience. He does not condemn the things themselves, such as science, prudence, mirth, riches, honours, &c.; but only their abuse, that is, the useless studies, unreasonable pursuits, and immoderate desires, of those who pervert God's blessings to their own destruction.

"On this head Solomon gives his sentiments, not only as a divine and philosopher, but like one thoroughly acquainted with the foibles of the human heart. It was not his design to drive people out of the world, or to make them live wretchedly in it; but only that they should think and act like rational creatures; or, in other words, be induced to consult their own happiness.

"There is nothing in the whole body of pagan philosophy so elevated and magnificent, as what some have written on the important subject of this poem: but we find their opinions so various and contradictory, and the most plausible so blended with errors, even those of the *divine Plato* not excepted, that their sublimest sentiments on the *sovereign good* or *ultimate happiness* of man, when compared with those of the royal preacher, not only appear cold and languid, but always leave the mind unsatisfied and restless. We are lost in a pompous flow of words; and dazzled, but not illuminated. One sect, by confining happiness to sensual pleasures, so greatly slackened the cord as to render it wholly useless: another, by their too austere and rigid maxims, stretched it so tight that it snapped asunder; though the experience of all ages has evinced that these latter imposed both on themselves and the world, when they taught that virtue, however afflicted here, was its own reward, and sufficient of itself to render a man completely happy. Even in the brazen bull of *Perillus*, truth will cry out from the rack against such fallacious teachers, and prove them liars. The extravagant figments, therefore, of the *stoical apathy*, no less than those of the *voluptuous epicurean*, both

equally vanish at the splendour of the Divine truth delivered by Solomon. He alone decides the great question in such a manner that the soul is instantly convinced; it need seek no farther.

"III. To prevent all misapprehensions, which a slight and cursory reading of this book is apt to raise in many persons, it will be requisite to observe two cautions: First, that Solomon, who tells us that he applied his heart not only to the search of wisdom and knowledge, but also of folly and madness, frequently speaks, not according to his own sentiments, though he proposes the thing in a naked and simple manner, designedly making use of such terms as might set the picture in a fuller and clearer light, so that we often meet with certain expressions which, unless we search into their true design, seem to have a quite different force and meaning from what the author really intended. We must therefore take particular care to distinguish the doubts and objections of others from Solomon's answers; the want of attending to which has made this book much more obscure than otherwise it would appear. Secondly, we should not judge of the entire discourse from some parts of it; since many things are pertinently said, according to the present subject, which, in themselves, and strictly taken, are far from true. In order to come at the genuine sense, we should form our opinion from the different circumstances of the matter treated of, comparing the antecedent with the consequent passages, and always considering the preacher's real scope and design. By carefully attending to these two cautions, this book will be seen in a very different light from what it now appears in to the generality of readers.

"IV. This book, besides the figurative and proverbial expressions to be found in no other part of the Scripture, is undoubtedly metrical; and, consequently, the grammatization, in many places, not a little perplexed, from the frequent ellipses, abbreviations, transposition of words, and other poetical licenses, allowed in all languages; to say nothing of the carelessness or ignorance of transcribers, as appears from the variety of readings. Yet, notwithstanding we are so little acquainted with the nature of the Hebrew metre, and the propriety of certain phrases which, at this vast distance of time, in a language that has been dead upwards of two thousand years, must unavoidably occasion the same difficulties and obscurities as occur in works of far less antiquity, and in languages more generally studied and better understood; notwithstanding this, I say, a diligent and attentive observer will always find enough to recompense his trouble; and, if he has any taste, cannot avoid being struck with the exquisite beauty and regularity of the plan.

"V. The most judicious commentators have remarked on this book, that we have here a conspicuous example of that form of disputing, which was so justly admired in the soundest of the pagan philosophers; particularly in Socrates, who, whilst others were taken up with abstruse speculations about the nature of things, and investigating the number, motions, distance, and magnitude of the stars, brought down philosophy from the upper regions, and fixed its abode on earth; that is, by teaching such precepts as served for the regulation of life and manners, by far the most useful of all sciences, as being most conducive to the welfare of society, and the general benefit of mankind. Of this we have a noble specimen in the memoirs of that ancient moralist, collected by Xenophon. It is, I think, beyond all contradiction, that no one ever made deeper researches into nature, or had made so great a progress in every branch of science, both speculative and experimental. But what, after all, was the result of his inquiries? A thorough conviction of the inutility of such studies, and how little they conduce towards the obtaining that peace and tranquillity of mind wherein true happiness consists. He applied himself, therefore, to that study which might

produce a real and lasting advantage, namely, to render men wise to some purpose; that is, truly virtuous. The manner of his treating this important subject bears some resemblance to that of the celebrated Greek moralist. He does not give us a long roll of dry formal precepts, with which the mind is soon tired; but, to confirm the truth of every thing he says, appeals, not only to his own experience, but to the general sense of unbiassed reason. At the same time he sets before us, in the liveliest colours, the sad effects of vice and folly; and makes use of every incentive to engage the heart to be enamoured with virtue, and pursue its own interest. Whatever he intends to inculcate is first barely proposed, and then more accurately explained and illustrated, though by gentle and almost imperceptible transitions; with this peculiarity, that there is always much more implied than expressed; insomuch that the reader, from a slight hint given him, is left to draw such inferences as his own reflection must naturally suggest. Every thing, in short, is drawn, in this admirable composition, with equal simplicity and elegance; and hath as distinguished a superiority to whatever the best pagan philosophers have given us on the same subject, as the borrowed light of the moon is surpassed by that of the sun in his full meridian lustre; or, to use a still stronger comparison, as Solomon's knowledge of the one true God excelled the idle notion of their fictitious deities."

Some have supposed that the book of Ecclesiastes is a poem. That some poetic lines may be found in it, there is no doubt; but it has nothing in common with poetic books, nor does it exist in the hemistich form in any printed edition or MS. yet discovered. It is plain prose, and is not susceptible of that form in which the Hebrew poetic books appear.

The author already quoted thinks that the book of *Ecclesiastes* is *metrical*. I cannot see this: but it has what is essential to poetry, a truly dignified style; there are no mean, creeping words in it, whether pure Hebrew, or borrowed from any of its dialects. They are all well chosen, nervous, and highly expressive. They are, in short, such as become the subject, and are worthy of that inspiration by which the author was guided.

# ECCLESIASTES OR, THE PREACHER

- Year from the Creation, according to Archbishop Usher, 3027.
- Year from the Flood of Noah, according to the common Hebrew text, 1371.
- Year before the birth of Christ, 973.
- Year before the vulgar era of Christ's nativity, 977.
- N. B. The time when this book was written is very uncertain: the above chronology is agreeable to that contained in the present authorized version.

## CHAPTER I

*The prophet shows that all human courses are vain, 1-4. The creatures are continually changing, 5-8. There is nothing new under the sun, 9-11. Who the prophet was, his estate and his studies, 12-18.*

## NOTES ON CHAP. I

Verse 1. **The words of the Preacher]** Literally, "The words of Choheleth, son of David, king of Jerusalem." But the *Targum* explains it thus: "The words of the prophecy, which Choheleth prophesied; the same is Solomon, son of David the king, who was in Jerusalem. For when Solomon, king of Israel, saw by the spirit of prophecy that the kingdom of Rehoboam his son was about to be divided with Jeroboam, the son of Nebat; and the house of the sanctuary was about to be destroyed, and the people of Israel sent into captivity; he said in his word-*Vanity of vanities* is all that I have laboured, and David my father; they are *altogether vanity*."

The word קהלה *Koheleth* is a feminine noun, from the root קהל *kahal*, to collect, gather together, assemble; and means, *she who assembles* or *collects a congregation*; translated by the *Septuagint*, Εκκλησιαστης, *a public speaker, a speaker in an assembly*; and hence translated by us *a preacher*. In my old MS. Bible it is explained thus: *a talker to the people; or toggyder cleping*.

Verse 2. **Vanity of vanities]** As the words are an exclamation, it would be better to translate, *O vanity of vanities!* Emptiness of emptinesses. True, substantial good is not to be found in any thing liable to *change* and *corruption*.

The author referred to in the introduction begins his paraphrase thus:—

"O vain deluding world! whose largest gifts  
Thine emptiness betray, like painted clouds,  
Or watery bubbles: as the vapour flies,  
Dispersed by lightest blast, so fleet thy joys,  
And leave no trace behind. This serious truth

The royal preacher loud proclaims, convinced  
 By sad experience; with a sigh repeats  
 The mournful theme, that nothing here below  
 Can solid comfort yield: 'tis all a scene.  
 Of vanity, beyond the power of words  
 To express, or thought conceive. Let every man  
 Survey himself, then ask, what fruit remains  
 Of all his fond pursuits? What has he gain'd,  
 By toiling thus for more than nature's wants  
 Require? Why thus with endless projects rack'd  
 His heated brain, and to the labouring mind,  
 Repose denied? Why such expense of time,  
 That steals away so fast, and ne'er looks back?  
 Could man his wish obtain, how short the space  
 For his enjoyment! No less transient here  
 The time of his duration, than the things  
 Thus anxiously pursued. For, as the mind,  
 In search of bliss, fix'd on no solid point,  
 For ever fluctuates; so our little frames,  
 In which we glory, haste to their decline,  
 Nor permanence can find. The human race  
 Drop like autumnal leaves, by spring revived:  
 One generation from the stage of life  
 Withdraws, another comes, and thus makes room  
 For that which follows. Mightiest realms decay,  
 Sink by degrees; and lo! new form'd estates  
 Rise from their ruins. Even the earth itself,  
 Sole object of our hopes and fears,  
 Shall have its period, though to man unknown."

Verse 3. **What profit hath a man]** What is the sum of the real good he has gained by all his toils in life? They, in themselves, have neither made him *contented* nor *happy*.

Verse 4. **One generation passeth away]** Men succeed each other in unceasing generations: but the earth is still the same; it undergoes no change that leads to melioration, or greater perfection. And it will continue the same לְעוֹלָם *leolam*, during the whole course of time; till the end of all things arrives.

Verses 5. and 6. These verses are confused by being falsely divided. The first clause of the *sixth* should be joined to the *fifth* verse.

"The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he ariseth; going to the south, and circulating to the north."

Verse 6. "The wind is continually whirling about, and the wind returneth upon its whirlings."

It is plain, from the clause which I have restored to the *fifth* verse, that the author refers to the approximations of the sun to the *northern* and *southern tropics*, viz., of *Cancer* and *Capricorn*.

All the *versions* agree in applying the first clause of the *sixth* verse to the *sun*, and not to the *wind*. Our *version* alone has mistaken the meaning. My old MS. Bible is quite correct:

The sunne risith up, and goth down, and to his place turnith agein; and there agein riising, goth about bi the south, and then agein to the north.

The author points out two things here: 1. *Day* and *night*, marked by the appearance of the sun above the horizon; proceeding *apparently* from *east* to *west*; where he sinks under the horizon, and appears to be lost during the night. 2. His *annual course* through the twelve signs of the zodiac, when, from the equinoctial, he proceeds southward to the tropic of Capricorn; and thence turneth about towards the north, till he reaches the tropic of Cancer; and so on.

Verse 7. **All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full]** The reason is, nothing goes into it either by the; *rivers* or by *rain*, that does not come from it: and *to the place whence the rivers come*, whether from the *sea* originally by evaporation, or immediately by *rain*, thither they return again; for the water exhaled from the sea by evaporation is collected in the *clouds*, and in rain, &c., falls upon the tops of the mountains; and, filtered through their fissures, produce *streams*, several of which *uniting*, make *rivers*, which flow into the sea. The water is again *evaporated by the sun*; the vapours collected are precipitated; and, being filtered through the earth, become *streams*, &c., as before.

Verse 8. **All things are full of labour]** It is; impossible to calculate how much anxiety, pain, labour, and fatigue are necessary in order to carry on the *common operations of life*. But an *endless desire of gain*, and an *endless curiosity to witness* a variety of results, cause men to, labour on. The *eye* sees much, but wishes to see more. The *ear* hears of many things; but is curious to have the actual knowledge of them. So *desire* and *curiosity* carry men, under the Divine providence, through all the labours and pains of life.

Verse 9. **The thing that hath been]** Every thing in the whole economy of nature has its *revolutions*; summer and winter, heat and cold, rain and drought, seedtime and autumn, with the whole system of *corruption* and *generation*, alternately succeed each other, so that *whatever has been* shall *be again*. There is really, physically, and philosophically, nothing absolutely new under the sun, in the course of sublunary things. The same is the case in all the revolutions of the heavens.

Verse 10. **Is there any thing, &c.]** The original is beautiful. "Is there any thing which will say, See this! it is new?" Men may say this of their discoveries, &c.; but universal nature says, It is not new. *It has been*, and it *will be*.

Verse 11. There is **no remembrance]** I believe the general meaning to be this: Multitudes of *ancient transactions* have been lost, because they were not *recorded*; and of many that have been recorded, the *records* are *lost*. And this will be the case with many others which are yet to occur. How many persons, not much acquainted with books, have supposed that certain things were their

own discoveries, which have been *written* or *printed* even long before they were born! *Dutens*, in his *Origin of the Discoveries attributed to the Moderns*, has made a very clear case.

Verse 12. **I the Preacher was king**] This is a strange verse, and does not admit of an easy solution. It is literally, "I, Choheleth, have been king over Israel, in Jerusalem." This book, as we have already seen, has been conjectured by some to have been written about the time that *Ptolemy Philadelphus* formed his great library at Alexandria, about *two hundred and eighty-five* years before our Lord; and from the multitude of Jews that dwelt there, and resorted to that city for the sake of commerce, it was said there was an *Israel in Alexandria*. See the *introduction*. See **Clarke "Ec 1:1"**.

It has also been conjectured from this, that if the book were written by *Solomon*, it was intended to be a *posthumous publication*. "I that *was* king, still continue to preach and instruct you." Those who suppose the book to have been written *after Solomon's fall*, think that he speaks thus through *humility*. "I was once worthy of the name of king: but I fell into all evil; and, though recovered, I am no longer worthy of the name." I am afraid this is not *solid*.

Verse 13. **And I gave my heart to seek and search**] While Solomon was faithful to his God, he diligently cultivated his mind. His giving himself to the study of natural history, philosophy, poetry, &c., are sufficient proofs of it. He had not intuitive knowledge from God; but he had a *capacity* to obtain every kind of knowledge useful to man.

**This sore travail**] This is the way in which knowledge is to be acquired; and in order to investigate the operations of nature, the most *laborious discussions* and *perplexing experiments* must be instituted, and conducted to their proper results. It is God's determination that knowledge shall be acquired in no other way.

Verse 14. **Behold, all is vanity**] After all these discussions and experiments, when even the results have been the most successful, I have found only *rational satisfaction*; but not that *supreme good* by which alone the soul can be made happy.

O curas hominum! O quantum est in rebus inane!

"How anxious are our cares, and yet how vain  
The bent of our desires!"  
PERS. *Sat.* i., v. 1.

Verse 15. That which is **crooked cannot be made straight**] There are many apparent irregularities and anomalies in nature for which we cannot account; and there are many *defects* that cannot be *supplied*. This is the impression from a *general view* of nature; but the more we study and investigate its operations, the more we shall be convinced that all is a *consecutive* and well-ordered whole; and that in the *chain of nature* not one *link* is broken, deficient, or lost.

Verse 16. **I communed with mine own heart**] Literally, "I spoke, I, with my heart, saying." When successful in my researches, but not happy in my soul, though easy in my circumstances, I entered into my own heart, and there inquired the *cause* of my discontent. He found that, though-1.

He had gotten wisdom beyond all men; 2. Wealth and honours more than any other; 3. Practical wisdom more than all his predecessors; 4. Had tried *pleasure* and animal gratification, even to their extremes; yet after all this he had nothing but *vexation of spirit*. None of these *four* things, nor the *whole* of them *conjoined*, could afford him such a *happiness* as satisfies the soul. Why was all this? Because the soul was made for God, and in the possession of him alone can it find happiness.

Verse 17. **To know madness and folly]** הוֹלְלוּת וְשִׂכְלוּת *holloth vesichluth*. Παραβολας και επιστημην, "Parables and science."—*Septuagint*. So the *Syriac*; nearly so the *Arabic*.

"What were error and foolishness."—*Coverdale*. Perhaps *gayety* and *sobriety* may be the better meaning for these two difficult words. I can scarcely think they are taken in that *bad sense* in which our translation exhibits them. "I tried pleasure in all its forms; and sobriety and self-abnegation to their utmost extent." *Choheleth* paraphrases, "Even fools and madmen taught me rules."

Verse 18. **For in much wisdom is much grief]** The more we know of *ourselves* the less satisfied shall we be with our own hearts; and the more we know of *mankind* the less willing shall we be to trust them, and the less shall we admire them.

**He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.]** And why so? Because, independently of God, the principal objects of knowledge are natural and moral evils.

The *Targum* gives a curious paraphrase here: "The man who multiplies wisdom, when he sins and is not converted to repentance, multiplies the indignation of God against himself; and the man who adds science, and yet dies in his childhood, adds grief of heart to his relatives." A man in science; a foolish child in conduct. How pained must they be who had the expense of his education! But there are many men-children of this sort in every age and country.

# ECCLESIASTES

## CHAPTER II

*The vanity of human courses in the works of pleasure, planting, equipage, amassing wealth, &c., 1-11. Wisdom preferable to folly, 12-14; yet little difference between the wise and the foolish in the events of life, 15-17. The vanity of amassing wealth for heirs, when whether they will be foolish or wise cannot be ascertained, 18-21. There is much sorrow in the labour of man, 22, 23. We should enjoy what the providence of God gives, 25, 26.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. II

Verse 1. **I will prove thee with mirth]** This is well expressed by the author so often referred to. Having tried speculative knowledge in vain, passion and appetite whisper,—

"From the rugged thorny road  
Of wisdom, which so ill repays thy toil,  
Turn back, and enter pleasure's flowery paths.  
Go, take thy fill of joy; to passion give  
The reins; nor let one serious thought restrain  
What youth and affluence prompt."

Verse 2. **I said of laughter, It is mad]** Literally "To laughter I said, O mad one! and to mirth, What is this one doing?"

Solomon does not speak here of a sober enjoyment of the things of this world, but of *intemperate pleasure*, whose two attendants, *laughter* and *mirth* are introduced by a beautiful *prosopopœia* as two persons; and the contemptuous manner wherewith he treats them has something remarkably striking. He tells the *former* to her face that *she is mad*; but as to the *latter*, he thinks her so much beneath his notice, that he only points at her, and instantly turns his back.

Verse 3. **To give myself unto wine, (yet acquainting [נהיג noheg, "guiding"] mine heart with wisdom.) ]** I did not run into *extremes*, as when I gave up myself to *mirth* and *pleasure*. *There*, I threw off all restraint; *here*, I took the middle course, to see whether a moderate enjoyment of the things of the world might not produce that happiness which I supposed man was created to enjoy here below.

Verse 4. **I builded me houses]** Palace after palace; the house of the forest of Lebanon, #1Ki 7:1, &c.; a house for the queen; the temple, &c., #2Ch 8:1, &c.; #1Ki 9:10, &c., besides many other buildings of various kinds.

Verse 5. **I made me gardens and orchards]** פַּרְדֵּסִים *pardesim*, "paradises." I doubt much whether this be an original *Hebrew* word. [Arabic] *ferdoos*, is found in the *Persian* and *Arabic*; and signifies a *pleasant garden*, a *vineyard*. Hence our word *paradise*, a place *full of delights*. How well Solomon was qualified to form *gardens*, *orchards*, *vineyards*, *conservatories*, &c., may be at once

conceived when we recollect his knowledge of *natural history*; and that he wrote treatises on vegetables and their properties, from the *cedar* to the *hyssop*.

Verse 6. **Pools of water**] *Tanks* and *reservoirs*.

**To water therewith the wood**] Aqueducts to lead the water from the tanks to different parts.

Verse 7. **Servants and maidens**] For my works, fields, folds, and various domestic labors.

**Servants born in any house**] Besides those hired from without, he had *married couples* in the precincts of his grounds, palaces, etc., who, when their children grew up, got them employment with themselves.

**Great and small cattle**] *Oxen, neat, horses, asses, mules, camels*, and such like; with *sheep* and *goats*. And multitudes of most of these he needed, when we are told that his household consumed daily *ten stall-fed oxen, with twenty from the pasture, with a hundred sheep; besides harts, roebucks, fallow deer, fatted fowls*, and other kinds of provision. Probably, such another court for splendor and expense was not in the universe.

Verse 8. **The peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces**] 1. The *taxes* levied off his subjects. 2. The *tribute* given by the neighboring potentates. Both these make the "peculiar treasure of kings;" *taxes* and *tribute*.

**Men singers and women singers**] This includes all *instrumental* and *vocal* performers. These may be called the *delights* of the sons of men.

**Musical instruments, and that of all sorts.**] For these *seven* words, there are only *two* in the original, שִׁדָּה וְשִׁדּוֹת shiddah veshiddoth. These words are acknowledged on all hands to be utterly unknown, if not utterly inexplicable. Some render them *male* and *female* captives; others, *cups* and *flagons*; others, *cooks* and *confectioners*; others, *a species of musical compositions* derived from a celebrated Phœnician woman named *Sido*, to whom Sanchoniatha attributes the invention of *music*. Others, with more probability, *wives* and *concubines*; of the former of whom Solomon had *seven hundred*, and of the latter, *three hundred*; and if these be not spoken of here, they are not mentioned at all; whereas music, and every thing connected with that, was referred to before. The author of *Choheleth* paraphrases thus:—

"To complete  
This scene of earthly bliss, how large a span  
Of that which most delights the sons of men  
Fell to my portion! What a lovely train  
Of blooming beauties, by *connubial* ties,  
By *purchase*, or the *gifts* of neighboring kings,  
Or *spoils of war*, made mine."

If, after all this, I may add one *conjecture*, it shall be this; שדה *sadeh*, in Hebrew, is a *field*, and occurs in various parts of the Bible. שדות *sadoth* is *fields*, #1Sa 22:7, the *points* in such a case are of no consideration. May not Solomon be speaking here of *farms upon farms*, or *estates upon estates*, which he had added by purchase to the *common regal portion*? We know that a king of Israel (Ahab) once desired to have a vineyard (Naboth's) which he could not obtain: now, Solomon having spoken before of *gardens, orchards, and vineyards*, why may he not here speak of supernumerary estates? Perhaps every man who critically examines the place will be dissatisfied, and have a *conjecture* of his own.

Verse 10. **I withheld not my heart from any joy**] He had every means of gratification; he could desire nothing that was not within his reach; and whatever he wished, he took care to possess.

Verse 11. **And, behold, all was vanity**] Emptiness and insufficiency in itself.

**And vexation of spirit**] Because it promised the good I wished for, but did not, could not, perform the promise; and left my soul discontented and chagrined.

Verse 12. **For what can the man do that cometh after the king?**] I have examined every thing proposed by *science*, by *maddening pleasure*, and by more refined and regulated *mirth*. I seized on the whole, and used them to the uttermost; and so far, that none ever shall be able to exceed me; as none can, in the course of things, ever have such *power* and *means* of *gratification*.

Verse 13. **Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly**] Though in none of these pursuits I found the *supreme* good, the happiness my soul longed after; yet I could easily perceive that wisdom *excelled* the *others*, as far as *light excels darkness*. And he immediately subjoins the reasons.

Verse 14. **The wise man's eyes, &c.**] Well expressed by *Chohemoth*:—

"The wise are circumspect, maturely weigh  
The consequence of what they undertake,  
Good ends propose, and fittest means apply  
To accomplish their designs."

**But the fool walketh in darkness]**

"But fools, deprived  
Of reason's guidance, or in darkness grope,  
Or, unreflecting like a frantic man,  
Who on the brink of some steep precipice  
Attempts to run a race with heedless steps,  
Rush to their own perdition."

## One event happeneth to them all.]

"Though wide the difference, what has human pride  
To boast? Even I myself too plainly saw,  
That *one event to both alike befalls*;  
To various accidents of life exposed,  
Without distinction: nor can *wisdom* screen  
From *dangers, disappointments, grief, and pain.*"

Verse 15. **As it happeneth to the fool]** Literally, "According as the event is to the fool, it happens to me, even me." There is a peculiar beauty and emphasis in the repetition of *me*. Having pointed out the advantages that wisdom has over folly, he takes this opportunity of reminding us of the danger of trusting too much to it, by showing that it is equally subject to the common accidents of life; and, therefore, incapable of making us completely happy. Having given his sentiments on this point in *general* terms, he proceeds to those *particular* instances wherein human prudence chiefly exerts itself; and shows how egregiously it is mistaken in every one of them.—C.

Verse 16. There is **no remembrance]** The wise and the fool are equally subject to death; and, in most instances, they are equally forgotten. *Time* sweeps away all remembrances, except the very *few* out of *millions* which are preserved for a while in the *page of history*.

Verse 17. **Therefore I hated life]** חַיִּים הַחַיִּים *et hachaiyim, the lives*, both of the *wise*, the *madman*, and the *fool*. Also all the *stages* of life, the *child*, the *man*, and the *sage*. There was nothing in it worth *pursuing*, no *period* worth *re-living* and no *hope* that if this were possible I could again be more successful.

Verse 18. **I hated all my labour]** Because, 1. It has not answered the end for which it was instituted. 2. I can enjoy the fruits of it but a short time. 3. I must leave it to others, and know not whether a *wise man*, a *knave*, or a *fool* will possess it.

Verse 19. **A wise man or a fool?]** Alas! Solomon, the *wisest* of all men, made the *worst use* of his wisdom, had *seven hundred wives* and *three hundred concubines*, and yet left but *one son* behind him, to possess his *estates* and his *throne*, and that one was the silliest of fools!

Verse 20. **I went about to cause my heart to despair]** What makes all worse, there is no remedy. It is impossible in the present state of things to prevent these evils.

Verse 21. **For there is a man]** Does he not allude to himself? As if he had said, "I have laboured to cultivate my mind in wisdom and in science, in knowledge of men and things, and have endeavoured to establish *equity* and dispense justice. And now I find I *shall leave* all the fruits of my labour to a *man that hath not laboured therein*, and consequently cannot prize what I have wrought." Does he not refer to his son *Rehoboam*?

Verse 22. **For what hath man of all his laborer]** *Labour of body, disappointment of hope, and vexation of heart*, have been all my portion.

Verse 23. **His days are sorrows]** What a picture of human life where the heart is not filled with the peace and love of God! All his *days* are *sorrows*; all his *labours* *griefs*; all his *nights* *restless*; for he has no portion but merely what *earth* can give; and that is embittered by the labour of *acquisition*, and the disappointment in the using.

**This is also vanity.]** Emptiness of good and substantial misery.

Verse 24. There is **nothing better for a man]** The sense of this passage is well expressed in the following lines:—

"For these disorders wouldst thou find a cure,  
Such cure as human frailty would admit?  
Drive from thee anxious cares; let reason curb  
Thy passions; and with cheerful heart enjoy  
That little which the world affords; for here,  
Though vain the hopes of perfect happiness,  
Yet still the road of life, rugged at best,  
Is not without its comforts.—————  
Wouldst thou their sweetness taste, look up to heaven,  
And praise the all-bounteous Donor, who bestows  
The power to use aright."

Verse 25. **For who can eat-more than I?]** But instead of **חַרֵץ מִמֶּנִּי** *chuts mimmenni, more than I*; **חַרֵץ מִמֶּנּוּ** *chuts mimmennu, without HIM*, is the reading of *eight* of *Kennicott's* and *De Rossi's* MSS., as also of the *Septuagint*, *Syriac*, and *Arabic*.

"For who maye eat, drynke, or bring enythinge to pass without him?"—COVERDALE.

I believe this to be the true reading. No one can have a true relish of the comforts of life without the Divine blessing. This reading connects all the sentences: "This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God;—for who can eat, and who can relish without HIM? For God giveth to man that is good." It is through his liberality that we have any thing to eat or drink; and it is only through his blessing that we can derive good from the use of what we possess.

Verse 26. **Giveth-wisdom, and knowledge, and joy]** 1. God gives *wisdom*—the knowledge of himself, light to direct in the way of salvation. 2. *Knowledge*—understanding to discern the operation of his hand; *experimental acquaintance* with himself, in the dispensing of his *grace* and the *gifts of his Spirit*. 3. *Joy*; a hundred days of ease for one day of pain; *one thousand* enjoyments for one privation; and to them that believe, *peace of conscience*, and *JOY in the Holy Ghost*.

**But to the sinner he giveth travail]** He has a life of labour, disappointment, and distress; for because he is an enemy to God, he travails in pain all his days; and, as the wise man says elsewhere, *the wealth of the wicked is laid up for the just*. So he loseth *earthly good*, because he would not take a *heavenly portion* with it.

# ECCLESIASTES

## CHAPTER III

*Every thing has its time and season, 1-8. Men are exercised with labour, 9, 10. Every thing is beautiful in its season, 11. Men should enjoy thankfully the gifts of God, 12, 13. What God does is for ever, 14. There is nothing new, 15. The corruption of judgment; but the judgments of God are right, 16, 17. Man is brutish, and men and brutes die in like manner, 18-21. Man may enjoy the fruit of his own labours, 22.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. III

Verse 1. **To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose]** *Two* general remarks may be made on the first *eight* verses of this chapter. 1. God by his providence governs the world, and has determined particular *things* and operations to particular *times*. In those times such things may be done with propriety and success; but if we neglect the appointed seasons, we sin against this providence, and become the authors of our own distresses. 2. God has given to man that portion of duration called TIME; the space in which all the operations of nature, of animals, and intellectual beings, are carried on; but while nature is steady in its course, and animals faithful to their instincts, man devotes it to a great variety of purposes; but very frequently to that for which God never made *time, space, or opportunity*. And all we can say, when an evil deed is done, is, there was a *time* in which it was done, though God never made *it* for that purpose.

To say any farther on this subject is needless, as the words themselves give in general their own meaning. The Jews, it is true, see in these *times* and *seasons* all the events of their own nation, from the birth of Abraham to the present times; and as to *fathers* and their followers, they see all the events and states of the Christian Church in them!

It is worthy of remark, that in all this list there are but *two* things which may be said to be done generally by the disposal of God, and in which men can have but little influence: the *time of birth*, and the *time of death*. But all the others are left to the option of man, though God continues to overrule them by his providence. The following paraphrase will explain all that is necessary to be generally understood:—

Verse 2. **A time to be born, and a time to die—plant]**

"As in its *mother's womb* the *embryo* lies  
A *space* determined; to full growth arrived,  
From its dark prison *bursts*, and *sees the light*;  
So is the period fix'd when man shall drop  
Into the *grave*.—A *time* there is to *plant*,  
And *sow*; another time to *pluck* and *reap*.  
Even *nations* have their destined *rise* and *fall*:  
Awhile they thrive; and for destruction ripe,  
When grown, are rooted up like *wither'd plants*."

Verse 3. **A time to kill,—heal,—break down,—build up]**

"The healing art, when out of season used,  
Pernicious proves, and serves to hasten death.  
But timely medicines drooping nature raise,  
And health restore.—*Now, Justice* wields her *sword*  
With wholesome rigour, nor the offender spares:  
But *Mercy* now is more expedient found.  
On *crazy fabrics* ill-timed cost bestow'd  
No purpose answers, when discretion bids  
To *pull them down*, and wait a season fit  
To *build anew*."

Verse 4. **A time to weep,—laugh,—mourn,—dance]**

—————"When private *griefs* affect  
The heart, *our tears with decent sorrow flow*;  
Nor less becoming, when the *public mourns*,  
To vent the *deepest sighs*. But all around  
When things a *smiling aspect* bear, our souls  
May *well exult*; 'tis then a time for *joy*."

Verse 5. **A time to cast away stones,—to gather stones,—to embrace,—to refrain]**

"One while *domestic cares abortive* prove,  
And then *successful*. Nature now invites  
*Connubial pleasures*: but, when *languid* grown,  
No less *rejects*."

Verse 6. **A time to get,—to lose,—to keep,—to cast away]**

—————"Commerce produces wealth,  
Whilst *time of gaining* lasts; from every point  
Blow prosperous gales. Now heaven begins to lower,  
And all our hopes are blasted. Prudence bids,  
One while, our *treasure to reserve*, and then  
With liberal hand to *scatter wide*. How oft  
In raging storms, the owner *wisely casts*  
*Into the deep* his precious merchandise,  
To save the foundering bark!

Verse 7. **A time to rend,—sew,—keep silence,—speak]**

—————"Intestine broils  
And factions *rend a state*: at length the *breach*  
Is *heal'd*, and rest ensues. Wisdom *restrains*  
The *tongue*, when *words* are vain: but *now*,  
"Tis *time to speak*, and silence would be criminal."

Verse 8. **A time to love,—hate,—of war,—of peace.]**

"*Love* turns to *hatred*; interest or caprice  
*Dissolves* the firmest knot by *friendship* tied.  
O'er rival *nations*, with *revenge* inflamed,  
Or *lust of power*, fell *Discord* shakes awhile  
Her *baleful torch*: now smiling *Peace* returns.

The above paraphrase on the verses cited contains a general view of the *principal occurrences of time*, in reference to the human being, from his cradle to his grave, through all the operations of life.

Verse 9. **What profit hath he]** What real good, what solid pleasure, is derived from all the labours of man? *Necessity* drives him to the principal part of his *cares* and *toils*; he *labours* that he may *eat* and *drink*; and he *eats* and *drinks* that he may be preserved *alive*, and kept from *sickness* and *pain*. Love of *money*, the basest of all passions, and *restless ambition*, drive men to many labours and expedients, which perplex and often destroy them. He, then, who lives without God, travails in pain all his days.

Verse 10. **I have seen the travail]** Man is a sinner; and, because he is such, he suffers.

Verse 11. **Beautiful in his time]** God's works are well done; there are order, harmony, and beauty in them all. Even the *caterpillar* is a finished beauty in all the *changes* through which it passes, when its structure is properly examined, and the *end* kept in view in which each change is to issue. Nothing of this kind can be said of the works of man. The most finished works of art are bungling jobs, when compared with the meanest operation of nature.

**He hath set the world in their heart]** הַעוֹלָם *haolam*, that *hidden time*—the period *beyond* the present,—ETERNITY. The proper translation of this clause is the following: "Also that eternity hath he placed in their heart, without which man could not find out the work which God hath made from the commencement to the end." God has deeply rooted the idea of *eternity* in every human heart; and every considerate man sees, that all the operations of God refer to that endless duration. See **#Ec 3:14**. And it is only in eternity that man will be able to discover what God has designed by the various works he has formed.

Verse 12. **I know that there is no good in them, but, &c.]** Since God has so disposed the affairs of this world, that the great events of providence cannot be accelerated or retarded by human cares

and anxieties, submit to God; make a proper use of what he has given: do thyself *no harm*, and endeavour as much as possible to do others *good*.

Enjoy, and bless thyself; let others share  
The transient blessing: 'tis the gift of God.

Verse 14. **I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever]** לְעוֹלָם *leolam*, for *eternity*; in reference to that grand consummation of men and things intimated in #Ec 3:11. God has produced no being that he intends ultimately to destroy. He made every thing in reference to eternity; and, however matter may be changed and refined, animal and intellectual beings shall not be deprived of their *existence*. The brute creation shall be restored, and all human spirits shall live for ever; the *pure* in a state of supreme and endless blessedness, the *impure* in a state of indestructible misery.

**Nothing can be put to it]** No new order of beings, whether animate or inanimate, can be produced. God *will not* create more; man *cannot* add.

**Nor any thing taken from it]** Nothing can be *annihilated*; no power but that which can *create* can *destroy*. And whatever he has done, he intended to be a means of impressing a just sense of his being, providence, mercy, and judgments, upon the souls of men. A proper consideration of God's works has a tendency to make man a *religious creature*; that is, to impress his mind with a sense of the *existence* of the *Supreme Being*, and the *reverence* that is due to him. In this sense *the fear of God* is frequently taken in Scripture. The Hebrew of this clause is strongly emphatic: וְהָאֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה שֵׁיירָאוּ מִלְּפָנָיו *vehaelohim asah sheiyireu millephanaiv*; "And the gods he hath done, that they might fear from before his faces." Even the doctrine of the eternal *Trinity in Unity* may be collected from numberless appearances in *nature*. A consideration of the herb *trefoil* is said to have been the means of fully convincing the learned Erasmus of the truth of the assertion, *These Three are One*: and yet *three distinct*. He saw the *same root*, the *same fibres*, the *same pulpy substance*, the *same membraneous covering*, the *same colour*, the *same taste*, the *same smell*, in *every part*; and yet the *three leaves* distinct: but *each* and *all* a *continuation* of the *stem*, and proceeding from the *same root*. Such a fact as this may at least illustrate the doctrine. An intelligent shepherd, whom he met upon the mountains, is said to have exhibited the herb, and the illustration while discoursing on certain difficulties in the Christian faith. When a child, I heard a learned man relate this fact.

Verse 15. **That which hath been is now]** God governs the world *now*, as he *has governed* it from the beginning; and the revolutions and operations of nature are the *same now*, that they have been from *the beginning*. What we see *now*, is the *same* as has *been seen* by those before us.

**And God requireth that which is past]** i.e., That it may return again in its proper order. The heavens themselves, taking in their great revolutions, show the same phenomena. Even comets are supposed to have their revolutions, though some of them are hundreds of years in going round their orbits.

But in the *economy of grace*, does not *God require that which is past*? Whatever blessing or influence God gives to the soul of man, he intends shall remain and increase; and it will, if man be

faithful. Reader, canst thou produce all the secret inspirations of his Spirit, all the drawings of his love, his pardoning mercy, his sanctifying grace, the heavenly-mindedness produced in thee, thy holy zeal, thy spirit of prayer, thy tender conscience, the witness of the Spirit, which thou didst once receive and enjoy? *WHERE are they? God requireth that which is past.*

Verse 16. **The place of judgment, that wickedness was there]** The abuse of power, and the perversion of judgment, have been justly complained of in every age of the world. The following paraphrase is good:—

"But what enjoyment can our labours yield,  
When e'en the *remedy* prescribed by heaven  
To cure disorders proves our deadliest bane?  
When God's vicegerents, destined to protect  
The weak from insolence of power, to guard  
Their lives and fortunes, impious robbers turn?  
And, or by force or fraud, deprive of both?—  
To what asylum shall the injured fly  
From her tribunal, where perverted law  
Acquits the guilty, the innocent condemns?"

C.

Verse 17. **For there is a time there for every purpose]** Man has *his time* here below, and God shall have *his time* above. At his throne the judged shall be rejudged, and iniquity for ever close her mouth.

Verse 18. **That they might see that they themselves are beasts.]** The author of *Chohelath* has given a correct view of this difficult verse, by a proper translation: "I said in my heart, reflecting on the state of the sons of men, O that God would enlighten them, and make them see that even they themselves are like beasts." These words are to be referred to those in authority who abused their power; particularly to the corrupt magistrates mentioned above.

Verse 19. **For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts]** From the present comparison of *great men* to *beasts*, the author takes occasion to enforce the subject by mentioning the state of mankind in general, with respect to the *mortality* of their *bodies*; and then, by an easy transition, touches in the next verse on the point which is of such infinite consequence to religion.

**As the one dieth, so dieth the other]** Animal life is the same both in the *man* and in the *beast*.

**They have all one breath]** They respire in the same way; and when they cease to respire, animal life becomes extinct.

*Befalleth beasts*—This is wanting in six of *Kennicott's* and *De Rossi's* MSS.

Verse 20. **All go unto one place]**

—————"Man was born  
To die, nor aught exceeds in this respect  
The vilest brute. Both transient, frail, and vain,  
Draw the same breath; alike grow old, decay,  
And then expire: both to one grave descend;  
There blended lie, to native dust return'd."  
—C.

Verse 21. **Who knoweth the spirit of man]** I think the meaning of this important verse is well taken by the above able writer:—

The nobler part of *man*, 'tis true, survives  
The frail corporeal frame: but who regards  
The difference? Those who live like beasts, as such  
Would die, and be no more, if their own fate  
Depended on themselves. Who once reflects,  
Amidst his revels, that the *human soul*,  
Of origin celestial, *mounts aloft*,  
While that of *brutes* to earth shall *downward go*?"

The word רוח *ruach*, which is used in this and the *nineteenth* verse, has two significations, *breath* and *spirit*. It signifies *spirit*, or an *incorporeal* substance, as distinguished from *flesh*, or a *corporeal* one, #1Ki 22:21, 22, and #Isa 31:3. And it signifies the *spirit* or *soul of man*, #Ps 31:6; #Isa 57:16, and in this book, #Ec 12:7, and in many other places. In this book it is used also to signify the *breath*, *spirit*, or *soul* of a beast. While it was said in #Ec 3:19, *they have all one breath*, i.e., the *man* and the *beast* live the same kind of animal life; in this verse, a proper distinction is made between the רוח *ruach*, or *soul* of man, and the רוח *ruach*, or *soul* of the beast: the one *goeth upwards*, the other *goeth downwards*. The literal translation of these important words is this: "Who considereth the רוח *ruach*) immortal spirit of the sons of Adam, which ascendeth? it is from above; (היא למעלה *hi lemalah*;) and the spirit or breath of the cattle which descendeth? it is downwards unto the earth," i.e., it tends to the earth only. This place gives no countenance to the materiality of the soul; and yet it is the strongest hold to which the cold and fruitless materialist can resort.

Solomon most evidently makes an *essential difference* between the human soul and that of brutes. Both have *souls*, but of different natures: the soul of man was made for *God*, and to *God* it shall return: *God is its portion*, and when a holy soul leaves the body, it goes to *paradise*. The soul of the beast was made to *derive its happiness* from this *lower world*. Brutes shall have a resurrection, and have an endless enjoyment in a *new earth*. The *body* of *man* shall arise, and join his *soul* that is already above; and both enjoy final blessedness in the fruition of God. That Solomon did not believe they had the *same kind of spirit*, and the same *final lot*, as some materialists and infidels say, is evident from #Ec 12:7: "The spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

Verse 22. **A man should rejoice in his own works]** Do not turn God's blessings into sin by perverseness and complaining; make the best of life. God will sweeten its bitters to you, if you be faithful. Remember this is the *state to prepare for glory*; and the evils of life may be so sanctified to you as to work for your good. Though even wretched *without*, you may be happy *within*; for God can make all grace to abound towards you. You may be happy if you please; cry to God, who never rejects the prayer of the humble, and gives his Holy Spirit to all them that ask him.

# ECCLESIASTES

## CHAPTER IV

*The vanity of life is increased by oppression, 1-3; by envy, 4; by idleness, 5. The misery of a solitary life, and the advantages of society, 6-12. A poor and wise child; better than an old and foolish king, 13. The uncertainty of popular favour, 14-16.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. IV

Verse 1. **Considered all the oppressions]** אֲשׁוּקִים *ashukim* signifies any kind of *injury* which a man can receive in his *person*, his *property*, or his *good fame*.

**On the side of their oppressors there was power]** And, therefore, neither protection nor comfort for the oppressed.

Verse 2. **Wherefore I praised the dead]** I considered those happy who had escaped from the pilgrimage of life to the place where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest.

Verse 3. **Which hath not yet been]** Better never to have been born into the world, than to have *seen* and *suffered* so many miseries.

Verse 4. **For this a man is envied]** It is not by injustice and wrong only that men suffer, but through *envy* also. For if a man act uprightly and properly in the world, he soon becomes the object of his neighbour's envy and calumny too. Therefore the encouragement to do good, to act an upright part, is very little. This constitutes a part of the *vain* and *empty* system of human life.

Verse 5. **The fool foldeth his hands]** After all, without *labour* and *industry* no man can get any comfort in life; and he who gives way to idleness is the veriest of fools.

Verse 6. **Better is a handful with quietness]** These may be the words of the *slothful* man, and spoken in vindication of his idleness; as if he had said, "Every man who labours and amasses property is the object of *envy*, and is marked by the oppressor as a subject for spoil; better, therefore, to act as I do; gain little, and have little, and enjoy my handful with quietness." Or the words may contain Solomon's *reflection* on the subject.

Verse 8. **There is one alone, and there is not a second]** Here *covetousness* and *avarice* are characterized. The man who is the centre of his own existence; has neither wife, child, nor legal heir; and yet is as intent on getting money as if he had the largest family to provide for; nor does he only labour with intense application, but he even refuses himself the comforts of life out of his own gains! This is not only *vanity*, the excess of foolishness, but it is also *sore travail*.

Verse 9. **Two are better than one]** Married life is infinitely to be preferred to this kind of life, for the very reasons alleged below, and which require no explanation.

Verse 13. **Better is a poor and a wise child]** The *Targum* applies this to *Abraham*. "Abraham was a *poor child* of only *three* years of age; but he had the spirit of prophecy, and he refused to worship the idols which the *old foolish king-Nimrod*-had set up; therefore Nimrod cast him into a furnace of fire. But the Lord worked a miracle and delivered him. Yet here was no knowledge in Nimrod, and he would not be *admonished*." The *Targum* proceeds:

Verse 14. **For out of prison he cometh to reign]** "Then Abraham left the country of the idolaters, where he had been *imprisoned*, and came and *reigned* over the land of Canaan; and Nimrod became *poor* in this world." This is the *fact* to which the ancient rabbins supposed Solomon to allude.

Verse 15. **With the second child that shall stand up]** The *Targum* applies this to the case of *Jeroboam* and *Rehoboam*. History affords many instances of mean persons raised to sovereign authority, and of kings being reduced to the meanest offices, and to a morsel of bread. Agrippa himself ascended the throne of Israel after having been long in prison. See Josephus, Ant. lib. xviii. c. 8. This the heathens attributed to *fortune*.

Si fortuna volet, fies de rhetore consul;  
Si volet haec eadem, fies de consule rhetor.  
JUV. Sat. vii., ver. 197.

Though I have given what the Jews suppose to be the allusion in these verses, yet the reader may doubt whether the reference be correct. There is a case implied, whether from *fact* or *assumption* I cannot say; but it seems to be this:

A king who had abused the authority vested in him by oppressing the people, had a son whose prudent conduct promised much comfort to the nation, when he should come to the throne. The father, seeing the popular wish, and becoming jealous of his son, *shut him up in prison*. In the interim the old king either *dies* or is *deposed*, and the son is brought *out of prison*, and *placed on the throne*. Then (#Ec 4:15, 16) multitudes of the people flock to him, and begin to *walk under the sun*; i.e., the prosperous state to which the nation is raised by its redemption from the former tyranny. However, the wise man insinuates that this *sunshine* will not last long. The young king, feeling the reins in his own hands, and being surrounded by those whose interest it was to *flatter* in order to obtain and continue in *court favour*, he also becomes corrupted so that those who come after shall have no cause of rejoicing in him. This appears to be the case; and similar cases have frequently occurred, not only in *Asiatic*, but also in *European* history, I have, in another place, referred to the case of *Rushn Achter*, who was brought *out of prison* and set upon the *throne of Hindoostan*. This is expressed in the following elegant Persian couplet, where his fortune is represented as similar to that of the patriarch *Joseph*:—

[Persian]  
[Persian]

"The *bright star* is now become a *moon*:  
*Joseph* is taken out of *prison*, and become a *king*."

*Rushn Achter* signifies a *bright* or *splendid star*.

Verse 16. There is **no end of all the people**] This is supposed to refer to the multitudes of people who hail the advent and accession of a new sovereign; for, as *Suetonius* remarks, *A plerisque adorari solem orientem*, "Most people adore the rising sun." But when the new king becomes old, very few regard him; and perhaps he lives long enough to be as much despised by the very persons who before were ready to worship him. This is also a miserable vanity. Thus the blooming heir-

"Shall feel the sad reverse: honoured awhile;  
Then, like his sire, contemn'd, abhorr'd, forgot."

C.

# ECCLESIASTES

## CHAPTER V

*The reverence to be observed in attending Divine worship, 1-3. We should be faithful to our engagements, 4-7. The oppression of the innocent, 8. The king dependent on the produce of the soil, 9. Against covetousness, 10, 11. The peace of the honest labourer, 12. The evil effect of riches, 13, 14. Man cannot carry his property to the grave, 15-17. We should thankfully enjoy the blessings of God, 18-20.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. V

Verse 1. **Keep thy foot]** This verse the *Hebrew* and all the versions join to the preceding chapter.

Solomon, having before intimated, though very briefly, that the only cure against human vanity is a due sense of religion, now enters more largely on this important subject, and gives some excellent directions with regard to the right performance of Divine service, the nature of vocal and mental prayer, the danger of rash vows, &c.—C.

The whole verse might be more literally translated thus:—

"Guard thy steps as thou art going to the house of God; and approach to hearken, and not to give the sacrifice of fools, for none of them have knowledge about doing evil." "They offer gifts for their sins, and do not turn from their evil works; for they know not (they distinguish not) between good and evil." See the *Chaldee*.

Verse 2. **Be not rash with thy mouth]** Do not hasten with thy mouth; weigh thy words, feel deeply, think much, speak little.

"When ye approach his altar, on your lips  
Set strictest guard; and let your thoughts be pure,  
Fervent, and recollected. Thus prepared,  
Send up the silent breathings of your souls,  
Submissive to his will."

C.

Verse 3. **For a dream cometh]** That is, as *dreams* are generally the effect of the business in which we have been engaged during the day; so a *multitude of words* evidence the feeble workings of the foolish heart.

Verse 4. **When thou vowest a vow]** When in distress and difficulty, men are apt to promise much to God if he will relieve them; but generally forget the vow when the distress or trouble is gone by.

Verse 5. **Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, &c.]** We are under *constant obligations* to live to God; no *vow* can make it more so. Yet, there may be cases in which we should bind ourselves to

take up some particular cross, to perform some particular duty, to forego some particular attachment that does not tend to bring our souls nearer to God. Then, if fully determined, and strong in faith relative to the point, *bind* and *hold fast*; but if not fully, rationally, and conscientiously determined, "do not suffer thy mouth to cause thy soul to sin."

Verse 6. **Neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error]** Nor think of saying "before the cruel angel, who shall exercise authority over thee in the judgment of the great day, that thou didst it through ignorance."—*Chaldee*. I believe by the *angel* nothing else is intended than the *priest*, whose business it was to take cognizance of *vows* and *offerings*. See #**Le 5:4, 5**. In #**Mal 2:7**, the priest is called the "angel of the Lord of hosts."

Verse 7. **In—dreams—are—divers vanities; but fear thou God.]** If, by the disturbed state of thy mind during the day, or by Satanic influence, thou dream of evil, do not give way to any unreasonable fears, or gloomy forebodings, of any coming mischief:—FEAR GOD. Fear neither the *dream* nor its *interpretation*; God, will take care of and protect thee. Most certainly, he that fears God need fear nothing else. Well may an upright soul say to *Satan* himself, I fear God; and because I fear *him*, I do not fear *thee*.

Verse 8. **If thou seest the oppression of the poor]** For this was a frequent case under all governments; and especially in the *provinces* or *colonies* which being far from the *seat* of government, were generally oppressed by the sovereign's deputies.

**Marvel not at the matter]** יְפֹהֵחַ *hachephets*, the *will*, i.e., of God; which permits such evils to take place; for all things shall work together for good to them that love him.

"Marvel not,  
Ye righteous, if his dispensations here  
Unequal seem. What, though disorders reign?  
He still presides, and with unerring hand  
Directs the vast machine. His wisdom can  
From discord harmony produce; and make  
Even vice itself subservient to his ends."

Verse 9. **The profit of the earth is for all]** The earth, if properly cultivated, is capable of producing food for every living creature; and without cultivation none has a right to expect bread.

**The king himself is served by the field.]** Without the field he cannot have supplies for his own house; and, unless *agriculture* flourish, the necessary expenses of the state cannot be defrayed. Thus, God joins the *head* and *feet* together; for while the peasant is protected by the king as executor of the laws, the king himself is dependent on the peasant; as the wealth of the nation is the fruit of the labourer's toil.

Verse 10. **He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver]** The more he gets, the more he would get; for the saying is true:—

Crescit amor nummi, quantum ipsa pecunia crescit.

"The love of money increases, in proportion as money itself increases."

Verse 11. **When goods increase]** An increase of property always brings an increase of expense, by a multitude of servants; and the owner really possesses no more, and probably *enjoys* much less, than he did, when every day provided its own bread, and could lay up no store for the next. But if he have more *enjoyment*, his cares are multiplied; and he has no kind of profit. "This also is vanity."

Verse 12. **The sleep of a labouring man is sweet]** His labour is healthy exercise. He is without possessions, and without cares; his sleep, being undisturbed, is sound and refreshing.

Verse 13. **Riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt.]** This may be the case through various causes: 1. He may make an improper use of them, and lose his health by them. 2. He may join in an unfortunate partnership and lose all. 3. His riches may excite the desire of the *robber*; and he may spoil him of his goods, and even take away his life. 4. Or, he may leave them to his son, who turns profligate, spends the *whole*, and ruins both his body and soul. I have seen this again and again.

Verse 14. **And he begetteth a son, and there is nothing in his hand.]** He has been stripped of his property by unfortunate trade or by plunderers; and he has nothing to leave to his children.

Verse 15. **As he came forth]** However it may be, he himself shall carry nothing with him into the eternal world. If he die worth millions, those millions are dead to him for ever; so he has had no real profit from all his labours, cares, anxieties, and vast property!

Verse 17. **All his days also he eateth in darkness]** Even his enjoyments are embittered by *uncertainty*. He fears for his goods; the possibility of being deprived of them fills his heart with anguish. But instead of **יֹכֵל**, *yochel*, "he shall eat," **יֵלֵךְ**, *yelech*, "he shall walk," is the reading of several MSS. *He walks* in darkness—he has no evidence of salvation. There is no ray of light from God to penetrate the gloom; and all beyond life is darkness impenetrable!

**And wrath with his sickness.]** His *last hours* are *awful*; for,

"Counting on long years of pleasure here,  
He's quite unfurnish'd for the world to come."

BLAIR.

He is full of anguish at the *thought* of death; but the *fear* of it is horrible. But if he have a sense of *God's wrath* in his guilty conscience, what horror can be compared with his horror!

Verse 18. **Behold that which I have seen]** This is the result of my observations and experience. God gives every man, in the course of his providence, the necessaries of life; and it is his will that he should thankfully use them.

**For it is his portion.]** What is requisite for him in the lower world; without them his life cannot subsist, and earthly blessings are as truly the *portion* of his *body* and *animal life*, as the *salvation of God* is the portion of his soul.

Verse 20. **For he shall not much remember]** The person who acts in this way, extracts all the good requisite from life. He passes through things temporal so as not to lose those that are eternal:—

"Calm and serene, the road of life to him,  
Or long or short, rugged or smooth, with thorns  
O'erspread, or gay with flowers, is but a *road*.  
Such fare as offers grateful he accepts,  
And smiling to his *native home* proceeds."

C.

# ECCLESIASTES

## CHAPTER VI

*The vanity of riches without use, 1, 2. Of children and of old age without riches and enjoyment, 3-7. Man does not know what is good for himself, 8-12.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. VI

Verse 2. **A man to whom God hath given riches]** A man may possess much earthly goods, and yet enjoy nothing of them. Possession and fruition are not necessarily joined together; and this is also among the *vanities* of life. It is worthy of remark, that it belongs to God as much to give the power to enjoy as it does to give the earthly blessings. A wise heathen saw this:—

Di tibi divitias dederant, artemque fruendi.  
HOR. Ep. lib. i., ep. 4, ver. 7.

"The gods had given thee riches, and the art to enjoy them."

Verse 3. **If a man beget a hundred children]** If he have the most numerous family and the largest possessions, and is so much attached to his riches that he grudges himself a monument; an *abortion* in the eye of reason is to be preferred to such a man; *himself* is contemptible, and his *life* worthless. The abortion *comes in with vanity*—balks expectation, *departs in darkness*—never opened its eyes upon the light, and *its name is covered with darkness*—it has no place in the family register, or in the chronicles of Israel. This, that hath neither *seen the sun, nor known any thing* is preferable to the *miser* who has his coffers and granaries well furnished, should he have *lived a thousand years*, and had *a hundred children*. He *has seen*—possessed, no good; *and he and the abortion go to one place*, equally unknown, and wholly forgotten.

Verse 7. **All the labour of man]** This is the grand primary object of all human labour; merely to provide for the support of life by procuring things *necessary*. And life only exists for the sake of the soul; because man puts these things in place of *spiritual good*, the *appetite*—the intense desire after the *supreme good*—is not *satisfied*. When man learns to provide as distinctly for his *soul* as he does for his *body*, then he will begin to be happy, and may soon attain his end.

Verse 8. **For what hath the wise more than the fool?]** They must both labour for the same end. Both depend upon the labour of themselves or others for the necessaries of life. Both must eat and drink in order to live; and the rich man can no more eat two meals at a time, than he can comfortably wear two changes of raiment. The necessaries of life are the same to both, and their *condition* in life is nearly similar; liable to the same diseases, dissolution, and death.

Verse 9. **Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire]** This is translated by the *Vulgate*, as a sort of adage: *Melius est videre quod cupias, quam desiderare quod nescias*, "It is better to see what one desires than to covet what one knows not." It is better to enjoy the present than to feed one's self with vain desires of the *future*. What we translate *the wandering of desire*,

מהלך נפש *mehaloch nephesh*, is the *travelling of the soul*. What is this? Does it simply mean *desire*? Or is there any reference here to the state of *separate spirits*! It however shows the soul to be in a *restless state*, and consequently to be *unhappy*. If Christ dwell in the heart by faith, the soul is then at *rest*, and this is properly the *rest of the people of God*.

Verse 10. **That which hath been is named already**] The *Hebrew* of this verse might be translated, "Who is he who is? His name has been already called. And it is known that he is Adam; and that he cannot contend in judgment with him who is stronger than he."

"What is more excellent than man; yet can he not, in the lawe, get the victory of him that is mightier than he."—COVERDALE.

ADAM is his name; and it at once points out, 1. His *dignity*; he was made in the image of God. 2. His *fall*; he sinned against his Maker and was cast out of Paradise. And 3. His *recovery* by *Christ*; the *second man* (Adam) was the *Lord from heaven*, and a *quickenng Spirit*.

Verse 12. **For who knoweth what is good for man in this life**] Those things which we deem *good* are often *evil*. And those which we think *evil* are often *good*. So ignorant are we, that we run the greatest hazard in making a *choice*. It is better to leave ourselves and our concerns in the hands of the Lord, than to keep them in our own.

**For who can tell a man what shall be after him**] Futurity is with God. While he lives, man wishes to know what is before him. When he is about to die, he wishes to know what will be after him. All this is vanity; God, because he is merciful, will reveal neither.

# ECCLESIASTES

## CHAPTER VII

*The value of a good name, 1. Advantages of sorrow and correction, 2-5. The emptiness of a fool's joy, 6. Of oppression, 7. The end better than the beginning, 8. Against hastiness of spirit, 9. Comparison of former and present times, 10. Excellence of wisdom, 11, 12. Of the dispensations of Providence, 13-15. Against extremes, 16-18. The strength of wisdom, 19. Man is ever liable to sin and mistake, 20. We should guard our words, 21, 22. Difficulty of obtaining wisdom, 23-25. A bad woman dangerous, 26. There are few who are really upright, 27-29.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. VII

Verse 1. **A good name]** Unsatisfactory as all sublunary things are, yet still there are some which are of great consequence, and among them a good name. The place is well paraphrased in the following verses:—

"A spotless name,  
By virtuous deeds acquired, is sweeter far  
Than fragrant balms, whose odours round diffused  
Regale the invited guests. Well may such men  
Rejoice at death's approach, and bless the hours  
That end their toilsome pilgrimage; assured  
That till the race of life is finish'd none  
Can be completely blest."

Verse 2. It is **better to go to the house of mourning]** *Birthdays* were generally kept with great festivity, and to these the wise man most probably refers; but according to his maxim, the miseries of life were so many and so oppressive that the day of a man's *death* was to be preferred to the *day of his birth*. But, in dependently of the allusion, it is much more profitable to visit the house of mourning for the dead than the house of festivity. In the *former* we find occasion for serious and deeply edifying thoughts and reflections; from the *latter* we seldom return with one profitable thought or one solid impression.

Verse 3. **Sorrow is better than laughter]** The reason is immediately given; for *by the sorrow of the countenance—the grief* of heart that shows itself in the countenance—

**The heart is made better.]** In such cases, most men try themselves at the tribunal of their own consciences, and resolve on amendment of life.

Verse 4. **The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning]** A wise man loves those occasions from which he can derive spiritual advantage; and therefore prefers *visiting the sick*, and *sympathizing* with those who have *suffered privations* by death. But the *fool*—the gay, thoughtless, and giddy—prefers places and times of diversion and amusement. Here he is prevented from seriously considering either himself or his latter end. The grand fault and misfortune of youth.

Verse 6. **For as the crackling of thorns]** They make a great noise, a great blaze; and are extinguished in a few moments. Such indeed, comparatively, are the joys of life; they are noisy, flashy, and transitory.

Verse 7. **Oppression maketh a wise man mad]** This has been translated with good show of reason, "Surely oppression shall give lustre to a wise man: but a gift corrupteth the heart."

The chief difference here is in the word **יְהוֹלֵל** *yeholel*, which, from the root **הָלַל** *halal*, signifies to *glister, irradiate*, as well as to *move briskly, to be mad, furious, in a rage*; and certainly the former meaning suits this place best. We cannot think that the wise man-he that is truly religious, (for this is its meaning in the language of Solomon,) can be made *mad* by any kind of oppression; but as he trusts in God, so in patience he possesses his soul.

Verse 8. **Better is the end]** We can then judge of the whole, and especially if the matter relate to the conduct of Divine Providence. At the beginning we are often apt to make very rash conjectures, and often suppose that such and such things are against us; and that every thing is going wrong. Dr. *Byrom* gives good advice on such a subject:—

"With patient mind thy course of duty run:  
God nothing does, nor suffers to be done,  
*But thou wouldst do thyself*, couldst thou but see  
The *end* of all events, as well as HE."

I may add, in the words of our paraphrast:—

"Wait the result, nor ask with frantic rage  
Why God permits such things. His ways, though now  
Involved in clouds and darkness, will appear  
All right, when from thine eyes the mist is cleared.  
Till then, to learn submission to his will  
More wisdom shows, than vainly thus to attempt  
Exploring what thou canst not comprehend,  
And God for wisest ends thinks fit to hide."

C.

Verse 9. **Anger resteth in the bosom of fools.]** A wise man, off his guard, may feel it for a moment: but in him it cannot *rest*: it is a *fire* which he immediately casts out of his breast. But the *fool*-the man who is under the dominion of his own tempers, harbours and fosters it, till it takes the form of malice, and then excites him to seek full revenge on those whom he deems enemies. Hence that class of *dangerous* and *empty fools* called *duellists*.

Verse 10. **The former days were better than these?]** This is a *common saying*; and it is as *foolish* as it is common. There is no weight nor truth in it; but men use it to excuse their crimes, and the folly of their conduct. "In former times, say they, men might be more religious, use more self-denial, be more exemplary." This is *all false*. In former days men were wicked as they are now,

and religion was unfashionable: God also is the same *now* as he was *then*; as just, as merciful, as ready to help: and there is no depravity in the age that will excuse your crimes, your follies, and your carelessness.

Among the oriental proverbs I find the following:—

"Many say, *This is a corrupt age*. This mode of speaking is not just; it is not the age that is corrupt, but the men of the age."

Verse 11. **Wisdom is good with an inheritance]** In this chapter Solomon introduces many observations which appear to be made by objectors against his doctrine; and as he was satisfied of their futility, he proposes them in their own full strength, and then combats and destroys them. It is quite necessary to attend to this; else we shall take the *objector's words* for *those of Solomon*; and think, as some have done, that the wise man contradicts and refutes himself. Observations, reflections, and objections of friends and adversaries are frequently introduced in the works of ancient authors, without mentioning them as such. This is frequent, more particularly in *ethic* writers; and we have many specimens in *Horace*; and without this distinction, it would be impossible to make sense of some of his writings. Here, an *objector*, who had listened to the wise man declaiming in favour of wisdom, suddenly interrupts him, and says in effect, "I grant the truth of what you have said. Wisdom is very good in its place; but what is it without property? A man who has a good inheritance may be profited by wisdom, because it will show him how to manage it to the best advantage."

Verse 12. **Wisdom is a defence]** To whom Solomon answers: All true *wisdom* is most undoubtedly a great advantage to men in all circumstances; and *money* is also of great use: but it cannot be compared to wisdom. *Knowledge* of Divine and human things is a great blessing. *Money* is the means of supporting our animal life: but *wisdom*—the religion of the true God—gives *life to them that have it*. *Money* cannot procure the favour of God, nor give *life* to the soul.

Verse 13. **Consider the work of God]** Such is the nature of his providence, that it puts money into the hands of few: but wisdom is within the reach of all. The first is not necessary to happiness; therefore, it is not offered to men; the latter is; and therefore God, in his goodness, offers it to the whole human race. The former can rarely be acquired, for God puts it out of the reach of most men, and you cannot *make that straight which he has made crooked*; the latter may be easily attained by every person who carefully and seriously seeks it from God.

Verse 14. **In the day of prosperity be joyful]** When ye receive these temporal gifts from God, enjoy them, and be thankful to the Giver: but remember, this sunshine will not *always* last. God has balanced *prosperity* and *adversity* against each other; and were it not so, how many would put the former in the place of God himself!

Verse 15. **There is a just man that perisheth]** This is another objection as if he had said, "I also have had considerable experience; and I have not discovered any marked approbation of the conduct of the righteous, or disapprobation of that of the wicked. On the contrary, I have seen a righteous man perish, while employed in the work of righteousness; and a wicked man prosperous, and even

exalted, while living wickedly. The former is indeed a victim to his righteousness, while the life and prosperity of the latter were preserved: hence I conclude, it is not prudent, whatever good there may be in religion, and whatever excellence in wisdom, that men should be overmuch righteous, or over-wise: for why should they by austerity and hard study destroy themselves?" So far the objector.

Verse 16. **Why shouldest thou destroy thyself?**] תִּשְׁשׁוּמֶם *tishshomem*, make thyself *desolate*, so that thou shalt be obliged to stand *alone*; neither make thyself over-wise, תִּתְחַכֵּם *tithchaccam*, do not pretend to abundance of wisdom. Why shouldest thou be so singular? In other words, and in modern language, "There is no need of all this watching, fasting, praying, self-denial, &c., you carry things to *extremes*. Why should you wish to be reputed singular and precise?" To this the man of God answers:—

Verse 17. **Be not overmuch wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time?**] אֵל תִּרְשָׁה הַרְבֵּה *al tirsha harbeh*. Do not multiply wickedness, do not add direct opposition to godliness to the rest of your crimes. Why should you provoke God to destroy you before your time? Perdition will come soon enough. If you will not turn from your sins, and avoid it finally, yet keep out of it as long as you can.

It cannot be supposed, except by those who are totally unacquainted with the nature of true religion, that a man may have *too much holiness, too much of the life of God* in his soul! And yet a learned doctor, in three sermons on this text, has endeavoured to show, out-doing Solomon's infidel, "the *sin, folly, and danger* of being righteous overmuch." O rare darkness!

Verse 18. It is **good that thou shouldest take hold or this**] Do not let such an observation slip: *take hold of this; do not forget that*. Get what you can in an honest way; but do not forget to get true religion; for he that fears God will be saved from all evil.

Verse 19. **Wisdom strengtheneth the wise**] One wise, thoroughly learned, and scientific man, may be of more use in fortifying and defending a city, than ten *princes*. Witness the case of *Syracuse*, when attacked by the Romans both by sea and land. *Archimedes*, by his engines, burnt and dashed their fleet to pieces, and destroyed all that came near the walls. And had not the city been betrayed, and he killed, all their force and skill could not have taken it.

Verse 20. There is **not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.**] לֹא יֵחַטָּא *lo yechta*, that *may not sin*. There is not a man upon earth, however just he may be, and habituated to do good, but is *peccable*—liable to commit sin; and therefore should continually watch and pray, and depend upon the Lord. But the text does not say, the *just man does commit sin*, but simply that he *may sin*; and so our translators have rendered it in **#1Sa 2:25**, twice in **#1Ki 8:31, 46**, and **#2Ch 6:36**; and the reader is requested to consult the note on **#1Ki 8:46**, where the proper construction of this word may be found, and the doctrine in question is fully considered.

Verse 21. **Also take no heed unto all words that are spoken**] This is good advice, and much for every man's peace through life.

**Thy servant curse thee]** מְקַלְלֶךָ *mekallelecha*, make light of thee, speak evil of thee.

Verse 22. **Thou thyself-hast cursed others.]** קָלַלְתָּ *kalalta*, thou hast spoken evil; hast vilified others. O, who is free from evil speaking, from uncharitable speaking; from detailing their neighbour's faults, from whispering, talebearing, and backbiting? Do not wonder if God, in his justice, permit *thee* to be calumniated, seeing thou hast so frequently calumniated others. See my discourse on **#Ps 15:1-5**.

Verse 23. **All this have I proved by wisdom]** These rules I have laid down for my own conduct, and sought after more wisdom; but have fallen far short of what I wished to be.

Verse 24. **That which is far off]** Though the wisdom that is essential to our salvation may be soon learned, through the teaching of the Spirit of wisdom, yet in wisdom itself there are *extents* and *depths* which none can reach or fathom.

Verse 25. **I applied mine heart]** I cast about, סְבֹוֹתִי *sabbothi*, I made a circuit; I circumscribed the ground I was to traverse; and all within my circle I was determined to *know*, and to *investigate*, and to *seek out wisdom*, and the *reason of things*. Has man *reason* and *understanding*? If so, then this is his work. God as much calls him to use these powers in this way, as to believe on the Lord Jesus that he may be saved; and he that does not, according to the means in his power, is a slothful servant, from whom God may justly take away the misemployed or not used talent, and punish him for his neglect. Every doctrine of God is a subject both for reason and faith to work on.

**To know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness.]**

"And my own heart, with scrutiny severe,  
By far the harder task survey'd; intent  
To trace that wisdom which from heaven descends,  
Fountain of living waters, and to explore  
The source of human folly, whose foul streams  
Intoxicate and kill."

—C.

Verse 26. **And I find more bitter than death the woman]** After all his investigation of the *wickedness of folly*, and the *foolishness of madness*, he found nothing equally dangerous and ruinous with the *blandishments of cunning women*. When once the affections are entangled, escape without ruin is almost impossible.

**Whoso pleaseth God]** The man who walks with God, and he alone, shall escape this sore evil: and even he that fears God, if he get with an artful woman, may be soon robbed of his strength, and become like other men. A bad or artful woman is represented as a *company of hunters*, with *nets*, *gins*, &c., to catch their prey.

Verse 27. Counting **one by one]** I have gone over every particular. I have compared one thing with another; man with woman, his wisdom with her wiles; his strength with her blandishments; his

influence with her ascendancy; his powers of reason with her arts and cunning; and in a *thousand* men, I have found *one* thoroughly upright *man*; but among *one thousand* women I have not found *one such*. This is a lamentable account of the *state of morals* in Judea, in the days of the wise King Solomon. Thank God! it would not be difficult to get a *tithe* of *both* in the same number in the present day.

The *Targum* gives this a curious turn:—"There is another thing which my soul has sought, but could not find: a man perfect and innocent, and without corruption, from the days of Adam until *Abraham* the just was born; who was found faithful and upright among the thousand kings who came together to construct the tower of Babel: but a *woman* like to *Sarah* among the wives of all those kings I have not found."

Verse 29. **Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright]** Whatever evil may be now found among men and women, it is not of God; for God made them all upright. This is a singular verse, and has been most variously translated: עשה האלהים את האדם ישר והמה בקשו חשבונה רבים *asah haelohim eth haadam yashar vehemhah bikkeshu chishbonoth rabbim*.

"Elohim has made mankind upright, and they have sought many computations."

"He hath meddled with endless questions."—VULGATE.

"Many reasonings."—SEPTUAGINT, SYRIAC, and ARABIC.

"They seek dyverse sotylties."—COVERDALE.

~~And he himself mengide with questions without eend.~~—Old MS. Bible.

The *Targum* considers the text as speaking of *Adam* and *Eve*.

"This have I found out, that the Lord made the first man upright before him, and innocent: but the serpent and Eve seduced him to eat of the fruit of the tree, which gave the power to those who ate of it to discern between good and evil; and was the cause that death came upon him, and all the inhabitants of the earth; and they sought that they might find out *many stratagems* to bring this evil upon all the inhabitants of the world."

I doubt much whether the word חשבונה *chishbonoth* should be taken in a *bad* sense. It may signify the whole of human *devices, imaginations, inventions, artifice*, with all their products; arts, sciences, schemes, plans, and all that they have found out for the destruction or melioration of life. God has given man wondrous faculties; and of them he has made strange uses, and sovereign abuses: and they have been, in consequence, at one time his help, and at another his bane. This is the fair way of understanding this question.

# ECCLESIASTES

## CHAPTER VIII

*A man's wisdom makes his face shine, 1. Kings are to be greatly respected, 2-4. Of him who keeps the commandment; of the misery of man; of the certainty of death, 5-8. Of him that rules another to his own hurt, 9. The end of the wicked, 10. God's longsuffering, 11, 12. It shall be ill with wicked men, 13. Strange events in the course of Providence, 14, 15. God's works cannot be found out, 16, 17.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. VIII

Verse 1. **Who knoweth the interpretation]** פֶּשֶׁר *peshet*, a pure *Chaldee* word, found nowhere else in the Bible but in the *Chaldee* parts of *Daniel*. "A man's wisdom maketh his face to shine." Every state of the heart shines through the countenance; but there is such an evidence of the contented, happy, pure, benevolent state of the soul in the *face* of a truly pious man, that it must be observed, and cannot be mistaken. In the Hebrew the former clause of this verse ends the preceding chapter. Who has ever been deceived in the appearance of the face that belonged to a savage heart? Those who represent, by painting or otherwise, a *wise man*, with a *gravely sour face*, striking awe and forbidding approach, have either mistaken the man, or are unacquainted with some essential principles of their art.

**The boldness of his face shall be changed.]** Instead of יֶשׁוּנֶה *yeshunne*, which signifies *shall be hated*, many of *Kennicott's* and *De Rossi's* MSS. have יֶשׁוּנֶה *yeshunneh*, shall be *changed* or *doubled*. Hence the verse might be read, "The wisdom of a man shall illuminate his face; and the strength of his countenance shall be doubled." He shall speak with full confidence and conviction on a subject which he perfectly understands, and all will feel the weight of his observations.

Verse 2. **To keep the king's commandment]** This sentence would be better translated, *I keep the mouth of the king*; I take good heed not to meddle with state secrets; and if I know, to hide them. Or, I am obedient to the commands of the laws; I feel myself bound by whatever the king has decreed.

**In regard of the oath of God.]** You have sworn obedience to him; keep your oath, for the engagement was made in the *presence of God*. It appears that the Jewish princes and chiefs took an oath of fidelity to their kings. This appears to have been done to *David*, #2Sa 5:1-3; to *Joash*, #2Ki 11:17; and to *Solomon*, #1Ch 29:24.

Verse 3. **Be not hasty]** I consider the first *five* verses here as directions to *courtiers*, and the more immediate servants of kings.

Be steadily faithful to your sovereign. *Do not stand in an evil thing*. If you have done wrong, do not endeavour to vindicate yourself before him; it is of no use; his power is *absolute*, and *he will do what he pleases*. He will take his *own view* of the subject, and he will *retain* it. The language of a despotic sovereign was ever this, *Sic volo sic jubeo, stat pro ratione voluntas*; "I will this. I command that. No hesitation! My will is law!" Therefore it is added here, *Where the word of a king is*, there

is *power*-influence, authority, and the sword. And *who may say unto him*, whether he acts right or wrong, *What doest thou?* #Ec 8:4. No wonder in such governments there are so many *revolutions*; but they are *revolutions* without *amendment*, as it is one *tyrant* rising up to destroy *another*, who, when seated in authority, acts in the way of his predecessor; till another, like himself, do to him as he has done to the former. In our country, after a long trial, we find that a *mixed monarchy* is the safest, best, and most useful form of government: we have had, it is true, unprincipled ministers, who wished to turn our *limited* into an *absolute monarchy*; and they were always ready to state that *an absolute monarchy was best*. Granted; provided the monarch be as *wise*, as *holy*, and as *powerful* as GOD!

Verse 5. **Both time and judgment.**] It is a matter of great importance to be able to discern WHEN and HOW both to *speak* and *act*; but when *time* and *manner* are both determined, the *matter* comes next. WHAT shall I *speak*? WHAT shall I *do*? *When*, *how*, and *what*, answer to *time*, *manner*, and *matter*. To discern all these, and act suitably, is a *lesson* for a *philosopher*, and a *study* for a *Christian*.

Verse 6. **To every purpose there is time**] יָפֵן *chaphets*, every *volition*, every thing that *depends on the will of man*. He has generally the *opportunity* to do whatever he purposes; and as his purposes are frequently evil, his acts are so too: and in consequence his misery is great.

Verse 8. There is **no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit**] The *Chaldee* has, "There is no man who can rule over the spirit of the breath, so as to prevent the animal life from leaving the body of man." Others translate to this sense: "No man hath power over the *wind* to restrain the wind; and none has power over *death* to restrain him; and when a man engages as a *soldier*, he cannot be discharged from the war till it is ended; and by wickedness no man shall be delivered from any evil." Taking it in this way, these are maxims which contain self-evident truths. Others suppose the verse to refer to the *king* who *tyrannizes* over and oppresses his people. He shall also account to God for his actions; he shall die, and he cannot prevent it; and when he is judged, his wickedness cannot deliver him.

Verse 9. **One man ruleth over another to his own hurt.**] This may be spoken of rulers generally, who, instead of *feeding*, *fleece the flock*; tyrants and oppressors, who come to an untimely end by their mismanagement of the offices of the state. All these things relate to *Asiatic* despots, and have ever been more applicable to *them* than to any other sovereigns in the world. They were despotic; they still are so.

Verse 10. **Who had come and gone from the place of the holy**] The place of the holy is the sacred office which they held, *anointed* either as *kings* or *priests* to God; and, not having fulfilled the holy office in a holy way, have been carried to their *graves* without *lamentation*, and lie among the dead without remembrance.

Verse 11. **Because sentence**] פִּתְגָם *pithgam*, a *Divine decree* or *declaration*. This is no *Hebrew*, but a mere *Chaldee* word, and occurs only in the *later books* of the Bible-*Esther*, *Ezra* and *Daniel*, and nowhere else but in this place. Because God does not immediately punish every delinquency, men think he disregards evil acts; and therefore they are emboldened to sin on. So this longsuffering

of God, which *leadeth to repentance*, is abused so as to *lead to farther crimes!* When men sin against the remedy of their salvation, how can they escape perdition?

Verse 12. **Though a sinner do evil a hundred times]** If God bear so long with a transgressor, waiting in his longsuffering for him to repent and turn to him, surely he will be peculiarly kind to them that *fear him*, and endeavour to walk uprightly before him.

Verse 13. **But it shall not be well with the wicked]** Let not the long-spared sinner presume that, because sentence is not speedily executed on his evil works, and he is suffered to go on to his *hundredth transgression*, God has forgotten to punish. No; *he feareth not before God*; and therefore he shall not ultimately escape.

Verse 14. **There be just men]** See on **#Ec 7:16**.

Verse 15. **Then I commended mirth]** These are some more of the cavils of the infidel objector: "Since *virtue* is frequently under oppression, and *vice* triumphs in health, and rolls in wealth, I see plainly that we should not trouble ourselves about future things; and therefore should be governed by the maxim EDE, BIBE, LUDE. *Post mortem nulla voluptas.*"

*Eat, drink, and play,*  
While here you may;  
For soon as death  
Has stopp'd your breath,  
Ye ne'er shall see a cheerful day.

Verse 16. **When I applied mine heart to know wisdom]** This is the reply of the wise man: "I have also considered these seeming contradictions. God governs the world; but we cannot see the reasons of his conduct, nor know why he does this, omits that, or permits a third thing. We may *study night and day*, and deprive ourselves of *rest and sleep*, but we shall never fathom the depths that are in the Divine government; but all is right and just. *This* is the state of *probation*; and in it neither can the wicked be punished, nor the righteous rewarded. But eternity is at hand; and then shall every man receive according to his works. He that spends his life in the *eat, drink, and play*, will find in that day that he has lost the *time* in *which* he could have prepared for *eternity*.

Verse 17. **Then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun]** I saw it to be of such a nature-1, That *a man cannot find it out*. 2. That if he *labour to find it out*, he shall not succeed. 3. That though he be *wise*—the *most instructed* among men, and *think* to find it out, he shall find *he is not able*. It is beyond the wisdom and power of man. How vain then are all your *cavils* about Providence. You do not understand it; you cannot comprehend it. Fear God!

# ECCLESIASTES

## CHAPTER IX

*No man knows, by any present sign, what is before him, 1. All things happen alike to all, 2, 3. Comparison of the state of the dead and the living, 4-6. Enjoy God's mercies, and live to his glory, 7-10. The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, 11. Man is ignorant of futurity, 12, 13. The account of the little city, and the poor wise man, 14-18.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. IX

Verse 1. **The righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God]** This is a continuation of the preceding subject; and here the wise man draws a conclusion from what he had seen, and from the well-known character of God, that the *righteous*, the *wise*, and *their conduct*, were all in *the hand of God*, protected by his power, and safe in his approbation: but we cannot judge from the occurrences which take place in life who are the objects of God's love or displeasure.

Verse 2. **All things come alike to all]** This is very generally true; but God often makes a difference; and his faithful followers witness many interventions of Divine Providence in their behalf. But there are general blessings, and general natural evils, that equally affect the just and the unjust. But in this all is right; the *evils* that are in nature are the effects of the FALL of man; and God will not suspend *general laws*, or *alter* them, to favour *individual* cases. Nor does he design that his approbation or disapprobation shall be shown by any of these occurrences. Every holy man has a testimony of God's approbation in his own heart; and this makes him truly happy, let outward things be as they may. And, in general, what the wicked suffer is the fruit of their own doings. But the general state of nature as to what are called *natural evils*, is just as it ought to be. There is *evil* enough to show that *man has fallen* from God, and *good* enough to show that God deals with him in *mercy*. I cannot see that there is any rational cause for me to stumble at the dispensations of Divine Providence on these accounts.

Verse 3. **The heart of the sons of men is full of evil]** No wonder then that the curse of God should be frequent in the earth.

Verse 4. **For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope]** While a man lives he hopes to *amend*, and he hopes to have a *better lot*; and thus life is spent, hoping to *grow better*, and hoping to *get more*. The *Vulgate* has, "There is none that shall live always, nor has any hope of such a thing." Perhaps the best translation is the following: "What, therefore, is to be chosen? In him that is living there is hope." Then choose that eternal life which thou hopest to possess.

**A living dog is better than a dead lion.]** I suppose this was a proverb. The smallest measure of *animal* existence is better than the largest of *dead matter*. The poorest living peasant is infinitely above Alexander the Great.

Verse 5. **The living know that they shall die]** This is so self-evident that none can doubt it; and therefore all that have this conviction should prepare for death and eternal blessedness.

**But the dead know not any thing]** Cut off from *life*, they know nothing of *what passes under the sun*. Their day of *probation* is ended, and therefore they can have no farther *reward* in living a holy life; nor can they be liable to any *farther punishment* for crimes in a state of probation, that being ended.

Verse 6. **Also their love, and their hatred]** It is evident that he speaks here of the ignorance, want of power, &c., of the *dead*, in reference only to *this life*. And though they have no more a *portion* under the sun, yet he does not intimate that they have none anywhere else. A man threatens to conquer kingdoms, &c. He dies; what are his *threats*?

Verse 7. **Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy]** Do not vex and perplex yourselves with the dispensations and mysteries of Providence; enjoy the blessings which God has given you, and live to his glory; and then *God will accept your works*.

Verse 8. **Let thy garments be always white]** The Jews wore white garments on festal occasions, as emblems of joy and innocence. Be always pure, and always happy. The inhabitants of India are all dressed in clean *white cotton*, and to this is the allusion in the text.

The *Targum* says: "At all times let thy garments be washed and pure from the stain of sin. Acquire a good name, which is likened to the oil of anointing, that blessings may be called down up thy head, and goodness not forsake thee."

Verse 9. **Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest]** Marry prudently, keep faithfully attached to the wife thou hast chosen, and rejoice in the labour of thy hands.

Some understand this as the words of the libertine objector: "Live joyfully with the woman whom thou lovest best." But this does not comport so well with the scope of the place.

Verse 10. **Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do]** Examine here the WHAT the HOW, and the WHY.

I. *What* is necessary to be done in this life, in reference to another? 1. Turn from sin. 2. Repent. 3. Frequent the ordinances of God, and associate with the upright. 4. Read the Scriptures. 5. Pray for pardon. 6. Believe on the Lord Jesus, that thou mayest obtain it. 7. Look for the gift of the Holy Spirit. 8. Bring forth in their seasons the fruits of it—(1) Repentance, (2) Faith; and (3) The Holy Spirit. 9. Live to get good. 10. And to do good. 11. And refer every purpose and act to the eternal world.

II. *How* should these be done? *With thy might*. 1. Be fully convinced of the necessity of these things. 2. Be determined to act according to this conviction. 3. Then act with all thy strength; put forth all thy power in avoiding evil, repenting of sin, &c., &c.

III. *Why* should this be done? 1. Because thou art a dying man. 2. Thou art going into the grave. 3. When thou leavest this life, thy state of probation, with all its advantages, is eternally ended. 4. If thou die in sin, where God is thou shalt never come. For, 1. There is no *work* by which thou mayest profit; 2. No *device* by which thou mayest escape punishment; 3. No *knowledge* of any means

of help; and, 4. No *wisdom*—restoration of the soul to the favour and image of God, *in that grave whither thou goest*. Therefore, work while it is called *to-day*.

My old MS. Bible translates this nervously: *Whatever thinge may thin hond don, besily witch: for nouthere were, ne resoun, ne wisdom, ne keemyng schuln be a nentis hell, whither thou gost*. Properly speaking, every sinner is *going to hell*, and the wisdom of God calls upon him to turn and live.

Verse 11. **The race is not to the swift]** It is not by swiftness, nor by strength and valour, that races are gained and battles won. God causes the *lame* often to take the *prey*, the prize; and so works that the *weak* overthrow the *strong*; therefore, no man should confide in himself. All things are under the government, and at the disposal of God.

**But time and chance]** תע *eth*, time or opportunity, and עגפ *pega*, incident or occurrence,—

**Happeneth to them all.]** Every man has what may be called *time* and *space* to act in, and *opportunity* to do a particular work. But in this TIME and OPPORTUNITY there is INCIDENT, what *may fall in*; and OCCURRENCE, what *may meet* and frustrate an attempt. These things should be wisely weighed, and seriously balanced; for those *four things* belong to every human *action*. While you have TIME, seek an OPPORTUNITY to do what is right; but calculate on *hinderances* and *oppositions*, because *time* and *opportunity* have their INCIDENT and OCCURRENCE. *Coverdale* translates this verse well: "I sawe that in runnyng, it helpeth not to be swift; in batayll, it helpeth not to be stronge; to fedyng, it helpeth not to be wyse; to riches, it helpeth not to be sutyll; to be had in favoure, it helpeth not to be connyng; but that all lyeth in time and fortune."

Verse 12. **As the birds that are caught]** Man acts so heedlessly, notwithstanding all his wisdom, and all his warnings, that he is often taken, as a *fish* is, by the baited hook; and the *bird* by the baited snare. And thus, *an evil time*, like the snare, gin, trap, hook, falleth suddenly upon them; and they are taken in a moment, and have no means of escaping. How frequently do we see these comparisons illustrated!

Verse 14. There was **a little city, and few men within it]** Here is another proof of the vanity of sublunary things; the *ingratitude of men*, and the *little compensation* that *genuine merit* receives. The little history mentioned here may have either been a *fact*, or intended as an instructive fable. A *little city*, with *few to defend* it, being besieged by a *great king* and a powerful army, was delivered by the *cunning and address on a poor wise man*; and afterwards his *townsmen* forgot their *obligation to him*.

Those who *spiritualize* this passage, making the *little city* the CHURCH, the *few men* the APOSTLES, the *great king* the DEVIL, and the *poor wise man* JESUS CHRIST, abuse the text.

But the *Targum* is not less whimsical: "The *little city* is the human body; *few men in it*, few good *affections* to work righteousness; *the great king*, evil concupiscence, which, like a strong and powerful king, enters into the body to oppress it, and besieges the heart so as to cause it to err; *built great bulwarks against it*—evil concupiscence builds his throne in it wheresoever he wills, and causes it to decline from the ways that are right before God; that it may be taken in the greatest nets

of hell, that he may burn it seven times, because of its sins. But there is *found in it a poor wise man*-a good, wise, and holy affection, which prevails over the evil principle, and snatches the body from the judgment of hell, by the strength of its wisdom. Yet, after this deliverance, the man did not remember what the good principle had done for him; but said in his heart, I am innocent," &c.

What a wonderful text has this been in the hands of many a modern *Targumist*; and with what force have the *Keachonians* preached Christ *crucified* from it!

Such a passage as this receives a fine illustration from the case of *Archimedes* saving the city of *Syracuse* from all the Roman forces besieging it by sea and land. He destroyed their ships by his *burning-glasses*, lifted up their galleys out of the water by his machines, dashing some to pieces, and sinking others. One man's wisdom here prevailed for a long time against the most powerful exertions of a mighty nation. In this case, wisdom far exceeded strength. But was not *Syracuse* taken, notwithstanding the exertions of this poor wise man? No. But it was *betrayed* by the baseness of *Mericus*, a Spaniard, one of the *Syracusan* generals. He delivered the whole district he commanded into the hands of *Marcellus*, the Roman consul, *Archimedes* having defeated every attempt made by the Romans, either by sea or land: yet he commanded no company of men, made no sorties, but confounded and destroyed them by his machines. This happened about 208 years before Christ, and nearly about the time in which those who do not consider Solomon as the author suppose this book to have been written. This wise man was *not remembered*; he was slain by a Roman soldier while deeply engaged in demonstrating a new problem, in order to his farther operations against the enemies of his country. See *Plutarch*, and the historians of this *Syracusan* war.

When *Alexander* the Great was about to destroy the city *Lampsacus*, his old master *Anaximenes* came out to meet him. *Alexander*, suspecting his design, that he would intercede for the city, being determined to destroy it, swore that he would *not* grant him any thing he should ask. Then said *Anaximenes*, "I desire that you *will* destroy this city." *Alexander* respected his oath, and the city was spared. Thus, says *Valerius Maximus*, the narrator, (lib. vii. c. iii., No. 4. Extern.,) by this sudden turn of sagacity, this ancient and noble city was preserved from the destruction by which it was threatened. "Haec velocitas sagacitatis oppidum vetusta nobilitate inclytum exitio, cui destinatum erat, subtraxit."

A stratagem of *Jaddua*, the *high priest*, was the means of preserving *Jerusalem* from being destroyed by *Alexander*, who, incensed because they had assisted the inhabitants of *Gaza* when he besieged it, as soon as he had reduced it, marched against *Jerusalem*, with the determination to raze it to the ground; but *Jaddua* and his priests in their sacerdotal robes, meeting him on the way, he was so struck with their appearance that he not only prostrated himself before the high priest, and spared the city, but also granted it some remarkable privileges. But the case of *Archimedes* and *Syracuse* is the most striking and appropriate in all its parts. That of *Anaximenes* and *Lampsacus* is also highly illustrative of the maxim of the wise man: "Wisdom is better than strength."

Verse 16. **The poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard.**] I cannot help pursuing this illustration a little farther. The soldier who found *Archimedes* busily employed in drawing figures upon the sand, put to him some impertinent question, withal rudely obtruding

himself on his operations. To whom this wonderful mathematician replied, "Stand off, soldier, and do not spoil my diagram;" on which the bloody savage struck him dead!

Verse 17. **The words of wise men are heard in quiet]** In the tumult of war the words of *Archimedes* were not heard; and his *life* was lost.

Verse 18. **Wisdom is better than weapons of war]** So proved in the case of *Archimedes*.

**But one sinner]** Such as the Roman butcher above mentioned.

**Destroyeth much good]** Such as were the life and skill of the Syracusan mathematician. One sinner has often injured the work of God; one stumbling-block has sometimes destroyed a revival of religion. Sin acts like a ferment; whatever comes in contact with it, it assimilates to itself.

# ECCLESIASTES

## CHAPTER X

*Observations on wisdom and folly, 1-3. Concerning right conduct towards rulers, 4. Merit depressed, and worthlessness exalted, 5-7. Of him who digs a pit and removes a landmark, 8, 9. The use of wisdom and experience, 10. Of the babbler and the fool, 11-15. The infant king, 16. The well-regulated court, 17. Of slothfulness, 18. Of feasting, 19. Speak not evil of the king, 20.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. X

Verse 1. **Dead flies]** Any putrefaction spoils perfume; and so a foolish act ruins the character of him who has the reputation of being wise and good. Alas! alas! in an unguarded moment how many have tarnished the reputation which they were many years in acquiring! Hence, no man can be said to be safe, till he is taken to the paradise of God.

Verse 2. **A wise man's heart is at his right hand]** As the *right hand* is ordinarily the best exercised, strongest, and most ready, and the *left* the contrary, they show, 1. The command which the wise man has over his own mind, feelings, passions, &c., and the prudence with which he acts. And, 2. The want of prudence and management in the fool, who has no restraint on his passions, and no rule or guard upon his tongue. The *right hand* and the *left* are used in Scripture to express *good* and *evil*. The wise man is always employed in doing *good*; the fool, in nonsense or evil.

Verse 3. **When—a fool walketh by the way]** In every act of life, and in every company he frequents, the irreligious man shows what he is. Vanity, nonsense, and wickedness are his themes: so that in effect *he saith to every one that he is a fool*.

Verse 4. **If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee]** If the king get incensed against thee.

**Leave not thy place]** Humble thyself before him, that is *thy place* and duty; for yielding to him, and not standing stoutly in thy defence, pacifieth *great offenses*: and then, when his anger is appeased, he will hear any thing in thy justification, if thou have any thing to offer. This is good advice to a *child* in reference to his *parents*, and to an *inferior* of any kind in reference to his *superiors*.

Several of the fathers understood this differently, *If the spirit of the ruler*-the influence of Satan-hath risen up against and prevailed over thee, to bring thee into some sin; *leave not thy place*-do not despair of God's mercy; humble thyself before him, and seek pardon through the Son of his love, and this will be מרפא *marpe*, a *remedy* or *cure* even for חטאים גדולים *chataim gedolim*, great errors or sins. All this is true in itself, whether found in this text or not.

Verse 5. **An error which proceedeth from the ruler]** What this error in the ruler is, the two following verses point out: it is simply this-an injudicious distribution of offices, and raising people to places of trust and confidence, who are destitute of *merit*, are neither of *name* nor *family* to excite public confidence, and are without *property*; so that they have no *stake in the country*, and their only

solicitude must naturally be to enrich themselves, and provide for their poor relatives. This is frequent in the governments of the world; and *favouritism* has often brought prosperous nations to the brink of ruin. *Folly* was set in *dignity*; the man of property, sense, and name, in a *low place*. *Servants*—menial men, *rode upon horses*—carried every thing with a high and proud hand; and *princes*,—the nobles of the people, were obliged *to walk by their sides*, and often from the state of things to become in effect *their servants*. This was often the case in this country, during the reign of *Thomas a Becket*, and *Cardinal Woolsey*. These insolent men lorded it over the whole nation; and the people and their gentry were raised or depressed according as their pride and caprice willed. And, through this kind of errors, not only a few sovereigns have had most uncomfortable and troublesome reigns, but some have even lost their lives.

Verse 8. **Whoso breaketh a hedge, a serpent shall bite him.**] While spoiling his neighbour's property, he himself may come to greater mischief: while pulling out the sticks, he may be bit by a serpent, who has his nest there. Some have supposed that שׁחַשׁ *nachash* here means a *thorn*; perhaps from the similarity of its *prick* to the serpent's *sting*. He who forces his way through a hedge will be pricked by the thorns.

Verse 9. **Whoso removeth stones**] This verse teaches care and caution. Whoever *pulls down* an old building is likely to be hurt by the stones; and in *cleaving wood* many accidents occur for want of sufficient caution.

Verse 10. **If the iron be blunt**] If the axe have lost its edge, and the owner do not sharpen it, he must apply the more strength to make it cut: but the *wisdom that is profitable to direct* will teach him, that he should *whet his axe*, and *spare his strength*. Thus, without wisdom and understanding we cannot go profitably through the meanest concerns in life.

Verse 11. **The serpent will bite without enchantment**] שׁחַשׁ בְּלֹא לַחֹשׁ *belo lachash*, without *hissing*. As a snake may bite before it hiss, so also will the babbler, talkative person, or calumniator. Without directly speaking evil, he insinuates, by innuendoes, things injurious to the reputation of his neighbour. ~~¶ If the eddir bite in silence, nothing lasse than he hath that privily backbiteth.~~—Old MS. Bible. "A babbler of his tongue is no better than a serpent that styngeth without hyssynge."—COVERDALE. The *moral* of this saying is simply this: A calumniator is as dangerous as a poisonous serpent; and from the envenomed tongue of slander and detraction no man is safe. The comparing the serpent, שׁחַשׁ *nachash*, to a *babbling*, has something singular in it. I have already supposed that the creature mentioned, #Ge 3:1, was of the genus *simia*. This has been ridiculed, but not *disproved*.

Verse 12. **The words of a wise man's mouth**] Every thing that proceeds from him is decent and orderly, creditable to himself, and acceptable to those who hear him. But the *lips of the fool*, which speak every thing at random, and have no understanding to guide them, are not only not pleasant to others, but often destructive to himself.

Verse 14. **A man cannot tell what shall be**] A foolish babbling man will talk on every subject, though he can say as little on the *past*, as he can on the *future*.

Verse 15. **He knoweth not how to go to the city.**] I suppose this to be a proverb: "He knows nothing; he does not know his way to the next village." He may labour; but for want of *judgment* he wearies himself to no purpose.

Verse 16. **Wo to thee, O land, when thy king is a child**] *Minorities* are, in general, very prejudicial to a state. Regents either disagree, and foment civil wars; or oppress the people. Various discordant interests are raised up in a state during a minority; and the young king, having been under the tutelage of interested men, acts *partially* and *injuriously* to the interests of the people when he comes to the throne; and this produces popular discontent, and a troubled reign.

**Thy princes eat in the morning!**] They do nothing in order; turn night into day, and day into night; sleep when they should wake, and wake when they should sleep; attending more to chamberings and banquetings, than to the concerns of the state.

Verse 17. **When thy king is the son of nobles**] *Υἱος ἐλευθέρων*, the son of freemen; persons well acquainted with the principles of civil liberty, and who rule according to them.—*Septuagint*. Such a one as comes to the throne in a legitimate way, from an ancient regal family, whose right to the throne is incontestable. It requires such a long time to establish a regal right, that the state is in continual danger from *pretenders* and *usurpers*, where the king is not the son of nobles.

**And thy princes eat in due season**] All persons in places of trust for the public weal, from the king to the lowest public functionary, should know, that the public are exceedingly scandalized at repeated accounts of entertainments, where irregularity prevails, much money is expended, and no good done. These things are drawn into precedent, and quoted to countenance debauch in the inferior classes. The natural division of the day for necessary *repasts* is, BREAKFAST, *eight*, or *half after*; DINNER, *one*, or *half after*; SUPPER, *eight*, or *half after*. And these, or even *earlier* hours were formerly observed in these countries. Then we had scarcely any such thing as *gout*, and no *nervous disorders*.

In ancient nations the custom was to eat but *once*; and then about mid-day.

Verse 18. **By much slothfulness**] This is remarkably the case in some countries. Houses are not repaired till they almost fall about the ears of the inhabitants. We have an adage that applies to all such cases: "A stitch in time saves nine."

Verse 19. **A feast is made for laughter**] The object of it is to produce merriment, to banish care and concern of every kind. But who are they who make and frequent such places? Epicures and drunkards generally; such as those of whom *Horace* speaks:—

Nos numerus sumus, et fruges consumere nati.  
*Epist. lib. i., ep. 2, ver. 27.*

"Those whose names stand as indications of *men*, the *useless many*; and who appear to be born only to consume the produce of the soil."

**But money answereth all]** This saying has prevailed everywhere.

*Scilicet uxorem cum dote, fidemque, et amicos,  
Et genus, et formam REGINA PECUNIA donat;  
Ac bene nummatum decorat Suadela, Venusque.*  
HOR. Ep. lib. i., ep. 6, ver. 36.

"For gold, the sovereign QUEEN of all below,  
Friends, honour, birth, and beauty, can bestow.  
The goddess of persuasion forms her train;  
And Venus decks the well-bemonied swain."

FRANCIS.

Verse 20. **Curse not the king]** Do not permit thyself even to think evil of the king; lest thy tongue at some time give vent to thy thoughts, and so thou be chargeable with treason.

**For a bird of the air shall carry the voice]** Does he refer here to such fowls as the *carrier pigeon*, which were often used to carry letters under their wings to a great distance, and bring back answers? The *Targum* turns it curiously: "Do not speak evil of the king in thy conscience, nor in the secret of thy heart, nor in the most hidden place in thy house, curse not a wise man; for *Raziel* calls daily from heaven upon Mount Horeb, and his voice goes through the whole world; and *Elijah*, the great priest, goes, flying through the air like a winged eagle, and publishes the words which are spoken in secret by all the inhabitants of the earth."

Civil government is so peculiarly of God, that he will have it supported for the benefit of mankind; and those who attempt to disturb it are generally *marked* by his *strong disapprobation*. And though there have been multitudes of treasons hatched in the deepest secrecy; yet, through the providence of God, they have been discovered in the most singular manner. This shows God's care for government.

# ECCLESIASTES

## CHAPTER XI

*Give alms to all, 1-4. The works of God unknown to man, 5. Diligence necessary, 6. Prosperity frequently succeeded by adversity, 7, 8. There will be a day of judgment, 9, 10.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. XI

Verse 1. **Cast thy bread upon the waters**] An allusion to the *sowing of rice*; which was sown upon muddy ground, or ground covered with water, and trodden in by the feet of cattle: it thus took root, and grew, and was *found after many days* in a plentiful harvest. Give alms to the poor, and it will be as seed sown in good ground. God will cause thee *afterwards* to receive it with abundant increase. The *Targum* understands it of giving bread to poor sailors. The *Vulgate* and my *old Bible* have the same idea. *Send thi brede upon men passing waters.*

Verse 2. **Give a portion to seven**] Never cease giving while thou seest a person in distress, and hast wherewithal to relieve him.

**Thou knowest not what evil**] Such may be the change of times, that thou mayest yet stand in need of similar help thyself. *Do as thou wouldst be done by.*

Verse 3. **If the clouds be full of rain.**] Act as the clouds; when they are full they pour out their water indifferently on the *field* and on the *desert*. By giving charity indiscriminately, it may be that thou wilt often give it to the unworthy: but thou shouldst ever consider that he is an object of thy charity, who *appears* to be in real want; and better relieve or give to a *hundred* worthless persons, than pass by one who is in real distress.

**Where the tree falleth, there it shall be.**] Death is at no great distance; thou hast but a short time to do good. Acquire a heavenly *disposition* while here; for there will be no *change after this life*. If thou die in the love of God, and in the love of man, in that state wilt thou be found in the day of judgment. If a tree about to fall lean to the *north*, to the north it will fall; if to the *south*, it will fall to that *quarter*. In whatever *disposition* or *state of soul* thou diest, in that thou *wilt be found* in the *eternal world*. *Death refines nothing, purifies nothing, kills no sin, helps to no glory.* Let thy continual *bent* and *inclination* be to God, to holiness, to charity, to mercy, and to heaven: then, fall when thou mayest, thou wilt fall well.

Verse 4. **He that observeth the wind shall not sow**] The man that is too scrupulous is never likely to succeed in any thing. If a man neither plough nor sow till the weather is entirely to his mind, the season will in all probability pass before he will have done any thing: so, if thou be too nice in endeavouring to find out who are the *impostors* among those who *profess to be in want*, the real object may perish, whom otherwise thou mightest have relieved, and whose life might have been thereby saved. Those very punctilious and scrupulous people, who will *sift every thing* to the bottom in *every case*, and, before they will act, must be *fully satisfied* on all points, seldom do any good, and

are themselves generally good for nothing. While they are *observing the clouds and the rain*, others have joined hands with God, and made a poor man live.

Verse 5. **As thou knowest not—the way of the spirit]** *Why* God should have permitted such an such persons to fall into want, and how they came into all their distresses, thou canst not tell, no more than thou canst how *their soul* is united to their body, how it came to *inform* that body, or how the *child* was formed in *the womb of its mother*. Nor canst thou discern the *end* which God has in view in these things. *He maketh all*, every thing is open to him; and take heed lest, while pretending motives of scrupulosity and prudence, in not relieving the distresses of those thou pretendest to suspect to be *unworthy*, he does not *see* that a *love of money* is the *motive* of thy conduct, and a *want of the bowels of mercy* the *cause* why thou drivest this *suspected* beggar from thy door.

Verse 6. **In the morning sow thy seed]** Be ready at *all times* to show mercy; begin in the *morning*, continue till the *evening*. Thou knowest not the most worthy object; it is enough that God knoweth; and if thy motive be *good*, he will applaud and reward thee; not according to the *worthiness* or *unworthiness* of the *object* of thy charity, but according to the *motive* which induced thee to relieve him.

Verse 7. **Truly the light is sweet]** Life is dear to every man as the *light of the sun* is to the *eye*. A man would give all that he has for his life, and it is particularly dear to him when he is in ease and affluence: but let each remember that,

Verse 8. **If a man live many years]** And even have *prosperity* through the whole; yet the *days of darkness*-times of affliction, weakness, and perhaps *old age, will be many*. If he die not a *violent* death, which no man can wish, he will die a *lingering death*; and this is ordinarily attended with many *pains*, and many *sorrows*; therefore let him prepare to meet his God; and to carry this thought through life, that all must terminate in death. The writer of *Ecclesiasticus*, **Eccl 7:36**, has a good saying, similar to this: "Whatsoever thou takest in hand, remember *thy* END; and thou shalt never do amiss;" *οὐκ ἀμαρτησείς, thou wilt not sin*.

Verse 9. **Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth]** *Youth* is devoid of cares; and, consequently, of many perplexities and distresses. Were it not so, we should have no *old men*; nay, perhaps not *one* even of *middle age*. It is in the order of a most gracious God, that the *young* should *rejoice* in their *youth*; but they should make such a moderate use of all their enjoyments, that they may not be confounded in the day of judgment. But, O young man, if thou wilt follow the propensities of thy *own heart*, the noisy mirth of the *fool*, and the dissipation of the *profligate-go on*; take thy full swing; but take this with thee, that "for all these things, God will judge thee;" and if the righteous are scarcely saved, where shall the *ungodly* and the *sinner* appear?

Verse 10. **Therefore remove sorrow]** *כעס* *caas, anger*; every kind of violent passion, all filthiness of *the flesh* and spirit. "Childhood and youth are vanity;" they pass away and come to nothing. Eternity alone is permanent; live for eternity.

# ECCLESIASTES

## CHAPTER XII

*Youth should remember their Creator, 1. A description of old age and its infirmities, with the causes of death and dissolution, 2-9. How the Preacher taught the people knowledge, 9-11. General directions, and conclusion of the work, 12-14.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. XII

Verse 1. **Remember thy Creator]** בֹּרֵא אֵיךְ *Boreeycha*, thy CREATORS. The word is most certainly in the *plural* number in all our common Hebrew Bibles; but it is in the *singular* number, בֹּרֵא אֵךְ *Borecha*, in *one hundred and seventy-six* of Dr. Kennicott's MSS., and *ninety-six* of *De Rossi's*; in many *ancient editions*; and in all the *ancient versions*. There is no dependence on the *plural* form in most of the modern editions; though there are some editions of great worth which exhibit the word in this form, and among them the *Complutensian*, *Antwerp*, *Paris*, and *London* polyglots.

The evidence, therefore, that this text is supposed to give to the doctrine of the *ever blessed Trinity*, is but precarious, and on it little stress can be laid; and no man who loves truth would wish to support it by dubious witnesses. Injudicious men, by laying stress on texts dubious in themselves, and which may be interpreted a different way, greatly injure the true faith. Though such in their hearts may be friends to the orthodox faith, they are in fact its *worst friends*, and their assistance is such as helps their *adversaries*.

But what does the text say? It addresses the *youth* of both sexes throughout the creation; and says in effect:—

I. You are not your own, you have no right to yourselves. God made you; he is your *Creator*: he made you that you might be happy; but you can be happy only *in him*. And as he *created* you, so he *preserves* you; he *feeds*, *clothes*, *upholds* you. He has *made* you capable of *knowing*, *loving*, and *serving* him in this world, and of *enjoying* him in his own glory for ever. And when you had *undone yourselves* by *sin*, he sent his Son to *redeem* you by his blood; and he sends his *Spirit* to *enlighten*, *convince*, and *draw you* away from childishness, from vain and trifling, as well as from sinful, pursuits.

II. *Remember* him; consider that he is your *Creator*, your *loving* and affectionate *Father*. In youth *memory* is strong and tenacious; but, through the *perversion of the heart* by *sin*, young people can *remember any thing* better than GOD. If you get a kindness from a friend, you can *remember* that, and *feel gratitude* for it; and the *person* is therefore *endeared* to you. Have any ever given you such *benefits* as your *Creator*? Your *body* and *soul* came from him; he gave you your *eyes*, *ears*, *tongue*, *hands*, *feet*, &c. What blessings are these! how *excellent*! how *useful*! how *necessary* and will you *forget HIM*?

III. *Remember him in thy YOUTH*, in order that you may have a *long and blessed life*, that you may be saved from the corruption and misery into which young people in general run; and the evils they entail upon themselves by giving way to the sinful propensities of their own hearts. As in youth all the powers are more active and vigorous, so they are capable of superior enjoyments. *Faith, hope, and love*, will be in their best *tenor*, their greatest *vigour*, and in their *least encumbered state*. And it will be *easier* for you to *believe, hope, pray, love, obey, and bear your cross*, than it can be in old age and decrepitude.

IV. *Remember him NOW*, in *this part* of your *youth*-you have no certainty of life; *now* is yours, to-morrow may not be. You *are* young; but you may *never* be old. *Now* he waits to be gracious; *tomorrow* may be too late. God *now* calls; his *Spirit* now strives; his *ministers* now exhort. You have now *health*; sin has not now *so much dominion over you* as it will have, increasing by every future moment, if you do not give up your hearts to your Maker.

V. There is another consideration which should weigh with you: should you live to *old age*, it is a very disadvantageous time to begin to serve the Lord in. *Infirmities* press down both body and mind, and the oppressed nature has enough to do to bear its own infirmities; and as there is *little time*, so there is generally *less inclination*, to call upon the Lord. *Evil habits* are strengthened by long continuance; and every desire and appetite in the soul is a strong hold for Satan. There is little time for repentance, little for faith, *none* for obedience. The *evil days* are *come*, and the *years* in which you will feelingly be obliged to say, Alas! "we have no pleasure in them;" and, what is worse, the heart is hardened through the *deceitfulness of sin*.

Verse 2. **While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened]** i.e., in the SPRING, prime, and prosperity of life.

**Nor the clouds return]** The infirmities of old age of which WINTER is a proper emblem, as *spring* is of *youth*, in the former clause of this verse.

Verse 3. **In the day when the keepers of the house]** The BODY of *man* is here compared to a HOUSE:—mark the metaphors and their propriety.

1. **The keepers shall tremble**—the *hands* become paralytic, as is constantly the case, less or more, in old age.

2. **The strong men shall bow]** The *legs* become feeble, and unable to support the weight of the body.

3. **The grinders cease because they are few]** The *teeth* decayed and mostly lost; the *few* that remain being incapable of properly masticating hard substances or animal food. And so they *cease*; for soft or pulpy substances, which are requisite then, require little or no mastication; and these aliments become their ordinary food.

4. **Those that look out of the windows]** The *optic nerves*, which receive impressions, through the medium of the different *humours* of the eye, from surrounding objects—they *are darkened*; the

humours becoming *thick, flat, and turbid*, they are no longer capable of transmitting those images in that clear, distinct manner, as formerly. There may be an allusion here to the *pupil* of the eye. Look into it, and you will see *your own image* in extreme miniature *looking out* upon you; and hence it has its name *pupillus*, a *little child*, from *pupus*, a *baby*, a *doll*; because the image in the eye resembles such. The *optic nerve* being seated at the *bottom of the eye*, has the images of surrounding objects painted upon it; *it looks out through the different humors*. The different membranes and humours which compose the eye, and serve for vision, are, the *tunica conjunctiva*, the *tunica sclerotica*, the *cornea*, the *iris*, the *pupil*, the *choroides*, and the *retina*. The *iris* is perforated to admit the rays of light, and is called the *pupil*; the *retina* is a diffusion of the *optic nerve* in the bottom of the eye, on which the images are painted or impressed that give us the *sensation* we term *sight* or *vision*. All these *membranes, humours, and nerves*, are more or less *impaired*, thickened, or rendered *opaque*, by *old age*, expressed by the metaphor, "Those that look out of the windows are darkened."

Verse 4. **And the doors shall be shut in the streets]**

5. The *doors*—the *lips*, which are the *doors* by which the *mouth* is *closed*.

6. **Be shut in the streets]** The *cavities* of the *cheeks* and *jaws*, through which the food may be said to *travel* before it is fitted by *mastication* or chewing to go down the *æsofagus* into the stomach. The *doors* or *lips* are *shut* to hinder the food in chewing from dropping out; as the *teeth*, which prevented that before, are now lost.

7. **The sound of the grinding is low]** Little noise is now made in eating, because the *teeth* are either lost, or become so infirm as not to suffer their being pressed close together; and the mouth being kept shut to hinder the food from dropping out, the *sound* in eating is scarcely heard. The *teeth* are divided into *three* kinds:—1. The *dentes incisores*, or *cutting teeth*, in the front of the jaw. 2. The *dentes canini*, or *dog teeth*, those in the sides of the jaws, for *gnawing*, or *tearing* and *separating* hard or *tough substances*. And, 3. *Dentes molares*, or *grinding teeth*, the posterior or *double teeth*, in both jaws, generally termed the *grinders*; because their office is to *grind down* the substances that have been *cut* by the *fore teeth*, *separated* into their parts or fibres by the *dog teeth*, and thus prepare it for digestion in the stomach.

8. **He shall rise up at the voice of the bird]** His sleep is not *sound* as it used to be; he *slumbers* rather than *sleeps*; and the *crowing of the cock* awakes him. And so much difficulty does he find to *respire* while in bed, that he is glad of the dawn to rise up and get some relief. The chirping of the sparrow is sufficient to awake him.

9. **All the daughters of music shall be brought low]** The VOICE, that wonderful *instrument*, almost endless in the *strength* and *variety* of its *tones*, becomes *feeble* and *squeaking*, and merriment and pleasure are no more. The tones *emitted* are all of the *querulous* or *mournful* kind.

Verse 5. When **they shall be afraid** of that which is **high]**

10. Being so *feeble*, they are afraid to trust themselves to *ascend steps, stairs, &c.*, without help. And when they *look upwards*, their heads turn giddy, and they are ready to fall.

11. **Fears shall be in the way]** They dare not walk *out*, lest they should meet some danger, which they have not *strength* to repel, nor *agility* to *escape*. A second childishness has taken place—apprehensions, fears, terrors, and weakness.

12. **The almond tree shall flourish]** יָנֵאֵץ *yenaets*, not *flourish*, but *fall off*. The *hair* begins to change, first *gray*, then *white*; it having no longer that supply of nutritive juices which it once had, this *animal vegetable withers* and *falls off*. The *almond tree*, having *white flowers*, is a fit emblem of a *hoary head*; or as *Hasselquist* says, who observed the tree in full flower in *Judea*, "like an old man with his *white locks*."

13. **The grasshopper shall be a burden]** Even such an inconsiderable thing as a *locust*, or a very small *insect*, shall be deemed burdensome, their strength is so exceedingly diminished. In cases of the *gout*, especially in *old men*, the *shadow* of a person passing by puts them to acute pain! How much less can they bear the smallest pressure! But probably the words refer to the man himself, who, bent at the loins, and his arms hanging down, exhibits some caricature of the animal in question. The poor grasshopper has become a burden to himself. Another interpretation has been given of the *grasshopper*; but I pass it by as impertinent and contemptible; such commentators appear as if they wished to render the text ridiculous.

14. **Desire shall fail]** Both *relish* and *appetite* for food, even the most *delicate*, that to which they were formerly so much *attached*, now *fails*. The *teeth* are no longer able to *masticate* the food, or have all *dropped out*; the stomach no longer able to digest any thing; and, as the body is no longer capable of receiving nourishment, *appetite* and *relish* necessarily fail.

15. **Because man goeth to his long home]** אֵל בֵּית עוֹלָמוֹ *el beith olamo*, "to the house of his age;" the place destined to receive him, when the *whole race* or *course* of life shall be *finished*; for עוֹלָם *olam* takes in the *whole course* or *duration of a thing*; if applied to a *dispensation*, such as the *LAW*, it takes in its *whole duration*; to the *life* of man, it takes in the *whole life*; to *time*, it includes its *whole compass*; to *eternity*, it expresses its *infinite duration*. So *old age* terminates the *olam*, the complete duration of human life; and when life is no longer desired, and nutrition ceases, the *olam* of man is terminated. My old MS. Bible translates it, **The hous of his everlastingness**.

16. He is just departing into the invisible world; and this is known by the *mourners going about the streets*, the *long hollow groans* and *throat rattlings* which proceed from him; the sure prognostications of the extreme *debility* and *speedy cessation* of those essential animal functions next mentioned.

Verse 6. **Or ever the silver cord be loosed]** We have already *had* all the *external* evidences of *old age*, with all its attendant infirmities; next follow what takes place *in* the body, in order to produce what is called *death*, or the separation of body and soul.

1. *The silver cord*.—The *medulla oblongata* or *spinal marrow*, from which all the nerves proceed, as itself does from the *brain*. This is termed a *cord*, from its *exact similitude* to one; and a *silver cord*, from its *colour*, as it strikingly exhibits the *silver gray*; and from its *preciousness*. This is said to be *loosed*; as the *nervous system* became a little before, and at the article of death, wholly

debilitated. The last *loosing* being the *fall of the under jaw*, the invariable and never-failing evidence of *immediate death*; a few struggles more, and the soul is dismissed from its clay tenement.

2. **The golden bowl be broken]** The *brain* contained in the *cranium*, or skull, and enveloped with the membranes called the *dura* and *pia mater*; here called a *bowl*, from its resemblance to such a vessel, the *container* being put for the *contained*; and *golden* because of its *colour*, and because of its exceeding *preciousness*, as has been noticed in the former case. *Broken*-be rendered *unfit to perform its functions*, neither supplying nor distributing any *nervous energy*.

3. **Or the pitcher be broken at the fountain]** The *vena cava*, which brings back the blood to the *right ventricle* of the heart, here called the *fountain*, **הַמַּבְּרֵעַ** *hammabbua*, the *spring* whence the water *gushes up*; properly applied here to the heart, which by its *systole* and *diastole* (*contraction* and *expansion*) sends out, and afterwards receives back, the blood; for all the blood flows from, and returns back to, the heart.

4. **The wheel broken at the cistern]** The *great aorta*, which receives the blood from the *cistern*, the *left ventricle* of the heart, and distributes it to the different parts of the system. These may be said, as in the case of the *brain* above, to be *broken*, i.e., rendered useless; when, through the *loosening of the silver cord*, the total relaxation of the *nervous system*, the *heart* becomes incapable of *dilatation* and *contraction*, so that the blood, on its return to the *right ventricle* of the heart, is not *received*, nor that already contained in the *ventricles* propelled into the *great aorta*. The *wheel* is used in allusion to the Asiatic *wheels*, by which they raise water from their wells and tanks, and deep cisterns, for domestic purposes, or to irrigate the grounds. Thus, then, the blood becomes stagnate; the lungs cease to respire; the blood is no longer *oxidized*; all motion, voluntary and involuntary, ceases; the body, the house of the immortal spirit, is no longer tenable, and the soul takes its flight into the eternal world. The man D-I-E-S! This is expressed in the following verse:—

Verse 7. **Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God]**

5. Putrefaction and solution take place; the whole mass becomes decomposed, and in process of time is reduced to dust, from which it was originally made; while the spirit, **הַרִּיחַ** *haruach*, that spirit, which God at first breathed into the nostrils of man, when he in consequence became a LIVING SOUL, an intelligent, rational, discoursing animal, returns to God who gave it. Here the wise man makes a most evident distinction between the body and the soul: they are not the same; they are not both matter. The body, which is matter, returns to dust, its original; but the spirit, which is *immaterial*, returns to God. It is impossible that two natures can be more distinct, or more emphatically distinguished. The author of this book was not a materialist.

Thus ends this affecting, yet elegant and finished, picture of OLD AGE and DEATH. See a description of old age similar, but much inferior, to this, in the Agamemnon of Æschylus, v. 76-82.

It has been often remarked that the *circulation of the blood*, which has been deemed a modern discovery by our countryman Dr. *Harvey*, in 1616, was known to Solomon, or whoever was the

author of this book: the *fountains, cisterns, pitcher, and wheel*, giving sufficient countenance to the conclusion.

Verse 8. This affecting and minute description of *old age* and *death* is concluded by the author with the same exclamation by which he began this book: *O vanity of vanities*, saith Koheleth, *all is vanity*. Now that man, the masterpiece of God's creation, the delegated sovereign of this lower world, is *turned to dust*, what is there *stable* or worthy of contemplation besides? ALL—ALL is VANITY!

Verse 9. **Because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge]** And in order to do this he took *good heed*—considered what would be most useful. *He set in order*—collected and arranged, many parables, probably alluding to the book over which we have already passed.

Verse 10. **He sought to find out acceptable words]** דִּבְרֵי חֵפֶז *dibreya chephets*, words of desire, words of will; the best, the most suitable words; those which the people could best understand. But these words were not such as might merely please the people; they were *words of truth*; such as came from God, and might lead them to him.

Verse 11. **The words of the wise]** Doctrines of faith, illustrated by suitable language, are *as nails fastened* by the *masters of assemblies*, בַּעֲלֵי אִסְפוֹת *baaley asuphoth*, the *masters of collections*, those who had made the best collections of this kind, the *matter* of which was of the most excellent nature; every saying sinking as deeply into the mind, by the *force* of the *truth* contained in it, as a *nail well pointed* does into a *board*, when *impelled by the hammer's force*. These *masters of collections* have been supposed to be public persons appointed by the *prince* himself, the *sole shepherd*, to see that nothing was put into the people's hands but what would be profitable for them to read; and that, when any wise man gave public instructions, a good *scribe* sat by to take down the words; and then the master examined what he *had written*, to see that it was *upright*, and that the words were *doctrines of truth*. These were something like our *licensors of the press*; but the existence of such is little more than conjecture.

After all, *masters of assemblies* may mean *public teachers*; that *which was written*, the oracles of God, out of which they instructed the people; the *one Shepherd*, GOD ALMIGHTY, from whom they received their authority and unction to preach the truth; and by the energy of whose *Spirit* the heavenly teaching was fastened in their hearts, as a *well-driven nail* in a *sound piece of wood*.

Verse 12. **And farther, by these, my son, be admonished]** Hear such teachers, and receive their admonitions; and do not receive the grace of God in vain.

**Of making many books there is no end]** Two thousand years have elapsed since this was written; and since that time some millions of treatises have been added, on all kinds of subjects, to those which have gone before. The press is still groaning under and teeming with books, books innumerable; and no one subject is yet *exhausted*, notwithstanding all that has been written on it. And we who live in these *latter times* are no nearer an end, in the investigation of NATURE and its *properties*; of GOD, his attributes, his providence, his justice, and his mercy; of MAN, his animal life, his mode of nutrition and existence, and his soul and its powers; of JESUS, and the redemption by him; of ETERNITY, and what it implies as exhibiting to us the pains of the cursed, and the glories of

the blessed. Of several of these we know no more than they who have lived *five thousand* years before us; nor do we know any thing *certainly* by the *endless books* that have been published, except what bears the seal of the God of heaven, as published in that word which was declared by his Spirit.

**And much study is a weariness of the flesh.]** O how true is this! Let the trembling knees, the palsied hands, the darkened eyes, the aching heart, and the puzzled mind of every real student declare! And should none more worthy of the name of student be within reach to consult, the writer of this work is a proof in point.

Verse 13. After all, the sum of the great business of human life is comprised in this short sentence, on which some millions of books have been already written!

### FEAR GOD, AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS

1. Know that HE IS, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. 2. Reverence him; pay him adoration. 3. Love him, that you may be happy.

**Keep his commandments]** They are contained in two words: 1. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart;" 2. "And thy neighbour as thyself." Blessed be God, much reading and much study are not necessary to accomplish this, which is called כּל הַאָּדָם *col haadam*, the whole of Adam; the whole that God required of the *first man* and of *all his posterity*. But the *Gospel* of Jesus Christ must be understood to comprehend the full force of this short saying.

The word *duty*, added here by our translators, *spoils*, if not PERVERTS, the sense.

The whole passage is rendered with great simplicity by *Coverdale*:—

"The same preacher was not wyse alone: but taught the people knowledge also. He gave good hede, sought out the grounde, and set forth many parables. His diligence was to fynde out acceptable wordes, right scripture, and the wordes of trueth. For the wordes of the wyse are like prickes and nales that go thorow, wherewith men are kepte together: for they are geven of one Shepherd onely. Therefore be warre (my sonne) that above these thou make thee not many and innumerable bookes, nor take dyverse doctrynes in hande, to weery thy body withall.

"Let us heare the conclusion of all thinges; Feare God, and kepe his comaundementes, for that toucheth all men; for God shall judge all workes and secrete thinges, whether they be good or evell."

I shall give the same from my old MS. Bible:—

And wan Ecclesiastes was most wiis he taght the peple, and told out what he had don, and enserchinge maade many parablis. He soght profitable wordis, and wrote most right sermons, and ful of trewth, The wordis of wisemen as prickis and as nailis into herte pigt: that bi the counseyle of maisteris ben geven of oon sheperd. More thann thes sone myn, ne seche thou; of making many bokes is noon eend, and oft bethinking is tormenting of the flesche. End of spekinge alle togydir heere mee. Drede God, and his hestis kepe; that is eche man. Alle thingis that ben maad schal bringen into dome, for eche erid thinge, whithir good or evyl it be.

Verse 14. **For God shall bring every work into judgment]** This is the *reason* why we should "fear God and keep his commandments." 1. Because there will be a *day of judgment*. 2. Every soul of man shall stand at that bar. 3. God, the infinitely wise, the heart-searching God, will be judge. 4. He will bring to light every *secret thing*—all that has been done since the creation, by all men; whether *forgotten* or *registered*; whether *done in secret* or *in public*. 5. All the works of the *godly*, as well as all the works of the *wicked*, shall be judged in that day; the *good* which the *godly* strove to *conceal*, as well as the *evil* which the *wicked* endeavoured to *hide*. This, then, will be the *conclusion* of the whole mortal story. And although in this world *all is vanity*; yet *there*, "vanities will be vain no more." Every thing, whether *good* or *evil*, will have its own proper stable, eternal *result*. O God! prepare the reader to give up his accounts with joy in that day! Amen.

### MASORETIC NOTES

Number of verses, 222.

Middle verse, #**Ec 6:10**.

Sections, 4.

The ARABIC subjoins this colophon:—"Praise be to God for ever and ever!"

"By the assistance of the Most High God this book of Ecclesiastes, which is vanity of vanities, written by Solomon the son of David who reigned over the children of Israel, is completed."

The SYRIAC has, "The end of the book of Koheleth."

There are others, but they are of no importance.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE CANTICLES, OR SONG OF SOLOMON

THE book before us is called in the Hebrew שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים SHIR HASHSHIRIM, "The Song of Songs;" or, "An Ode of the Odes:" which might be understood, "An Ode *taken* or selected *from others* of a similar kind;" or, "An Ode the *most excellent* of all others;" this being an idiom common to the Hebrew language: e.g., the *God of gods* is the supreme God; the *Lord of lords*, the supreme Lord; the *King of kings*, the supreme King; the *heaven of heavens*, the supreme or highest heaven. It may therefore be designed to express "a song of the *utmost perfection; one of the best that existed, or had ever been penned.*" Perhaps the title may have a reference to the other poetical compositions of Solomon, which were no less than *one thousand and five*; and this was considered the *most excellent* of the whole, and the *only one* that remains, unless we suppose Solomon, with some of the Jews, to be the author of Psalms lxxii. and cxxvii.: but this cannot be proved.

There have been some doubts concerning the author of this book. Some of the rabbins supposed it to be the work of the prophet Isaiah; but this sentiment never gained much credit. Most have, without hesitation, attributed it to Solomon, whose name it bears; and if the book of Ecclesiastes be his, this will follow in course, as the *style* is exactly the same, allowing for the difference of the subject. Both books seem to have been written about the same *time*, and to have had the same *author*.

This book, if written by Solomon, could not have been written in his *old age*, as some have supposed the book of Ecclesiastes to have been; which sentiment is, I think, sufficiently disproved; for we find that long before Solomon's old age he had *three hundred wives*, and *seven hundred concubines*; but at the time this Song was written, Solomon had only *sixty wives* and *eighty concubines*. And the Song most certainly celebrates a *marriage*; whether between *Solomon* and the *daughter of Pharaoh*, or between him and some *Jewish princess*, has not been fully agreed on among critics and commentators. It is most likely to have been a *juvenile* or *comparatively juvenile* production; and indeed the high and glowing colouring, and the strength of the images, are full proofs of this. Though *Anacreon* made amatory odes when he was *bald-headed*, yet neither he nor *any one else*, humanly speaking, could have made such odes as the Canticles when stricken in years.

But to what denomination of writing do the Canticles belong? Are they mere *Odes*, or *Idyls*, or *Pastorals*; or are they an *Epithalamium*? Let us define these terms, and examine the Song of Solomon by them. 1. The ODE is generally understood to be a species of poetry containing sublime and important matter, always *sung*, or accompanied by the *harp*, or some proper *musical instrument*. 2. The IDYL implies a *short poem*, containing some *adventure*. 3. The PASTORAL contains what belongs to *shepherds*, and their occupations. 4. The EPITHALAMIUM is the congratulatory song, sung to a new married pair, wishing them abundant blessings, a numerous and happy offspring, &c. Strictly speaking, the book of Canticles falls under neither of these descriptions: it is rather a composition *sui generis*, and seems to partake more of the nature of what we call a MASK, than any thing else; an entertainment for the guests who attended the marriage ceremony, with a *dramatic cast* throughout the whole, though the *persons* who speak and act are not formally introduced. There are

so many touches in the form and manner of this Song like those in the *Comus* of Milton, that it leads me to doubt whether the *English poet* has not taken the idea of his *mask* from the *Jewish*.

As to the *persons*, chiefly concerned, it is generally believed that *Solomon* and *Pharaoh's daughter* are the *bridegroom* and *bride*; with their proper *attendants*, viz., companions of the bridegroom, and companions of the bride, with certain *mutes*, who only appear, or are mentioned by others, without taking any particular part in the transactions.

But it is much more easy to be satisfied on the *species* of composition to which this book belongs, than on the *meaning* of the book itself. Is it to be understood in the *obvious manner* in which it presents itself? And are Solomon and his bride, their friends and companions, to be considered as mere *dramatis personæ*? Or are they *typical* or *representative* persons? Does this *marriage* represent a *celestial union*? Do the *speeches* of each contain Divine doctrines? Are the *metaphors*, taken from *earthly* things, to be understood of *spiritual* matters? In a word, does *Solomon* here represent *Jesus Christ*? Is the *daughter of Pharaoh* the *Christian Church*; or, according to some Roman Catholics, the *Virgin Mary*? Are *watchmen*, *vineyard-keepers*, *shepherds*, &c., the *ministers* of the *Gospel*? *Wine* and *various fruits*, the *influences* and *graces* of the Divine Spirit? &c., &c. How multitudinous and *positive* are the *affirmative* answers to these questions! And yet, though the many agree in the general principle, how various their expositions of the different parts of the piece! And where, all this time, is the *proof* that the *principle* is not misunderstood? As to *conjectures*, they are as *uncertain* as they are endless; and what one pious or learned man may *think* to be the meaning, is no proof to any other that he should make up his mind in the *same way*.

Let us for a moment consider the different opinions held on this book, without entering into the discussion of their propriety or impropriety. They are the following:—

I. It is a plain *epithalamium* on the marriage of Solomon with the *daughter of Pharaoh*, king of Egypt; and is to be understood in no other way.

II. It is an *allegory* relative to the conduct of God towards the Hebrews, in bringing them out of Egypt, through the wilderness to the Promised Land.

III. It is intended to represent the *incarnation* of Jesus Christ, or his marriage with human nature, in reference to its redemption.

IV. It represents Christ's love to the Church or elected souls, and their love to him.

V. It is an *allegorical poem* on the glories of *Jesus Christ* and the *Virgin Mary*.

VI. It is a collection of sacred idyls; the spiritual meaning of which is not agreed on.

Now each of these opinions has its powerful supporters, and each of these has reasons to offer for the support of the opinion which is espoused; and nothing but a direct revelation from God can show us which of these opinions is the correct one, or whether any of them are correct.

The *antiquity* of an opinion, if that be not founded on a *revelation from God*, is no evidence of its truth; for there are many ungodly opinions which are more than a *thousand* years old. And as to *great men* and *great names*, we find them enrolled and arranged on each side of all controversies. It may be asked, What do Christ and his apostles say of it?

1. If Jesus Christ or any of his apostles had referred to it as an *allegory*, and told us the *subject* which it pointed out, the matter would have been *plain*: we should then have had *data*, and had only to proceed in the way of *elucidation*. But we find nothing of this in the New Testament.

2. If they had referred to it as an *allegory*, without intimating the *meaning*, then we should be justified in searching everywhere for that meaning; and *conjecture* itself would have been legal, till we had arrived at some *self-testifying issue*.

3. If they had referred to it at all, in connection with *spiritual* subjects, then we should have at once seen that it was to be *spiritually understood*; and, comparing spiritual things with spiritual, we must have humbly sought for its spiritual interpretation.

4. Had the *Supreme Being* been introduced, or referred to in any of his *essential attributes*, or by any of the names which he has been pleased to assume in his revelations to men, we should have then seen that the writer was a *spiritual man*, and wrote probably in reference to a *spiritual end*; and, that we should pass by or through his *letter*, in order to get to the *spirit* concealed under it. But none of these things appear in this book: the *name of God* is not found in it; nor is it *quoted* in the *New Testament*. As to certain *references* which its allegorical expositors suppose are made to it, either in the *Gospels*, *Epistles*, or *Apocalypse*, they are not *express*, and do not, by any thing *in* or *connected* with them, appear *unequivocally* to point out this book. And after all that has been said, I am fully of opinion it is not once referred to in the New Testament. But this is no proof of its not being *canonical*, as there are other books, on which there is no doubt, that are in the same predicament. But still, if it refer so distinctly to Christ and his Church, as some suppose, it certainly would not have been passed over by both evangelists and apostles without pointed and especial notice; and particularly if it points out the *love of Christ to his Church*, and the whole *economy* of God's working in reference to the salvation of the souls of men.

From all this it will appear to the intelligent reader, that the *spiritual meaning* of this book cannot easily be made out: 1. Because we do not know that it is an *allegory*. 2. If one, the *principles* on which such allegory is to be explained do nowhere appear.

*Whom* then are we to follow in the interpretation of this very singular book? The *Targumist*, who applies it to God and the *Hebrews*, in their journeyings from Egypt to the promised land? *Origen*, who made it a Christian allegory? *Apponius*, who spiritualized it? *Gregory the Great*, who in the main copied them? The *good man*, who in 1717, at Paris, so illustrated it as "to induce men to devote themselves to Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary?" Mr. *Durham*, Mr. *Robotham*, Mr. *Ainsworth*, Mr. *Romaine*, and Dr. *Gill*, who endeavoured to prove that it concerns *Christ* and the *elect*? Or Mr. *Harmer* and others who acknowledge it to be an inimitable composition, and to be understood only of Solomon and Pharaoh's daughter? Or, finally, Dr. *Mason Good*, who considers it a collection of sacred idyls, the spiritual interpretation of which is not agreed on?

I had for a long time hesitated whether I should say any thing on this book; not because I did not think I understood its chief design and general meaning, for of this I really have no doubt, but because I did not understand it as a *spiritual allegory*, representing the *loves of Christ and his Church*. I must own I see no indubitable ground for this opinion. And is it of no moment whether the *doctrines* drawn from it, by those who allegorize and spiritualize it, be indubitably founded on it or not? The doctrines may be true in themselves, (which is indeed more than can be said of those of most of its interpreters,) but is it not a very *solemn*, and indeed *awful* thing to say, *This is the voice of Christ to his Church, This is the voice of the Church to Christ, &c., &c.*, when there is *no proof* from God, nor from any other portion of his word, that these things are so?

It is much better, therefore, if explained or illustrated at all, to take it in its *literal* meaning, and explain it in its *general* sense. I say *general* sense, because there are many passages in it which should not be explained, if taken literally, the references being too delicate; and Eastern phraseology on such subjects is too vivid for European imaginations. Let any sensible and pious medical man read over this book, and, if at all acquainted with Asiatic phraseology, say whether it would be proper, even in medical language, to explain all the descriptions and allusions in this poem.

After what I have said on the difficulty of interpreting this book in a *spiritual* way, it would not be fair to withhold from the reader the general *arguments* on which the *theory* of its allegorical meaning is founded. The principal part of the commentators on this book, especially those who have made it their *separate* study, have in general taken it for granted that their mode of interpretation is incontrovertible; and have proceeded to spiritualize every *figure* and every *verse* as if they had a Divine warrant for all they have said. Their conduct is dangerous; and the result of their well-intentioned labours has been of very little service to the cause of *Christianity* in general, or to the interests of true *morality* in particular. By their mode of interpretation an undignified, not to say mean and carnal, language has been propagated among many well-meaning religious people, that has associated itself too much with *selfish* and *animal affections*, and created feelings that accorded little with the dignified spirituality of the religion of the Lord Jesus. I speak not from report; I speak from observation and experience, and observation not hastily made. The conviction on my mind and the conclusion to which I have conscientiously arrived, are the result of frequent examination, careful reading, and close thinking, at intervals, for nearly *fifty* years; and however I may be *blamed* by some, and *pitied* by others, I must say, and I say it as fearlessly as I do conscientiously, that in this inimitably fine elegant Hebrew ode I see nothing of *Christ and his Church*, and nothing that appears to have been *intended* to be *thus* understood; and nothing, if applied in this way, that, *per se*, can promote the interests of vital godliness, or cause the simple and sincere not to "know Christ after the flesh." Here I conscientiously stand. May God help me!

The most rational view of the subject that I have seen is that taken by Mr. *Harmer*, who has indeed detailed and strengthened the arguments of his predecessors who have declared for the *spiritual* meaning. In his "Outlines of a Comment upon Solomon's Song," he supposes that the Song refers to *Solomon's marriage with the daughter of Pharaoh*; and that he had a *Jewish queen*, who is frequently referred to in the work; and that, unless this be allowed, there are several important passages in the book that cannot be understood; and indeed it is on this principle that he finds his chief ground for a *spiritual* and *allegorical* interpretation.

"Whatever was the intention of God," says he, "in bringing about this marriage, and in causing it to be celebrated in such an *extraordinary* manner, *by songs that were directed to be placed among the sacred writings*, it is certain there never was *any resemblance more striking* between the circumstances and transactions of any of the remarkable personages of the Old Testament and those of Messiah, than the *likeness* we may observe between *Solomon marrying a Gentile princess*, and making her *equal in honour and privileges* with his former *Jewish queen*, and in her being *frequently mentioned* afterwards in history, while the other is passed over in *total silence*, and the *conduct of the Messiah towards the Gentile and Jewish Churches*.

"The two remarkable things in the conduct of the Messiah towards the two Churches are the making the Gentiles *fellow heirs* of the same body and partakers of the promises, *without any difference*; and the *giving up to neglect* the Jewish Church, while that of the Gentiles has long flourished in great honour, and been the subject of many a history. St. Paul takes notice of both these circumstances with particular solemnity; of the first, in the *third* chapter of *Ephesians*, and elsewhere; of the other, in the *eleventh* chapter of *Romans*. They are points, then, that deserve great attention.

"They are both called *mysteries*, (**#Ro 11:25; #Eph 3:3**), that is, things that had been concealed aforetime; but it by no means follows that there were no shadowy representations of these events in the preceding ages, only that they were not *clearly and expressly revealed*.

"*Kingdoms and cities* are frequently spoken of in holy writ as *women*. *Sacred* as well as secular bodies of men are represented under that image. *The universal Church* is spoken of under the notion of a *bride*, and the *Messiah* as her *husband*, **#Eph 5:23-25, 32**. The two Churches of Jews and Gentiles, or the Church under the Mosaic dispensation and the Church freed from those ceremonies, are represented as *two women*—the one formerly treated as the *principal wife*; and the second, as having been for a long time neglected, but afterwards producing a much more numerous issue than the first—by the prophet Isaiah in his *fifty-fourth* chapter, according to the explanation St. Paul has given of that passage in **#Ga 4:22-31**. *Particular Churches* are mentioned after the same manner. So, concerning the Church at Corinth, St. Paul says, "I have espoused you to one husband, *that I may present you* as a chaste virgin to Christ;" **#2Co 11:2**.

"Since then it is common for the Scriptures to represent the Church of God under the notion of a *woman*, and the Messiah under that of a *husband*; since the two bodies of men—that which worshipped God according to the *Mosaic* rites, and that which observed them *not*—are compared to *two women*; and since the circumstances of these two Churches are such as I have given an account of from St. Paul, it must be acknowledged that there is a lively resemblance between Solomon's espousing the Egyptian princess and the Messiah's admitting the Gentiles to equal privileges with the Jews, whether it was or was not *designed* by God as an emblem and type of it celebrated by his prophets for this cause, in holy songs; and those songs preserved with care to this day among writings of the *most sacred* kind on that account."

This is the whole of Mr. *Harmer's* argument; see his *Outlines*, pages 74-77. And *what* is proved by it? Nothing, in reference to this book. We know that the *Jewish people*, not the *Church* exclusively, are represented under the notion of a *woman addicted*, and a *wife unfaithful, divorced*,

and *forsaken*, &c.; and that the *Corinthians* were represented under the notion of a *chaste virgin espoused to Christ*. And we know that all this was done to show, that as the *marriage union* was the *closest, strictest, and most sacred* among men, the union of the soul to God, and its connection with him, might be most fitly represented by that union, and unfaithfulness to him by infidelity in the other case. But what has this to do with the *Canticles*? *Where is the intimation that Solomon represents Christ; Pharaoh's daughter, the Church of the Gentiles; and the Jewish queen, the Church of the Israelites?* Nowhere. Why then *assume* the thing that should be *proved*; and then build doctrines on it, and draw inferences from it, as if the *assumption* had been *demonstrated*?

Were this mode of interpretation to be applied to the Scriptures in general, (and why not, if legitimate here?) in what a state would religion soon be! Who could see any thing certain, determinate, and fixed in the meaning of the Divine oracles, when *fancy* and *imagination* must be the standard interpreters? God has *not* left his word to man's will in this way.

Every attempt, however well-intentioned, to revive this thriftless, not to say dangerous, *Origenian* method of seducing the Scriptures to particular creeds and purposes, should be regarded with jealousy; and nothing received as the *doctrine* of the Lord but what may be derived from those *plain words* of the Most High which lie most on a level with the capacities of mankind. Allegory, metaphor, and figures in general, where the design is clearly indicated, which is the case with all those employed by the sacred writers, may come in to *illustrate* and more forcibly to *apply* Divine truth; but to extort celestial meanings from *a whole book*, where no such *indication* is given, is most certainly not the way to arrive at the knowledge of the true God, and of Jesus Christ whom he has sent.

As the Jewish marriages were celebrated for *seven days*, it has been often observed that this Song divides itself into *seven periods*, and describes the *transactions* of each.

I. The **FIRST** *chapter* represents the *bridegroom* and *bride* as a *shepherd* and *shepherdess*. The bride asks her spouse where he takes his flock at noon, to preserve them from the excessive heat, lest she, in seeking him, should go astray into some strange pastures. After this day, the *first night* succeeds, which is pointed out **#So 2:4-6**. The bridegroom rises early in the morning, leaves the bride asleep, and goes hastily to the fields to his necessary occupations, **#So 2:7**.

II. The **SECOND** *night* is pointed out **#So 2:8, 9**, &c. The bridegroom comes to the window of his spouse. She opens it, and he enters; and on the morrow, he returns to the fields to his flocks, **#So 2:17**.

III. The **THIRD** *night*, the bridegroom having delayed his coming, the bride, being uneasy, arises from her bed, and goes out and inquires of the guards of the city, whether they had seen her beloved. She had not gone far from them till she met with him; she conducts him to her apartment, **#So 3:1-4**. Very early in the morning, he retires to the country, leaving the bride asleep, **#So 3:5**. Afterwards she arises, and goes also to the fields, **#So 3:6**.

The **FOURTH** *chapter* is an eulogium on the bride's beauty; and seems to be a conversation between the parties in the country. She invites the bridegroom to visit her, **#So 5:1**. He leaves his friends, with

whom he was feasting, and comes to the door of his spouse, #So 5:2. She hesitating to let him in, he withdraws and goes to his garden. The bride follows; but, not knowing whither he had retired, asks the guards of the city, by whom she is maltreated; thence goes to the daughters of Jerusalem, and inquires of them, #So 5:3, &c. At last she meets with him, #So 6:1, &c., and having spent some time with him, returns.

IV. #So 6:9, points out the FOURTH *night* of the marriage.

V. The FIFTH *night* is pointed out #So 7:1, &c. The bridegroom gives his bride nearly the same praise and commendations which he had received from her in the preceding chapters; and early in the morning they go out together to the fields, #So 7:11-13.

VI. The SIXTH *night* they pass at a village in the country, at the house of a person who is termed the bride's *mother*, #So 7:13; 8:1-3. She invites her spouse thither, and promises to regale him with excellent fruits and choice wine; and early in the morning the bridegroom arises, leaves the bride asleep as formerly, and retires to the country, #So 8:4.

VII. The SEVENTH *night* is passed in the gardens. From #So 8:5, we have a series of dialogues between the bride and bridegroom. In the morning the bridegroom, having perceived that they were overheard, begs the bride to permit him to retire. She assents, #So 8:13, 14, and exhorts him "to make haste, and be like a roe or a young hart on the mountains of spices."

This is the division, which is in the main most followed, especially by the best critics. But, besides this, several others have been proposed; and the reader, who wishes to enter more particularly into the subject, may consult Bishop *Bossuet*, *Calmet*, and Bishop *Lowth*. For my own part I doubt the propriety of this technical arrangement, and do not think that any thing of the kind was intended by the author. The division is not *obvious*; and therefore, in my apprehension, not *natural*. Of Dr. *Good's* division I shall speak below.

The *dramatis personæ* have been marked by some of the ancient interpreters, and the different portions of the whole Song appointed to several persons who are specified; and this division served for the *basis* of a *commentary*. The most regular division of this kind with which I have met is in a MS. of my own; the Bible which I have often quoted in my *comment*.

This, attributed by some to Wiclif, and by others to an older translator, I have carefully transcribed, with all the distinction of *parts* and *speeches*. The translation is very simple; and in many cases is much more faithful to the meaning of the *Hebrew* text, though in the main taken from the *Vulgate*, than our own version. It is a great curiosity, and certainly was never before printed; and is a fine specimen of our mother tongue as spoken in these countries in M.CCCLX., which may be about the date of this translation. On the common mode of interpretation I venture to assert that my readers will understand this Song ten times better from this translation and its *rubrics*, than they have ever done from all the forms in which it has been presented to them, to the present time. For this addition, I anticipate the thanks of every intelligent reader. The indications of the speakers, printed here in black letter, are all *rubrick*, in the beautiful original. I have added a short glossary on

some of the more difficult or obsolete words, which will assist the less experienced reader, under whose notice such remote specimens of his own tongue seldom fall.

Between *twenty* and *thirty* years ago I received from India a *part* of the *Gitagovinda*, or *Songs of Jayadeva*. This poet, the finest lyric poet of India, flourished before the Christian era; and the poem above, which makes the tenth book of the *Bhagavet*, was written professedly to celebrate the *loves of Chrishna and Radha*, or the *reciprocal attraction between the Divine goodness and the human soul*. The author leaves us in no doubt concerning the *design* of this little *pastoral drama*; for in the conclusion he thus speaks: "Whatever is delightful in the modes of music, *whatever is* DIVINE in MEDITATIONS on VISHNU, whatever is exquisite in the sweet art of love, whatever is graceful in the fine strains of poetry; all that, let the happy and wise learn from the Songs of Jayadeva, whose soul is united with the foot of *Narayan*." *Vishnu* and *Narayan* are epithets of *Chrishna*, or the supreme incarnated god of the Hindoos. I found the general phraseology of this work, and its imagery as well as its *subject*, to correspond so much with those of the *Canticles*, that in the short notes which I wrote on this book in 1798, I proposed the illustration of many of its passages from the *Gitagovinda*; and was pleased to find, several years after, that my view of the subject had been confirmed by that encyclopedia of learning and science, Dr. *Mason Good*, who in his translation of the *Song of Songs*, with *critical notes*, published 1803, 8vo., has illustrated many passages from the *Gitagovinda*.

After having made a selection from this ancient poet for the illustration of the *Canticles*, I changed in some measure my purpose, and determined to give the whole work, and leave it to my readers to apply those passages which they might think best calculated to throw light upon a book which professedly has the *wisest of men* for its *author*, and according to the opinion of many, the most *important doctrines* of the Christian religion for its *subject*. I have not followed the *metrical version* which I received from India, but rather the *prose translation* of Sir William Jones; dividing it into *parts* and *verses*, after the model of the metrical version above mentioned; and adding verbal interpretations of the principal proper names and difficult terms which are contained in the work.

Having been long convinced that the *Chaldee Targum* is at once the oldest and most valuable *comment* upon this book, I have also added this. And here I might say that I have not only followed my own judgment, but that also of a very learned divine, Dr. *John Gill*, who, having preached *one hundred and twenty-two* sermons on the Song of Solomon, to the Baptist congregation at *Horsleydown*, near London, embodied them all in what he calls "*An Exposition*" of this book; to which he added a *translation of the Targum*, with short *explanatory notes*, folio, 1728. This was, however, suppressed in all the later editions of this exposition; but why, I cannot tell. This piece I give to my readers, and for the same reasons alleged by this very learned and excellent man himself:-

"At the end of this exposition I have given," says he, "a version of the *Targum* or *Chaldee paraphrase* upon the whole book, with some notes thereon, induced hereunto by the following reasons:

"*First*, to gratify the curiosity of some who, observing frequent mention and use made of it in my exposition, might be desirous of perusing the whole.

"*Secondly*, for the profitableness thereof. Our learned countryman, Mr. *Broughton*, says, this paraphrase is worth our study both for delight and profit. It expounds several passages of Scripture, and some in the *New Testament*, which I have directed to in my notes upon it; and I am persuaded that the writings of the Jews, the ancient Jews especially, would give us much light into the phraseology and sense of abundance of texts in the *New Testament*."

It is certain that this paraphrase does very often direct us, or at least confirm us, as to the *persons speaking* in this Song, to know which is of very great use in the explication of it. I shall add another reason: I believe the book of Canticles refers more to the *Jewish* than to the *Christian Church*, and I think the *Targumist* has made a more rational use of it than any of his successors.

I have thus places within the reach of all my readers THREE *especial helps* towards a good understanding of this book: 1. The ancient English translation, with its curious *dramatis personæ*. 2. The *Gitagovinda*, a most curious poem of the spiritual and allegorical kind. 3. The *Chaldee Targum*, the oldest comment on this Song. And I add my prayer, May God guide the reader into all truth, through Christ Jesus! Amen.

On this part of the subject it would be almost criminal not to mention, still more particularly, Dr. *Mason Good's translation and notes* on the *Song of Songs*. He has done much to elucidate its phraseology, and his notes are a treasury of critical learning. He considers the book to be a collection of *Sacred Idyls*, twelve in number; and his division is as follows:—

		IDYL I
Royal Bride,	Chap. I.	Verses 2, 3, 4.
Attendant Virgins,	————	Part of the fourth verse, beginning, "We will exult."
Royal Bride,	————	Verses 5, 6, 7.
Attendant Virgins,	————	———— 8.

		IDYL II
King Solomon,	Chap. I.	Verses 9, 10, 11.
Royal Bride,	————	———— 12, 13, 14.
King Solomon.	————	———— 15.
Royal Bride,	————	———— 16, 17. Chap. II. Ver. 1.
King Solomon,	————II.	———— 2.
Royal Bride,	————	———— 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

		IDYL III
Royal Bride,	Chap. II.	Verses 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17.

		IDYL IV
Royal Bride,	Chap. III.	Verses 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

## IDYL V

### *Scene, a Chiosk or Pavilion*

Attendant Virgins,	Chap. III.	Verse 6.
Other Virgins,	————	———— 7, 8, 9, 10.
Royal Bride,	————	———— 11.
King Solomon,	———— IV.	———— 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

## IDYL VI

King Solomon,	Chap. IV.	Verses 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15.
Royal Bride,	————	———— 16.
King Solomon,	———— V.	———— 1.
Royal Bride,	————	Part of the first verse, beginning, "Eat, O my friends."

## IDYL VII

Royal Bride,	Chap. V.	Verses 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8,
Virgins,	————	———— 9.
Royal Bride,	————	———— 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.
Virgins,	———— VI.	———— 1.
Royal Bride,	————	———— 2, 3.
King Solomon,	————	———— 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

## IDYL VIII

Royal Bride,	Chap. VI.	Verses 11, 12.
Virgins,	————	———— 13.
Royal Bride,	————	Part of the thirteenth verse, beginning, "What do you expect?"
Virgins,	————	Latter part of the thirteenth verse, beginning "Fortitude."

## IDYL IX

Virgins,	Chap. VII.	Verses 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.
King Solomon,	————	———— 6, 7, 8, 9.

## IDYL X

Royal Bride,	Chap. VII.	Verses 10, 11, 12, 13.
	———— VIII.	———— 1, 2, 3, 4.

## IDYL XI

Virgins,	Chap. VIII.	Verse 5.
King Solomon,	————	Part of the fifth verse, beginning, "I excited thee."
Royal Bride,	————	Verse 6.
King Solomon,	————	———— 7.

IDYL XII

Royal Bride,	Chap. VIII.	Verse 8.
King Solomon,	————	———— 9.
Royal Bride,	————	———— 10, 11, 12.
King Solomon,	————	———— 13.
Royal Bride,	————	———— 14.

There have been various opinions on this division; and many will still think that much remains yet to be done. Dr. *Good* considers it a *spiritual allegory*; but he does not attempt a spiritual application of any part of it. This perhaps is no mean proof of his good sense and judgment. I have acted in the same way, though not so convinced of its spirituality as Dr. *Good* appears to be. If I took it up in this way, I should explain it *according to my own creed*, as others have done according to *theirs*; and could I lay it down as a maxim, that it is to be spiritually interpreted in reference to the Christian Revelation, I might soon show my reader that it points out the infinite love of God to every human soul, in the incarnation of Christ; the means he uses to bring all mankind to an acquaintance with himself; the redemption of true believers from all unrighteousness, through the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit; their consequent holy life, and godly conversation; the calling of the Gentiles; the restoration of the Jews; and the final judgment! And my comment on this plan would have just as *solid a foundation* as those of my predecessors, from *Origen* to the present day.

To conclude: I advise all young ministers to avoid preaching on Solomon's Song. If they take a text out of it, to proclaim salvation to lost sinners, they must borrow their doctrines from other portions of Scripture, where all is *plain* and *pointed*. And why then leave such, and go out of their way to find allegorical meanings, taking a whole book by storm, and leaving the word of God to serve tables?

It is curious to see the manner in which many preachers and commentators attempt to expound this book. They first assume that the book refers to Christ and his Church; his union with human nature; his adoption of the Gentiles; and his everlasting love to elect souls, gathered out of both people; then take the words bride, bridegroom, spouse, love, watchmen, shepherds, tents, door, lock, &c., &c., and, finding some words either *similar* or *parallel*, in other parts of the sacred writings, which have *there* an allegorical meaning, contend that those *here* are to be similarly understood; and what is spoken of *those* apply to *these*; and thus, in fact, are explaining other passages of Scripture in their own way, while professing to explain the *Canticles*! What eminent talents, precious time, great pains, and industry, have been wasted in this way! One eminent scholar preaches to his congregation *one hundred and twenty-two* sermons upon the Song of Solomon, while all this time the evangelists and apostles have been comparatively forgotten; except only as they are referred to in illustration of the particular creed which such writers and preachers found on this book. How can they account to God for so much time spent on a tract which requires all their ingenuity and skill to make edifying, even on their own plan; a text of which they are not permitted to allege, in controversy, to prove the truth of any disputed doctrine? This, however, is not the fault of any particular *class* of ministers *exclusively*; several of all classes, though of some more than of others, have been found, less or more, labouring at this thriftless craft. Some, having preached on it during the whole of their ministry, have carried it, in a certain way, beyond the grave. An aged minister once told me, in a very solemn manner, that as God had been exceedingly merciful to him in saving his

soul, and putting him into the ministry, thus accounting him faithful, he hoped that, when called to the Church above, if any *funeral sermon* were preached for him, it should be from Canticles, #**So 1:8**: "Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents." That he could have applied these words to his own state, and the use which should be made of his life and death, I have no doubt; but who, from this text, would have chosen to pronounce the funeral oration?

I repeat it, and I wish to be heard by young ministers in particular, take the plainest texts when you attempt to convince men of sin, and build up believers on their most holy faith; and thus show rather your love for their souls than your dexterity in finding out spiritual meanings for obscure passages, on the true signification of which few, either among the learned or pious, are agreed.

I now, according to my promise, lay before my readers a transcript from my own MS. Bible, which is most probably the first translation of this *Song* that was ever made into the English language. I have *added*, for the sake of reference, the *figures* for the present division into verses, in the *margin*: these are not in the MS. The *dramatic personæ*, here in *black* letter, {bold for computer display,} are in *red* in the MS. The *orthography* is scrupulously followed.

## THE SONG OF SOLOMON

- Year from the Creation of the World, according to Archbishop Usher, 2990.
- Year from the Flood of Noah, according to the common Hebrew text, 1334.
- Year before the birth of Christ, 1010.
- Year before the vulgar era of Christ's nativity, 1014.

### CHAPTER I

*The bride's love to her spouse, 1-5. She confesses her unworthiness; desires to be directed to the flock, 6, 7; and she is directed to the shepherds' tents, 8. The bridegroom describes his bride, and shows how he will provide for her, and how comfortably they are accommodated, 9-17.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. I

Verse 1. **The song of songs]** A song of peculiar excellence. See the *Introduction*. The rabbins consider this superior to all songs. TEN *songs*, says the *Targum*, have been sung; but this excels them all. 1. The *first* was sung by *Adam* when his sin was pardoned. 2. The *second* was sung by *Moses* and the *Israelites* at the *Red Sea*. 3. The *third* was sung by the *Israelites* when they drank of the *rock* in the wilderness. 4. The *fourth* was sung by *Moses* when summoned to *depart* from this *world*. 5. The *fifth* was sung by *Joshua* when the *sun* and *moon* stood still. 6. The *sixth* was sung by *Deborah* and *Barak* after the defeat of *Sisera*. 7. The *seventh* was sung by *Hannah* when the Lord promised her a *son*. 8. The *eighth* was sung by *David* for all the *mercies* given him by God. 9. The *ninth* is the present, sung in the spirit of prophecy by *Solomon*. 10. The *tenth* is that which shall be sung by the *children of Israel* when restored from their *captivities*. See the *Targum*.

Verse 2. **Let him kiss me, &c.]** She speaks of the bridegroom in the *third* person, to testify her own *modesty*, and to show him the greater *respect*.

**Thy love is better than wine.]** The *versions* in general translate דודעא *dodeyca*, thy *breasts*; and they are said to represent, spiritually, the *Old* and *New Testaments*.

Verse 3. **Thy name is as ointment poured forth]** Ointments and perfumes were, and still are, in great request among the *Asiatics*. They occur constantly in their entertainments. Thy *name* is as refreshing to my heart, as the best perfumes diffused through a chamber are to the senses of the guests.

**Therefore do the virgins love thee.]** She means *herself*; but uses this *periphrasis* through modesty.

Verse 4. **Draw me]** Let me have the full assurance of thy affection.

**We will run after thee]** Speaking in the plural through modesty, while still *herself* is meant.

**The king hath brought me]** My spouse is a *potentate*, a mighty *king*, no ordinary person.

**Into his chambers]** He has favoured me with his utmost confidence.

**The upright love thee.]** The most perfect and accomplished find thee worthy of their highest esteem.

Verse 5. **I am black, but comely]** This is literally true of many of the Asiatic women; though *black* or *brown*, they are exquisitely beautiful. Many of the Egyptian women are still fine; but their *complexion* is much inferior to that of the Palestine females. Though black or swarthy in my complexion, yet am I *comely*-well proportioned in every part.

**As the tents of Kedar]** I am *tawny*, like the *tents* of the *Arabians*, and like the pavilions of Solomon, probably covered by a kind of *tanned cloth*. The *daughters of Jerusalem* are said to represent the *synagogue*; the *bride*, the *Church of Christ*. It is easy to find spiritual meanings: *every creed* will furnish them.

Verse 6. **Because the sun hath looked upon me]** The bride gives here certain reasons why she was *dark complexioned*. "The sun hath looked upon me." I am sunburnt, tanned by the sun; being obliged, perhaps, through some domestic jealousy or uneasiness, to keep much without: "My mother's children were angry; they made me keeper of the vineyards." Here the *brown complexion* of the Egyptians is attributed to the influence of the *sun* or *climate*.

**My mother's children were angry with me]** Acted *severely*. The bringing of a *foreigner* to the throne would no doubt excite jealousy among the Jewish females; who, from their own superior complexion, national and religious advantages, might well suppose that Solomon should not have gone to *Egypt* for a wife and queen, while *Judea* could have furnished him with every kind of superior excellence.

Verse 7. **Tell me—where thou feedest]** This is spoken as if the parties were shepherds, or employed in the pastoral life. But how this would apply either to *Solomon*, or the *princes of Egypt*, is not easy to ascertain. Probably in the marriage festival there was something like our *masks*, in which persons of quality assumed rural characters and their employments. See that fine one composed by *Milton*, called COMUS.

**To rest at noon]** In hot countries the shepherds and their flocks are obliged to retire to shelter during the burning heats of the noon-day sun. This is common in all countries, in the summer heats, where *shelter* can be had.

**One that turneth aside]** As a *wanderer*; one who, not knowing where to find her companions, wanders fruitlessly in seeking them. It was customary for shepherds to *drive their flocks together* for

the purpose of *conversing, playing on the pipe, or having trials of skill in poetry or music*. So VIRGIL:—

Forte sub arguta consererat ilice Daphnis  
*Compulerantque greges* Corydon et Thyrsis in unum:  
Thyrsis oves, Corydon distentas lacte capellas;  
Ambo florentes ætatibus, Arcades ambo,  
Et cantare pares, et respondere parati.  
ECL., vii. v. 1.

"Beneath a holm repair'd two jolly swains:  
Their sheep and goats together grazed the plains;  
Both young Arcadians, both alike inspired  
To sing and answer as the song required."  
DRYDEN.

This does not express the sense of the original: from the different pastures in which they had been accustomed to feed their flocks, *they drove their sheep and goats together* for the purpose mentioned in the pastoral; and, in course, returned to their respective pasturages, when their business was over.

Verse 8. **If thou know not**] This appears to be the reply of the *virgins*. They know not exactly; and therefore direct the bride to the *shepherds*, who would give information.

Verse 9. **I have compared thee-to a company of horses**] This may be translated, more literally, "I have compared thee לְשֵׁשׁ־סוּסִים *lesusathi*, to *my mare*, in the chariots or courses of Pharaoh;" and so the *versions* understood it. *Mares*, in preference to *horses*, were used both for riding and for chariots in the East. They are much *swifter*, endure more *hardship*, and will go longer *without food*, than either the *stallion* or the *gelding*. There is perhaps no brute creature in the world so beautiful as a fine well-bred horse or mare; and the finest woman in the universe, *Helen*, has been compared to a *horse* in a *Thessalian chariot*, by *Theocritus*. Idyl. xviii. ver. 28:—

Ὅδε καὶ χρυσεὰ Ἑλένα διαφαίνεται ἐν ἡμῖν,  
Πιερῆ, μεγάλη, ἀτ' ἀνεδραμεν ὄγμος ἀρουρά,  
Ἡ κάπῳ κυπαρισσοῦ, ἢ ἀρματὶ Θεσσαλὸς ἵππος.

"The golden Helen, tall and graceful, appears as distinguished among us as the furrow in the field, the cypress in the garden, or the *Thessalian horse in the chariot*."

This passage amply justifies the Hebrew bard, in the simile before us. See #Jer 6:2.

Verse 10. **Thy cheeks are comely**] *D'Arvieux* has remarked that "the Arabian ladies wear a great many *pearls* about their *necks* and *caps*. They have *golds chains* about their *necks* which hang down upon their *bosoms* with strings of coloured gauze; the gauze itself *bordered* with *zechins* and other pieces of *gold coin*, which hang upon their *foreheads* and both *cheeks*. The ordinary women wear *small silver coins*, with which they cover their *forehead-piece* like *fish scales*, as this is one of the

principal ornaments of their faces." I have seen their *essence bottles* ornamented with festoons of *aspers*, and small pieces of silver *pearls*, *beads*, &c. One of these is now before me.

Verse 11. **Borders of gold**] I have observed several of the *handkerchiefs*, shawls, and head attire of the Eastern women, curiously and expensively worked in the *borders* with *gold* and *silver*, and variously coloured silk, which has a splendid effect.

Verse 12. **While the king sitteth at his table**] **בִּמְסִבּוֹ** *bimsibbo*, in his *circle*, probably meaning the circle of his friends at the marriage festivals, or a *round table*.

Verse 13. **He shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.**] Mr. *Harmer* contends that it is the *bundle of myrrh* which the bride says shall *lie all night betwixt her breasts*, to which she compares the bridegroom, his name being as pleasing and refreshing to her mind, as the myrrh or *stacte* was to her senses, by its continual fragrance.

Verse 14. **A cluster of camphire**] Mr. *Hasselquist* supposes this to mean a *bunch of the Cyprus grape*; but this is supposed to mean a *shrub* so called, not any production of the isle of *Cyprus*; the best kinds of which were found at *En-gedi*. This place belonged to the tribe of *Judah*.

Perhaps the poet alludes to the dark colour of the *hair*, which by the Greeks was not unfrequently compared to the *bunches of grapes*; by no means an unfit similitude for thick black clustering curls. The following lines represent the same idea:—

[Persian]

[Persian]

"The dark black locks that ornament her neck  
Hang thick and clustering like the branchy palm."

Verse 15. **Thou hast doves' eyes**] The large and beautiful dove of *Syria* is supposed to be here referred to, the eyes of which are remarkably fine.

Verse 16. **Also our bed is green.**] **עֵרֶשׁ** *eres*, from its use in several places of the Hebrew Bible, generally signifies a *mattress*; and here probably a *green bank* is meant, on which they sat down, being now on a walk in the country. Or it may mean a *bower* in a *garden*, or the nuptial bed.

Verse 17. **The beams of our house are cedar**] Perhaps it was under a *cedar tree*, whose vast limbs were interwoven with the **בְּרוֹתַי** *beroth*, a tree of the *cypress* kind, where they now sat. And this natural bower recommended itself to the poet's attention by its strength, loftiness, and its affording them a *shady cover* and *cool retreat*. How natural to break out into the praise of a *bower*, by whose *branches* and *foliage* we are shielded from the intense heat of the sun! Even the *shelter of a great rock to a weary land* is celebrated by the pen of the first of *prophets* and greatest of *poets*,  
#Isa 32:2.

With this chapter the *first* day of the marriage ceremonies is supposed to end.

# SONG OF SOLOMON

## CHAPTER II

*A description of the bridegroom, and his love to the bride, 1-9. A fine description of spring, 10-13. The mutual love of both, 14-17.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. II

Verse 1. **I am the rose of Sharon**] *Sharon* was a very fruitful place, where David's cattle were fed, #1Ch 27:29. It is mentioned as a place of excellence, #Isa 35:2, and as a place of flocks, #Isa 65:10, Perhaps it would be better, with almost all the *versions*, to translate, "I am the rose of the field." The bridegroom had just before called her *fair*; she with a becoming modesty, represents her beauty as nothing extraordinary, and compares herself to a *common flower of the field*. This, in the warmth of his affection, he denies, insisting that she as much surpasses all other maidens as the flower of the *lily* does the *bramble*, #So 2:2.

Verse 3. **As the apple tree**] The bride returns the compliment, and says, *As the apple or citron tree is among the trees of the wood*, so is the bridegroom among all other men.

**I sat down under his shadow**] I am become his spouse, and my union with him makes me indescribably happy.

Verse 4. **He brought me to the banqueting house**] Literally, *the house of wine*. The ancients preserved their wine, not in barrels or dark cellars under ground, as we do, but in large *pitchers*, ranged against the wall in some upper apartment in the house, the place where they kept their most precious effects. We have a proof of this in HOMER:—

Ως φαν· ο δ' υψοραφον θαλομον κατεβησατο πατρος  
Ευρυν, οθι νητος χρυσοσ και χαλκοσ εκειτο,  
Εσθησ τ' εν χηλοισιν, αλις τ' ευωδεσ ελαιον.  
Εν δε πιθοι οينوιο παλαιου ηδυποτοιο  
Εστασαν, ακρητον θειον ποτον εντοσ εχοντεσ,  
Εξειησ ποτε τοιχον αρηροτεσ· ειποτ' Οδυσσευσ  
Πικαδε νοσθησειε, και αλγεα πολλα μογησασ.  
Κλημισται δ' επεσαν σανιδεσ πυκινωσ αραρυιαι,  
Δικλιδεσ· εν δε γυνη ταμιη νυκτασ τε και ημαρ  
Εσχ', κ. τ. λ.

Od. lib. ii., ver. 337.

Meantime the lofty rooms the prince surveys,  
 Where lay the *treasures* of th' Ithacian race.  
 Here, ruddy *brass* and *gold* refulgent blazed;  
 There, polished *chests* *embroider'd* *vestures* graced.  
 Here, *pots of oil* breathed forth a rich perfume;  
 There, *jars of wine* in rows adorn'd the dome.  
 (Pure flavorful wine, by gods in bounty given,  
 And worthy to exalt the feasts of heaven.)  
 Untouch'd they stood, till, his long labours o'er,  
 The great *Ulysses* reach'd his native shore.  
 A double strength of bars secured the gates;  
 Fast by the door wise *Euryclea* waits, &c.

POPE.

Verse 5. **Stay me with flagons]** I believe the original words mean some kind of *cordials* with which we are unacquainted. The *versions* in general understand some kind of *ointment* or *perfumes* by the first term. I suppose the good man was perfectly sincere who took this for his *text*, and, after having repeated, *Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love* sat down, perfectly overwhelmed with his own feelings, and was not able to proceed! But while we admit such a person's sincerity, who can help questioning his judgment?

Verse 7. **I charge you—by the roes]** This was probably some rustic mode of adjuration. The verses themselves require little comment.

With this verse the *first night* of the *first day* is supposed to end.

Verse 8. **Behold, he cometh leaping]** This appears to be highly characteristic of the gambols of the shepherds, and points out the ecstasy with which those who were enamoured ran to their mates. It is supposed that the *second day's eclogue* begins at this verse. The author of what was then called *A New Translation of Solomon's Song*, observes, 1. The bride relates how the bridegroom, attended by his companions, had come under her window, and called upon her to come forth and enjoy the beauties of the spring, **#So 2:9-11**, &c. 2. She then returns to her narration, **#So 3:1**. The bridegroom did not come according to her wishes. Night came on; she did not find him in her bed; she went out to seek him; found him, and brought him to her mother's pavilion, **#So 3:4**; and then, as before, conjures the virgins not to disturb his repose, **#So 3:5**.

Verse 9. **He standeth behind our wall]** This may refer to the *wall* by which the house was *surrounded*, the space between which and the house constituted the *court*. He was seen first *behind the wall*, and then in the *court*; and lastly came to the *window* of his bride's chamber.

Verse 11. **The winter is past]** Mr. *Harmer* has made some good collections on this part, from Drs. *Shaw* and *Russel*, which I shall transcribe. One part of the winter is distinguished from the rest of it by the people of the East, on account of the *severity of the cold*. At *Aleppo* it lasts about forty days, and is called by the natives *maurbanie*. I would propose it to the consideration of the learned, whether the word here used, and translated *winter*, may not be understood to mean what the

*Aleppines* express by the term *maurbanie*. It occurs nowhere else in the Old Testament; and another word is used for the *rainy* part of the year in general. If this thought be admitted, it will greatly illustrate the words of the bridegroom: *Lo, the winter is past; the rain is over, and gone*. For then the last clause will not be explanatory of the first, and signify that the moist part of the year was entirely past; with which, Dr. *Russel* assures us, all pleasantness withdraws at *Aleppo*; but the words will import: "The *maurbanie* is past and over; the weather is become agreeably warm; the rain too is just ceased, and consequently hath left us the prospect of several days of serenity and undisturbed pleasantness."

The weather of Judea was in this respect, I presume, like that at *Algiers*; where, after two or three days of rain, there is usually, according to Dr. *Shaw*, "a week, a fortnight, or more, of fair and good weather. Of such a sort of cessation of rain alone, the bridegroom, methinks, is here to be understood; not of the absolute termination of the rainy season, and the *summer droughts* being come on. And if so, what can the time that is *past* mean but the *maurbanie*? Indeed, Dr. *Russel*, in giving us an account of the excursions of the English merchants at *Aleppo*, has undesignedly furnished us with a good comment on this and the two following verses. These gentlemen, it seems, dine abroad under a tent, in spring and autumn on Saturdays, and often on Wednesdays. They do the same during the good weather in winter; but they live at the gardens in April, and part of May. In the heat of the summer they dine at the gardens, as once or twice a week they dine under a tent in autumn and spring." The cold weather is not supposed by Solomon to have been long over, since it is distinctly mentioned; and the *Aleppines* make these incursions very early; the *narcissus* flowers during the whole of the *maurbanie*; the *hyacinths* and *violets* at least before it is quite over. The appearing of flowers, then, doth not mean the appearing of the first and earliest flowers, but must rather be understood of the earth's being covered with them; which at *Aleppo* is not till after the middle of *February*, a *small crane's bill* appearing on the banks of the river there about the middle of *February*, quickly after which comes a profusion of flowers. The *nightingales*, too, which are there in abundance, not only afford much pleasure by their songs in the gardens, but are also kept tame in the houses, and *let out* at a small rate to divert such as choose it in the city; so that no entertainments are made in the *spring* without a concert of these birds. No wonder, then, that *Solomon* makes the bridegroom speak of the singing of birds; and it teaches us what these birds are, which are expressly distinguished from turtle doves.

Verse 13. **The fig tree putteth forth her green figs]** The fig tree in Judea bears *double* crops; the first of which is ripe in *spring*. But the tree, as I have elsewhere observed, bears figs all the year through, in the climes congenial to it. That is, the fig tree has always *ripe* or *unripe* fruit on it. I never saw a healthy tree naked. But in the beginning of spring they grow fast, and become turgid.

**The vines with the tender grape]** The versions understand this of the *flowers* of the vine. These were formerly put into the new wine (2 lbs. to every cask) to give it a fine flavour.

Verse 14. **My dove—in the clefts of the rock]** He compares his bride hiding herself in her secret chambers and closets to a *dove* in the clefts of the rock.

Verse 15. **Take us the foxes]** That these were ruinous to vines all authors allow. They love the vine, and they are eaten in autumn in some countries, according to *Galen*, when they are very fat with

eating the grapes. They abounded in Judea; and did most damage when the clusters were young and tender. It is likely that these are the words of the *bridegroom* to his *companions*, just as he was entering the apartment of his spouse. "Take care of the vineyard: set the traps for the foxes, which are spoiling the vines; and destroy their *young* as far as possible."

Verse 16. **My beloved is mine]** The words of the *bride* on his entering: "I am thy own; thou art wholly mine."

**He feedeth among the lilies.]** The odour with which he is surrounded is as fine as if he passed the night among the sweetest scented flowers.

Verse 17. **Until the day break]** Literally, *until the day breathe*; until the first dawn, which is usually accompanied with the most refreshing *breezes*.

**The shadows flee away]** Referring to the *evening* or *setting of the sun*, at which all *shadows* vanish.

**The mountains of Bether.]** Translated also *mountains of division*, supposed to mean the mountains of *Beth-horon*.

There was a place called *Bithron*, #2Sa 2:29, on the other side of Jordan; and as the name signifies PARTITION, it might have had its name from the circumstance of its being divided or separated from Judea by the river Jordan.

With this chapter the *second night* is supposed to end.

# SONG OF SOLOMON

## CHAPTER III

*The bride mentions the absence of her spouse, her search after him, and her ultimate success, 1-5. A description of the bridegroom, his bed, chariot, &c., 6-11.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. III

Verse 1. **By night on my bed I sought him]** It appears that the bridegroom only saw the bride *by night*: that on the night referred to here he did not come as usual. The bride troubled on the account, rose and sought him, inquired of the city guards, and continued to seek till at last she found him, and brought him to her apartment, #So 3:2-4.

Verse 4. **Into my mother's house]** The *women* in the East have all *separate apartments*, into which no person ever attempts to enter except the *husband*. We find *Isaac* bringing *Rebecca* into his *mother's tent*, when he made her his wife, #Ge 24:67. What is here related appears to refer to the third night of the nuptials.

Verse 5. **I charge you]** The same adjuration as before, #So 2:7.

Verse 6. **Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness]** Going to Egypt was called *descending* or *going down*, coming from it was termed *coming up*. The bride, having risen, goes after her spouse to the country, and the clouds of incense arising from her *palanquin* seemed like *pillars of smoke*; and the appearance was altogether so splendid as to attract the admiration of her own women, who converse about her splendour, excellence, &c., and then take occasion to describe Solomon's nuptial bed and chariot. Some think that it is the *bridegroom* who is spoken of here.

With this verse the *third night* is supposed to end.

Verse 7. **Threescore valiant men]** These were the *guards* about the pavilion of the bridegroom, who were placed there *because of fear in the night*. The *security* and *state* of the prince required such a guard as this, and the passage is to be *literally* understood.

Verse 8. **They all hold swords]** They are swordsmen. Every man has a sword, and is well instructed how to use it.

Verse 9. **Of the wood of Lebanon.]** Of the *cedar* that grew on that mount. It is very likely that a *nuptial bed*, not a *chariot*, is intended by the original word אַפִּירְיוֹן *appiryon*. *Montanus* properly translates it *sponsarum thalamum*, a nuptial bed. It may, however, mean a *palanquin*.

Verse 10. **The pillars-of silver]** The *bedposts* were made of silver, or *cased* with wrought silver plates, like the king's chairs brought from Hanover, now, in one of the staterooms in *Windsor Castle*.

**The bottom thereof of gold]** This may refer to *cords* made of *gold thread*, or to the *mattress*, which was made of cloth ornamented with gold.

**The covering—of purple]** Most probably the *canopy*.

**The midst—paved with love]** The *counterpane*, a superb piece of *embroidery*, wrought by some of the noble maids of Jerusalem, and, as a proof of their affection, respect, and love, presented to the bride and bridegroom, on their nuptial day. This is most likely to be the sense of the passage, though some suppose it to refer to the whole court.

A Turkish couch is made of wooden *lattices* painted and gilded; the inside is painted with baskets of flowers and nosegays, intermixed with little *mottoes* according to the fancy of the artist. Solomon's couch may have been of the same kind, and decorated in the same way; and the *paving with love* may refer to the amatory verses worked either on the counterpane, hangings, or embroidered carpet. And as this was done by the *daughters of Jerusalem*, they might have expressed the most striking parts of such a *chaste history of love* as Halaly's *Leely* and *Mejnoon* on the different parts. I see that Dr. *Good* is of this opinion. It is sufficiently probable.

Verse 11. **Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion]** This is the exhortation of the *companions* of the *bride* to the *females* of the *city* to examine the superb appearance of the bridegroom, and especially the *nuptial crown*, which appears to have been made by *Bathsheba*, who it is supposed might have lived till the time of Solomon's marriage with the daughter of Pharaoh. It is conjectured that the *prophet* refers to a *nuptial crown*, #**Isa 61:10**. But a *crown*, both on the *bride* and *bridegroom*, was common among most people on such occasions. The nuptial crown among the Greeks and Romans was only a chaplet or wreath of flowers.

**In the day of the gladness of his heart.]** The day in which all his wishes were crowned, by being united to that female whom beyond all others he loved.

Here the *third day* is supposed to end.

# SONG OF SOLOMON

## CHAPTER IV

*The bridegroom's description of his bride, her person, her accomplishments, her chastity, and her general excellence, 1-16.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. IV

Verse 1. **Thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks]** Perhaps this refers rather to a sort of veil worn by many of the Eastern women, but especially in Egypt. It is a species of black cloth made of the hair of some animal, probably the black goat; is suspended from the head by silken cords, one of which comes from the crown of the head, down the forehead, to the upper part of the nose, just under the eyes, at which place the veil begins; for the forehead and the eyes are uncovered, except the cord above mentioned, which is ornamented with gold, silver, and precious stones, according to the circumstances of the wearer. This partial veil not only covers all the face, the eyes and forehead excepted, but the neck also, and hangs loosely down over the bosom. One of them, lately brought from Egypt, now lies before me.

But the clause, *within thy locks*, מבעד לצמתך *mibbaad letsammathech*, is not well translated, either by ourselves or by the *versions*. *Jerome's* translation is an indication of the meaning: *Absque eo quod intrinsecus latet; without that, or independently of that, which lies hidden within*. The *Septuagint*, *Syriac*, and *Arabic* have, *besides thy silence*. *Calmet* contends that none of these gives the *true meaning*, and that the word צמה *tsemath* has not the meaning of *hair* or *locks* wherever it occurs, and has quite a different meaning in #**Isa 47:2**. *St. Jerome* on this place expresses himself thus: *Nolentibus qui interpretati sunt transferre nomen quod in Sancta Scriptura sonat turpitudinem.—Ergo צמתך tsmathech, quod Aquila posuit, verenda mulieris appellatur cujus etymologia apud eos sonat sitiens tuus*. *Calmet* translates: *Vous etes toute belle, won amie; vous etes toute belle: vos yeux sont des yeux de colombe; sans ce que la pudeur et la modestie tiennent cache*. I leave the translation of these to the learned reader. See another description under #**So 4:7**.

**As a flock of goats]** Because it was black and sleek, as the hair of the goats of Arabia and Palestine is known to be; which, with its fine undulation, is supposed to bear some resemblance to the *curls* or *plaits* of a woman's tresses. The mountains of *Gilead* were beyond Jordan, on the frontiers of *Arabia Deserta*.

Verse 2. **Thy teeth are like a flock]** This comparison appears to be founded on the *evenness*, *neatness*, and *whiteness* of the *newly shorn* and *newly washed* sheep.

Verse 3. **Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet]** Both *lips* and *cheeks* were *ruddy*; *sicut fragmen mali punici*.—**VULGATE**. *Like the section of a pomegranate*, that side cut off on which is the *finest blush*. This is a good and apt *metaphor*. But the inside may be referred to, as it is finely streaked with red and white melting into each other. She had beautiful *hair*, beautiful *eyes*, beautiful *cheeks* and *lips*, and a most pleasing and dulcet *voice*.

**Within thy locks.]** See on #So 4:1, and on #So 4:7.

Verse 4. **Thy neck is like the tower of David]** It is certain that *bucklers* were frequently hung about towers, both for their ornaments, and to have them at hand when their use was required; see #Eze 27:10. But the allusion here may be to those *pillars* which are often seen in armouries on which weapons of various kinds are hung, formed into a great variety of shapes and very splendid. Whoever has seen the *armoury* in the *tower* of London, or such like places, has most probably seen something very similar to that of which the poet speaks.

Verse 5. **Thy two breasts are like two young roes]** I have met with many attempts to support this *similitude*, or rather to show that there is a *similitude*; but I judge them unworthy of citation. The poet speaks the *language of nature*; and in a case of this kind, where the impassioned lover attempts to describe the different perfections of his bride, language often fails him, and his comparisons and similitudes are often without strict correctness. In love songs we have heard ladies' *necks* compared to that of the *swan*, not only for its *whiteness*, but also for its *length*! The description here shows more of *nature* than of *art*, which I consider a high recommendation.

**Feed among the lilies.]** It may be the *nipples* especially, which the poet compares to the *two young roes*; and the *lilies* may refer to the *whiteness* of the *breasts* themselves.

Verse 6. **Until the day break]** Until the morning *breeze*. See #So 2:17.

**The shadows flee away]** Till the *sun sets*.

**Mountain of myrrh]** Probably the same as the mountains of *Bether*, #So 2:17. Mountains where the trees grew from which *myrrh* and *incense* were extracted.

Verse 7. **Thou art all fair—there is no spot in thee.]** "My beloved, every part of thee is beautiful; thou hast not a single defect."

The description given of the beauties of *Daphne*, by OVID, *Metam. lib. i. ver. 497*, has some similarity to the above verses:—

*Spectat inornatos collo pendere capillos.  
Et, quid si comantur? ait. Videt igne micantes  
Sideribus similes oculos; videt oscula, quae non  
Est vidisse satis. Laudat digitosque, manusque,  
Brachiaque, et nudos media plus parte lacertos.  
Si qua latent meliora putat.*

Her well-turn'd *neck* he view'd, (her neck was bare,)  
 And on her shoulders her *disheveled hair*.  
 O, were it comb'd, said he, with what a grace  
 Would every *waving curl* become her face!  
 He view'd her *eyes*, like heavenly lamps that shone,  
 He view'd her *lips*, too sweet to view alone;  
 Her taper fingers, and her panting *breast*.  
 He praises all he sees; and, for the rest,  
 Believes the *beauties yet unseen* the best.  
 DRYDEN.

Jayadeva describes the beauty of Radha in nearly the same imagery: "Thy *lips*, O thou most beautiful among women, are a *bandhujiva* flower; the lustre of the *madhuca* beams upon thy *cheek*; thine *eye* outshines the blue *lotos*; thy *nose* is a bud of the *tila*; the *cunda* blossom yields to thy *teeth*. Surely thou descendedst from heaven, O slender damsel! attended by a company of youthful goddesses; and all their beauties are collected in thee." See these poems, and the short notes at the end.

The same poet has a parallel thought to that in #So 4:5, "Thy two breasts," &c. The companions of *Radha* thus address her: "Ask those *two round hillocks* which receive pure dew drops from the garland playing on thy neck, and the *buds* on *whose tops* start aloft with the thought of thy beloved."

Verse 8. **My spouse.**] The כלה *callah* which we translate *spouse*, seems to have a peculiar meaning. Mr. Harmer thinks the *Jewish princess* is intended by it; and this seems to receive confirmation from the bridegroom calling her *sister*, #So 4:9, that is, one of the same stock and country; and thus different from the Egyptian bride.

Mr. Harmer's opinion is very probable, that TWO *queens* are mentioned in this song: one Pharaoh's daughter, the other a Jewess. See his *outlines*. But I contend for no system relative to this song.

**Look from the top of Amana, &c.**] Solomon, says *Calmet*, by an admirable poetic fiction, represents his beloved as a mountain nymph, wholly occupied in hunting the lion and the leopard on the mountains of Lebanon, Amana, Shenir, and Hermon. As a bold and undisciplined virgin, who is unwilling to leave her wild and rural retreats, he invites her to come from those hills; and promises to deck her with a crown and to make her his bride. Thus the poets represent their goddess *Diana*, and even *Venus* herself:—

Per juga, per sylvas, dumosaque saxa vagatur  
 Nuda genu, vestem ritu succincta Dianæ;  
 Hortaturque canes; tutæque animalia prædæ,  
 Aut pronos lepores, aut celsum in cornua cervum,  
 Aut agitat damas: at fortibus abstinet apris.  
 MET. lib. x., ver. 535.

Now buskin'd like the virgin huntress goes  
Through woods, and pathless wilds, and mountain snows.  
With her own tuneful voice she joys to cheer  
The panting hounds that chase the flying deer.  
She runs the labyrinth of the fearful hares,  
But fearless beasts and dangerous prey forbears.

Mount *Libanus* separates Phoenicia from Syria. *Amanus* is between Syria and Silicia. *Shenir* and *Hermon* are beyond Jordan, to the south of Damascus and Mount Libanus, and northward of the mountains of Gilead. Hermon and Shenir are but different parts of the same chain of mountains which separates *Trachonitis*, or the country of *Manasses*, from Arabia Deserta. For these places, see #2Ki 5:12, and #De 3:9, where they are probably meant.

Verse 9. **Thou hast ravished my heart]** לִבְבַּתִּי *libbabtini*, "Thou hast hearted me," i.e., taken away my heart; as we say, "He has barked the tree," i.e., he has stripped it of its bark; "He has fleeced the flock," i.e., deprived them of their wool.

**With one of thine eyes]** בְּאַחַד מְעֵינַיִךְ *beachad meeynayich*. This has been thought a harsh expression, and various emendations have been sought. The *Masoretes* have put בְּאַחַת *beachath*, "at once," in the margin; and this is confirmed by *twenty* of *Kennicott's MSS.* but *De Rossi* does not notice it. It is scarcely necessary; the sense to me is clear and good without it. "Even one of thine eyes, or one glance of thine eyes, has been sufficient to deprive me of all power; it has completely overcome me;" for *glance* may be understood, and such forms of speech are common in all languages, when speaking on such subjects. If even taken *literally*, the sense is good; for the poet may refer to a *side glance*, shot in *passing by* or *turning away*, where only *one eye* could be seen. I think this a better sense than that which is obtained from the Masoretic emendation.

**With one chain of thy neck]** Probably referring to the play of the *cervical muscles*, rather than to *necklaces*, or *ringlets of hair*.

Verse 10. **How much better is thy love]** דָּדַיִךְ *dodayich*; Hebrew. Μαστοί σου; *Septuagint.* *Ubera tua*; *Vulgate*. "Thy breasts." And so all the *versions*, except the *Chaldee*.

**Smell of thine ointments]** Perfumes.

Verse 11. **Thy lips—drop as the honey-comb]** Thy words are as delicious to my heart as the first droppings of the honey-comb are to the palate.

**Honey and milk are under thy tongue]** Eloquence and persuasive speech were compared among the ancients to *honey* and *milk*.

Thus Homer, Iliad, lib. i., ver. 247:—

Τοισι δε Νεστωρ  
Ἡδύεπης ανορουσε, λιγυς Πυλιων αγορητης.  
Του και απο γλωσσης μελιτος γλυκιων ρεεν αυδη.

Experienced Nestor, in *persuasion* skill'd,  
Words sweet as honey from his lips distill'd.

But the figure is common to all writers and languages. A similar expression will be seen in the *Gitagovinda*.

Verse 12. **A garden enclosed—a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.**] Different expressions to point out the *fidelity* of the bride, or of the Jewish queen. See the *outlines*. She is *unsullied*, a chaste, pure *virgin*. None has ever *entered* into this *garden*; none has yet *tasted* of this *spring*; the *seal* of this *fountain* has never been *broken*. Among the Athenians, the interior part of the house, called the women's apartment, was not only locked but sealed; so Aristophan., Thesmoph. ver. 422:—

Ειτα δια τουτον ταις γυναικωνιτισιν  
Σφραγιδα εμβαλλουσιν ηδη και μοχλους.

And on this account, to the women's apartment  
They place seals as well as bolts.

And *seal*, as applicable to chaste conduct, is a phrase well known to the Greeks. Æschylus, in the *Agamemnon*, praises a woman, *σημαντη ριον ουδεν διαφθειρασαν*, who had not violated her seal of conjugal faith. But Nonnus, lib. ii., uses the form of speech exactly as Solomon does with reference to a pure virgin; he says, *Αψαυστον εης σφρηγιδα κορειης*; "She had preserved *the seal of her virginity untouched*." All this is plain; but how many will make *metaphors* out of *metaphors*!

Verse 13. **Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates**] This seems to refer to the *fecundity* of the bride or Jewish queen; to the former it would be a *prediction*; to the latter, a *statement of what had already taken place*. The word פֶּרְדִּים *pardes*, which we translate an *orchard*, is the same which has given birth to our *paradise*, a *garden of pleasure*. The other expressions, in this and the following verse, seem to refer wholly to matters of a connubial nature.

Verse 15. **A fountain of gardens**] Perhaps גַּנִּים *gannim*, "gardens," was originally חַיִּים *chayim*, "lives," a *living fountain*, a *continual spring*. See *Houbigant*. But this is expressed afterwards; though there would be nothing improper in saying, "a living fountain, a well of living waters, and streams from Mount Lebanon." A fountain of gardens may mean one so abundant as to be sufficient to supply many gardens, to water many plots of ground, an exuberant fountain. This is the allusion; the reference is plain enough.

Verse 16. **Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south**] It is granted that the *south wind* in Palestine, in the summer, is *extremely hot and troublesome*; therefore, another interpretation of this

passage has been proposed by Mr. *Harmer*; who thinks כָּרֵאִי *boi*, which we render *come*, signifies *enter into thy repositories*; and, therefore, supposes the true interpretation of the words to be as follows: "Arise, thou north wind, (and retire, thou south,) blow upon my garden; let the spices thereof flow forth, that my beloved may come into his garden, invited by the coolness and fragranciness of the air, and may eat his pleasant fruits; for, if the *south wind* blow, the *excessive heat* will forbid his taking the air, and oblige him to shut close the doors and windows of his apartments." Others think that he wishes the *winds* from *all directions* to carry throughout the land the *fume* of his spices, virtue, and perfections.

**Let my beloved come into his garden]** This is the invitation of the *bride*: and if we look not for far-fetched meanings, the sense is sufficiently evident. But commentators on this song sometimes take a *literal* sense where the *metaphor* is evident; at other times they build an *allegory* upon a *metaphor*. The *Gitagovinda* has an elegant passage similar to this. See the place, Part VII., beginning with *Enter, sweet Radha*.

The whole of this chapter is considered to be unconnected with any particular time of the marriage ceremonies.

# SONG OF SOLOMON

## CHAPTER V

*The bridegroom calls on his spouse to admit him, 1-3. She hesitates; but arising finds him gone, seeks him, and is treated unworthily by the city watch, 4-7. Inquires of the daughters of Jerusalem, who question her concerning her beloved, 8, 9. This gives her occasion to enter into a fine description of his person and accomplishments, 10-16.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. V

Verse 1. **I am come into my garden]** באתי bathi, I came, or have come; this should be translated in the *past* tense, as the other *preterite* verbs in this clause. I think the latter clause of the preceding verse should come in here: "Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits. I have come into my garden, my sister, callah, or spouse; I have gathered my myrrh," &c. I have taken thee for my spouse, and am perfectly satisfied that thou art pure and immaculate.

**Eat, O friends—drink abundantly]** These are generally supposed to be the words of the *bridegroom*, after he returned from the *nuptial chamber*, and exhibited those *signs* of his wife's *purity* which the customs of those times required. This being a cause of universal joy, the entertainment is served up; and he invites his companions, and the friends of both parties, to eat and drink abundantly, as there was such a universal cause of rejoicing. Others think that these are the words of the bride to her spouse: but the original will not bear this meaning; the verbs are all plural.

Verse 2. **I sleep, but my heart waketh]** This is a *new part*; and some suppose that the *fifth* day's solemnity begins here. *Though I sleep, yet so impressed is my heart* with the excellences of my beloved, that my imagination presents him to me in the most pleasing *dreams* throughout the night. I doubt whether the whole, from this verse to the end of the *seventh*, be not a *dream*: several parts of it bear this resemblance; and I confess there are some parts of it, such as her hesitating to rise, his sudden disappearance, &c., which would be of easier solution on this supposition. Or part of the transactions mentioned might be the *effects of the dream* she had, as rising up suddenly, and going out into the street, meeting with the watchmen, &c., before she was well awake. And her being in so much *disorder* and *dishabille* might have induced them to treat her as a *suspicious person*, or one of questionable *character*. But it is most likely the whole was a *dream*.

**For my head is filled with dew]** She supposed he had come in the night, and was standing without, *wet*, and exposed to the inclemency of the weather.

Verse 3. **I have put off my coat]** The bride must have been in a *dream* or in much *disorder of mind* to have made the frivolous excuses here mentioned. The words relate to the case of a person who had gone to take rest on his bed. As they wore nothing but sandals, they were obliged to wash their feet previously to their lying down. I have washed my feet, taken off my clothes, and am gone to bed: I cannot therefore be disturbed. A Hindoo always washes his feet before he goes to bed. If called from his bed, he often makes this excuse, *I shall daub my feet*; and the excuse is reasonable, as the floors are of earth; and they do not wear shoes in the house.—WARD.

Verse 4. **My beloved put in his hand]** If it were a *real scene*, which is mentioned in this and the two following verses, it must refer, from the well-known use of the *metaphors*, to matrimonial endearments. Or, it may refer to his *attempts to open the door*, when she hesitated to arise, on the grounds mentioned **#So 5:3**. But this also bears every evidence of a *dream*.

Verse 5. **My hands dropped with myrrh]** It was a custom among the Romans, as *Brissonius*, *Isidore*, and others relate, to conduct the bride to the house of the bridegroom with lighted torches; and those who brought her *anointed the door-posts with fragrant oils*, whence the name *uxor*, or as it was formerly written *unxor*, for a *wife* or *married* woman, because of the *anointing* which took place on the occasion; for sometimes the bride herself *anointed the door-posts*, and sometimes those who brought her; probably both at the same time. The same custom might have existed among the Jews. See *Vossius' Etymologicon*.

Verse 7. **Took away my veil]** They tore it off rudely, to discover who she was. See on **#So 5:2**. To tear the veil signifies, in Eastern phrase, to deflower or dishonour a woman.

Verse 8. **I am sick of love.]** "I am exceedingly concerned for his absence; and am distressed on account of my thoughtless carriage towards him." The latter clause may be well translated, "What should ye tell him?" Why, "that I am sick of love." This ends the transactions of the *third day* and *night*.

Verse 9. **What is thy beloved more than another beloved]** This question gives the bride an opportunity to break out into a highly wrought description of the beauty and perfections of her spouse.

Verse 10. **My beloved is white and ruddy]** *Red* and *white*, properly mixed, are essential to a *fine complexion*; and this is what is intimated: he has the *finest complexion among ten thousand persons*; not one in that number is equal to *him*. Literally, "He bears the standard among ten thousand men;" or "He is one before whom a standard is borne," i.e., he is *captain* or *chief* of the whole.

Verse 11. **His head is as the most fine gold]** He has the most beautiful head, fine and majestic. Gold is here used to express *excellence*.

**His locks are bushy]** *Crisped* or *curled*. This may refer to his mustachios.

**Black as a raven.]** His hair is black and glossy.

Verse 12. **His eyes are as the eyes of doves]** See on **#So 4:1**.

**Washed with milk]** The *white* of the eye, *exceedingly white*. By the use of *stibium*, in the East, the eye is rendered very *beautiful*; and receives such a *lustre* from the use of this article, that, to borrow the expression of a late traveller, "their eyes appear to be swimming in bliss." I believe this expression to be the meaning of the text.

**Fitly set.]** Or, as the *margin*, very properly, *sitting in fullness*; not sunk, not contracted.

Verse 13. **His cheeks are as a bed of spices]** Possibly meaning a *bed in the garden*, where odoriferous herbs grew. But it has been supposed to refer to his *beard*, which in a *young well-made man* is exceedingly beautiful. I have seen young Turks, who had taken much care of their beards, mustachios, &c., look majestic. Scarcely any thing serves to set off the human face to greater advantage than the *beard*, when kept in proper order. Females admire it in their *suitors* and *husbands*. I have known cases, where they not only *despised* but *execrated* Europeans, whose faces were close shaved. The men perfume their beards often; and this may be what is intended by *spices* and *sweet-smelling myrrh*.

**His lips like lilies]** The שושנים *shoshannim* may mean any flower of the *lily* kind, such as the *rubens lilium*, mentioned by *Pliny*, or something of the *tulip* kind. There are tints in such flowers that bear a very near resemblance to a fine *ruby lip*.

Verse 14. **His hands—gold rings set with the beryl]** This really seems to refer to *gold rings* set with precious stones on the fingers, and perhaps to circlets or bracelets about the wrists. Some suppose it to refer to the roundness and exquisite symmetry of the hand and fingers. תרשיש *tarshish*, which we translate *beryl*, a gem of a sea-green tint, had better be translated *chrysolite*, which is of a *gold* colour.

**His belly—bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.]** This must refer to some *garment* set with *precious stones* which went round his waist, and was peculiarly remarkable. If we take it *literally*, the sense is plain enough. His belly was beautifully white, and the blue veins appearing under the skin resembled the sapphire stone. But one can hardly think that this was intended.

Verse 15. **His legs are as pillars of marble]** Exquisitely turned and well-shaped; the *sockets of gold* may refer to his *slippers*. On these a profusion of gold and ornaments are still lavished in Asiatic countries.

**His countenance is as Lebanon]** As Lebanon exalts its head beyond all the other mountains near Jerusalem, so my beloved is tall and majestic, and surpasses in stature and majesty all other men. He is also as *straight* and as *firm* as the *cedars*.

Verse 16. **His mouth is most sweet]** His eloquence is great, and his voice is charming. Every word he speaks is sweetness, mildness, and benevolence itself. Then, her powers of description failing, and metaphor exhausted she cries out, "The whole of him is loveliness. This is my beloved, and this is my companion, O ye daughters of Jerusalem."

# SONG OF SOLOMON

## CHAPTER VI

*The companions of the bride inquire after the bridegroom, 1-3. A description of the bride, 4-13.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. VI

Verse 1. **Whither is thy beloved gone]** These words are supposed to be addressed to the *bride* by her own *companions*, and are joined to the preceding chapter by the *Hebrew* and all the *versions*.

Verse 2. **My beloved is gone down into his garden]** The answer of the *bride* to her *companions*.

Verse 4. **Beautiful—as Tirzah]** This is supposed to be the address of Solomon to the bride. Tirzah was a city in the tribe of Ephraim, (#**Jos 12:24**), and the capital of that district. It appears to have been *beautiful* in *itself*, and *beautifully situated*, for *Jeroboam* made it his residence before *Samaria* was built; and it seems to have been the ordinary residence of the kings of *Israel*, #**1Ki 14:17; 15:21; 16:6**. Its *name* signifies *beautiful* or *delightful*.

**Comely as Jerusalem]** This was called *the perfection of beauty*, #**Ps 48:2, 3; 50:2**. And thus the poet compares the bride's beauty to the *two finest places* in the land of Palestine, and the *capitals* of the *two kingdoms* of *Israel* and *Judah*.

**Terrible as an army with banners.]** This has been supposed to carry an allusion to the *caravans* in the East, and the manner in which they are conducted in their travels by night. The caravans are divided into *companies*, called *cottors*, according to *Thevenet*; and each company is distinguished by the *form* of the *brazier* in which they carry their *lights*. After night, these braziers are placed on the ends of long poles, and carried by a person who walks at the head of the company. Some have *ten* or *twelve* lights, and are of different forms; some *triangular*, or like an N; some like an M, by which each pilgrim readily knows *his own company*, both by *night* and *day*. A whole caravan, composed of many thousands of *hadgees* or *pilgrims*, divided into various *cottors* or companies, each having its own distinguishing brazier or *light*, must necessarily produce a very *splendid*, if not a *terrible*, appearance.

Verse 5. **Turn away thine eyes]** As the sight of so many fires after night was extremely *dazzling*, and the *eye* could not *bear* the sight, so the *look* of the bride was such as pierced the heart, and quite overwhelmed the person who met it. Hence the bridegroom naturally cries out, "Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me."

**Thy hair is as a flock of goats]** See on #**So 4:1**.

Verse 6. **Thy teeth]** See on #**So 4:2**.

Verse 7. **As a piece of a pomegranate]** See on #**So 4:3**.

Verse 8. **There are threescore queens]** Though there be *sixty queens*, and *eighty concubines*, or *secondary wives*, and *virgins innumerable*, in my harem, yet thou, *my dove, my undefiled, art* אֵת אַחַת, ONE, the ONLY ONE, she in whom I delight beyond all.

Verse 9. **The daughters saw her, and blessed her]** Not only the *Jewish women in general* spoke well of her on her arrival, but the *queens and concubines praised her* as the most accomplished of her sex.

With this verse the *fourth night* of the marriage week is supposed to end.

Verse 10. **Looketh forth as the morning]** The bride is as lovely as the *dawn* of day, the *Aurora*, or perhaps the *morning star*, VENUS. She is even more resplendent, she is as *beautiful as the MOON*. She even surpasses *her*, for she is as *clear and bright* as the SUN; and *dangerous* withal to look on, for she is as formidable as the vast collection of lights that burn by night at the head of every company in a numerous caravan. **See Clarke's note on "So 6:4"**. The comparison of a fine woman to the splendour of an unclouded *full moon* is continually recurring in the writings of the Asiatic poets.

Verse 11. **I went down into the garden of nuts]** I believe this and the following verse refer at least to the preparations for a farther consummation of the marriage, or examination of the advancement of the bride's pregnancy. But many circumstances of this kind are so interwoven, and often *anticipated* and also *postponed*, that it is exceedingly difficult to arrange the whole so as to ascertain the several parts, and who are the actors and speakers. But other writers find no difficulty here, because they have their system; and that explains all things.

It is probably not the *hazel* but the *almond nut*, that is referred to here.

Verse 12. **The chariots of Amminadib.]** Probably for their great speed these chariots became proverbial. The passage marks a strong agitation of mind, and something like what we term palpitation of the heart. As I am not aware of any *spiritual* meaning here, I must be excused from commenting on that which is *literal*. *Amminadib* signifies *my noble* or *princely people*; but it may here be a proper name, and Amminadib might be celebrated for his skill and rapidity in driving, as Jehu was.

Verse 13. **Return, O Shulamite]** This appears to be addressed to the bride, as now the confirmed, acknowledged *wife of Solomon*; for שׁוּלַמִּיתֵהּ *shulamith*, appears to be a *feminine* formed from שְׁלֹמֹה *shelomoh*, or שְׁלֹמוֹן *shelomon*, as we form *Charlotte* from *Charles*; *Henrietta*, from *Henry*; *Janette*, from *John*, &c.

**The company of two armies.]** Or the *musicians of the camps*. She is as terrible as hosts of armed men, on the ground of what is said on #So 6:4, 5. The two armies may refer to the *choirs* of the bride's *virgins*, and the bridegroom's *companions*; but the similitude is not very perceptible. The *Targum* explains it of "the camps of Israel and Judah:" as if the bridegroom should say, "My beloved possesses all the perfections both of the Israelitish and Jewish women." But how little satisfaction do the best *conjectures* afford!

With this chapter the *fifth night* is supposed to end.

# SONG OF SOLOMON

## CHAPTER VII

*A farther description of the bride, 1-9. Her invitation to the bridegroom, 10-13.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. VII

Verse 1. **How beautiful are thy feet with shoes]** "How graceful is thy walking." In the *sixth* chapter the bridegroom praises the *Shulamite*, as we might express it, *from head to foot*. Here he begins a new description, taking her from *foot to head*.

The *shoes, sandals, or slippers* of the Eastern ladies are most beautifully formed, and richly embroidered. The *majestic walk* of a beautiful woman in such shoes is peculiarly grand. And to show that such a walk is intended, he calls her a *prince's daughter*.

**The joints of thy thighs]** Must refer to the ornaments on the beautiful *drawers*, which are in general use among ladies of quality in most parts of the East.

Verse 2. **Thy navel is like a round goblet]** This may also refer to some ornamental dress about the *loins*. These suppositions are rendered very probable from hundreds of the best finished and highly decorated drawings of Asiatic *ladies* in my own collection, where every thing appears in the drawings, as in nature.

**A heap of wheat set about with lilies.]** This is another instance of the same kind. The richly embroidered dresses in the above drawings may amply illustrate this also. Ainsworth supposes the metaphor is taken from a pregnant woman; the child in the womb being nourished by means of the *umbilical cord* or *navel string*, till it is brought into the world. After which it is fed by means of the mother's *breasts*, which are immediately mentioned. Possibly the whole may allude to the bride's *pregnancy*.

Verse 3. **Thy two breasts]** Where the hair and breasts are fine, they are the highest ornaments of the person of a female.

Verse 4. **Thy neck—as a tower of ivory]** High, white, and ornamented with jewellery, *as the tower of David* was with *bucklers*. See on **#So 4:4**.

**The fish-pools in Heshbon]** Clear, bright, and serene. These must have been very beautiful to have been introduced here in comparison. These two fountains appear to have been situated at the *gate* that led from *Heshbon* to *Rabba*, or *Rabboth Ammon*. There is a propriety in this metaphor, because *fountains* are considered to be the *eyes* of the *earth*.

**Thy nose—as the tower of Lebanon]** There was doubtless a propriety in this similitude also, which cannot now be discerned. If we are to understand the similitude as taken from the *projecting* form of the *nose*, even here I see nothing striking in the metaphor; for surely the tower of Lebanon

did not *project* from the *mountain* as the human *nose* does from the *face*. It is better to acknowledge that there was undoubtedly some fit resemblances; but in what *circumstance* we know not. But some commentators are always extolling the correctness of the imagery in those very difficult places, where no soul sees the similitude but themselves.

Verse 5. **Thine head—like Carmel]** Rising majestically upon thy neck, and above thy shoulders, as Mount Carmel does in its district. Carmel was the name of the mountain where Elijah had his contest with the prophets of Baal. See #1Ki 18:19, &c.

**The hair of thine head like purple]** Ornamented with *ribbons* and *jewellery* of this *tint*.

**The king is held in the galleries.]** Or is detained in the antechamber. His heart is captivated by thy person and conduct. Some understand the ringlets of the bride's hair.

Verse 6. **How fair and how pleasant]** Thou art every way beautiful, and in every respect calculated to inspire pleasure and delight.

Verse 7. **Like to a palm tree]** Which is remarkably *straight*, *taper*, and *elegant*.

**And thy breasts to clusters of grapes.]** *Dates* are the fruit of the palm tree; they grow in clusters; and it is these, not *grapes*, which are intended.

Verse 8. **I will go up to the palm tree]** I will take hold on the boughs of this tree, and climb up by them, in order to gather the clusters of dates at the top. The *rubric* here in the old MS. interprets this of the *cross of Christ*.

Verse 9. **The roof of thy mouth like the best wine]** The *voice* or *conversation* of the spouse is most probably what is meant.

**Causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.]** As *good wine* has a tendency to cause the most backward to *speak fluently* when taken in moderation; so a sight of thee, and hearing the charms of thy conversation, is sufficient to excite the most taciturn to speak, and even to become eloquent in thy praises.

Verse 10. **I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me.]** It is worthy of remark that the word which we translate *his desire* is the very same used #Ge 3:16: *Thy desire*, thy ruling appetite, תשוקתך *teshukathech*, shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. This was a part of the woman's curse. Now here it seems to be *reversed*; for the bride says, *I am my beloved's*, and *his desire* or *ruling appetite* and *affection*, תשוקתו *teshukatho*, is עלי *ali*, UPON ME. The old MS. translates this with considerable force:—*I to my leaf, and to me the turnynge of him*.

Verse 11. **Let us go forth into the field]** It has been conjectured that the bridegroom arose early every morning, and left the bride's apartment, and withdrew to the country; often leaving her asleep, and commanding her companions not to disturb her till she should awake of herself. Here the bride wishes to accompany her spouse to the country, and spend a night at his country house.

Verse 12. **Let us get up early to the vineyards]** When in the country, we shall have the better opportunity to contemplate the progress of the spring vegetation; and there she promises to be peculiarly affectionate to him.

Verse 13. **The mandrakes give a smell]** See Clarke's note on "**Ge 30:14**", where the *mandrake* is particularly described; from which this passage will receive considerable light. The reader is *requested* to consult it.

**All manner of pleasant fruits]** Fruits *new* and *old*; *flowers* and *herbs* of every kind which the season could yield. The literal sense, allowing for the concealing metaphors, is, I believe, of a widely different nature from what is generally given. But this must be left to the reader's sagacity and prudence.

# SONG OF SOLOMON

## CHAPTER VIII

*The love of the bride to her spouse, and the nature of that love, 1-7. The younger sister, 8-10. Solomon's vineyard, 11, 12. The confidence of the bride and bridegroom in each other, 13, 14.*

### NOTES ON CHAP. VIII

Verse 1. **O that thou wert as my brother**] The bride, fearing that her fondness for her spouse might be construed into too great a familiarity, wishes that he were *her little brother*; and then she might treat him in the most affectionate manner, and kiss him even in the *streets* without suspicion, and without giving offense to any one.

Verse 2. **Would—bring thee into my mother's house, who would instruct me**] She would teach me how to conduct myself towards thee, as she would how to nurse a young child.

**To drink of spiced: wine**] Wine rendered peculiarly strong and invigorating. The bride and bridegroom on the wedding day both drank out of the same cup, to show that they were to *enjoy* and equally *bear* together the *comforts* and *adversities* of life.

Verse 3. **His left hand**] See on **#So 2:6**.

With the *fourth* verse the *SIXTH night* of the marriage week is supposed to end.

Verse 5. **That cometh up from the wilderness**] Perhaps the words of the *daughters of Jerusalem*, who, seeing the bride returning from the country, leaning on the arm of her beloved, are filled with admiration at her excellent carriage and beauty.

**I raised thee up under the apple tree**] The original of this clause is obscure, and has given birth to various translations. The following is nearly literal: "Under the apple tree I excited thee (to espouse me:) there, thy mother contracted thee;—there, she that brought thee forth contracted thee (to me.) Or it may be understood of the following circumstance: The bridegroom found her once asleep under an apple tree, and awoke her; and this happened to be the very place where her mother, taken in untimely labour, had brought her into the world." And here the bridegroom, in his fondness and familiarity, recalls these little adventures to her memory.

The *Vulgate* gives this an abominable meaning.

Sub arbore malo suscitavi te: ibi corrupta est mater tua; ibi violata est genetrix tua; "I raised thee up under the apple tree: it was there that thy mother was corrupted; it was there that she who brought thee forth was violated." Spiritually, all this is applied to Eve losing her purity by sin; and Jesus as the promised seed *raising her up* by the promise of mercy, through the blood of his cross. But the *text* says nothing of this.

Verse 6. **Set me as a seal upon thine heart]** It was customary in the Levant and other places to make impressions of *various kinds* upon the *arms*, the *breast*, and other parts. I have seen these often: some slight punctures are made, and the place rubbed over with a sort of blue powder that, getting between the *cuticle* and *cutis*, is never discharged; it continues in all its distinctness throughout life. The figures of *young women* are frequently thus impressed on the *arms* and on the *breasts*. If the bride alludes to any thing of this kind, which is very probable, the interpretation is easy. Let me be thus depicted upon thine *arm*, which being constantly before thy eyes, thou wilt never forget me; and let me be thus depicted upon thy *breast*, the emblem of the share I have in thy *heart* and affections. Do this as a proof of the love I bear to thee, which is such as nothing but death can destroy; and do it to prevent any *jealousy* I might feel, which is as *cruel as the grave*, and as deadly as *fiery arrows* or poisoned darts shot into the body.

**A most vehement flame.]** שלהבתיה *shalhebethyah*, "the flame of God;" for the word is divided שלהבתיה *shalhebeth Yah*, "the flame of Jehovah," by *one hundred and sixteen* of Dr. Kennicott's MSS., and by *one hundred and fourteen* of those of *De Rossi*. It may mean the *lightning*; or, as our text understands it, a most *vehement* or *intense fire*.

Verse 7. **Many waters]** Neither common nor uncommon *adversities*, even of the most *ruinous* nature, can destroy love when it is *pure*; and *pure love* is such that nothing can *procure* it. If it be not excited naturally, no money can purchase it, no property can procure it, no arts can persuade it. How vain is the thought of *old rich men* hoping to procure the affections of *young women* by loading them with *presents* and *wealth*! No woman can command her affections; they are not in her power. Where they do not rise spontaneously, they can never exist. "If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly contemned." Let the *old*, as well as the *gay* and the *giddy*, think of this.

Verse 8. **We have a little sister]** This young girl belonged most probably to the *bride*.

**She hath no breasts]** She is not yet marriageable.

**What shall we do for our sister]** How shall we secure her comfort and welfare?

**In the day when she shall be spoken for?]** When any person shall demand her in marriage.

Verse 9. **If she be a wall]** All these expressions, says *Calmet*, show that it was necessary to provide a husband for this young sister. For a *woman* without a *husband* is like a *wall* without *towers*, and without defense; is like a *gate* or *door* without *bar* or *lock*; and like a *city* without *walls*. They must therefore provide for their sister a *rich*, *powerful*, and *illustrious* man; qualities here figured by *towers* or *palaces* of *silver*, and *doors* of *cedar*. As it is customary to build *towers* upon a *wall*, and to put *bolts* and *bars* upon a *door* in order to secure it, so the expressions may point out the *defense*, *protection*, and *guardianship* which they imagined this young woman to require.

Verse 10. **I am a wall, and my breasts like towers]** I am become marriageable, and I stood in need of the *defense* I have now in my beloved; and as soon as I was so, and became pleasing in the eyes of my beloved, I was given to him in marriage, and have ever since *found favour in his sight*.

As soon then as my sister is in my state, let a proper match be sought out for *her*. These expressions show the solicitude which the bride felt for her sister, and in her favour she wishes to interest her spouse.

Verse 11. **Solomon had a vineyard]** *Calmet* translates and paraphrases the *Hebrew* of these two verses thus: "Ver. 11. *Solomon has a vineyard at Baal-hamon: he has let it out to keepers, each of whom for the fruit of it was to bring a thousand pieces of silver.* Ver. 12. *As for me, my vineyard is before me; that is, it is my own; I am its proprietor. Keep thyself, O Solomon, thy thousand pieces of silver, and let those who dress (thy vineyard) have two hundred for their trouble.* I neither envy thee thy vineyard, nor them their profits. I am satisfied with my own. My beloved is my vineyard-my heritage; I would not change him for all the riches of the universe."

Some suppose that there is a reference here to some property which Pharaoh had given to Solomon with his daughter. See *Harmer's Outlines*, where this subject is considered at large.

Verse 13. **Thou that dwellest in the gardens]** This is supposed to refer to the bridegroom asking permission of his spouse early in the morning to retire, as was his usual custom. He intimates the *companions* were waiting to *hear*, and he wished to *hear it* in the way of *permission* to depart.

Verse 14. **Make haste, my beloved]** These appear to be the words of the bride giving permission, but entreating him to speed his *return*. What these *mountains of spices* were, we cannot particularly tell; but they must have been thus named from their producing the *trees* on which the *spices* grew. They might have been the same as the *mountains of Bether*, #So 2:17, or the *mountains of myrrh*, #So 4:6; where see the notes. See Clarke "So 4:6".

Here ends the *seventh night* of the marriage week.

Thus ends this most singular book; the oldest *pastoral* in the world, if it may be ranked among this species of writing. To whatever species of composition it belongs, it is, beyond all controversy, the *finest*, the most *sublime* for *imagery* and *colouring*, that ever came from the pen of man.

In the preceding notes I have carefully avoided all attempts to *spiritualize* this song. My reasons I have already given in the *introduction*; and in the course of writing these short notes I have seen no cause to alter my opinion. Any man may *allegorize* it; that is an easy matter; for when he once considers it to be an *allegory*, his own *creed* will furnish him with enough to *say*, *write*, or *preach*, upon the *spiritual* meanings of every part, which will be an exhibition of his own *confession of faith!* But when he has finished his work, the question will recur, By what authority do you give it *these meanings?* And till the day of judgment none shall be able to say, "I have the authority of God for my exposition."

## MASORETIC NOTES

Number of verses in Canticles, 117.

Middle verse #So 4:14.

See Ancillary data for  
**Targum**  
or **Chaldee paraphrase**,  
on the **Song of Songs**.

Also

See Ancillary data for  
**The Gitagovinda**  
or the **Songs of Jayadeva**