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A

# COMMENTARY

ON THE

## B I B L E.

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### *THE BOOK OF PROVERBS.*

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#### GENERAL OBSERVATIONS,

**I**T is remarkable that in the three sacred books, of which this is one of them, written by Solomon, he sends each forth under three different titles. Here he calls himself the son of David, king of Israel. The book of Ecclesiastes, he stiles the words of the Preacher, and therein he takes the name of the King of Jersusalem. And in the Canticles, after speaking in the title page of the excellency of it, he only puts his name of Solomon.

Various have been the opinions of holy men of old, concerning the *time* in which those portions of inspired scripture have been sent forth. Some have thought that the whole were written when he was near death. And others have said that the book of the Songs was written first, and the book of Ecclesiastes last; but this is certainly contrary to the order in which they are placed in the Bible, perhaps about 980 years before Christ.

I do not think it necessary to dwell at all upon the character of Solomon, because the Holy Ghost hath very largely given his history in its proper place; and the uses to be made of his history are also very plainly marked out; so that every thing on this ground is superseded.

The period in which this book of God was written, it cannot be difficult to ascertain. The age of the church in which Solomon lived will serve to shew very nearly the time in which those precious sentences and maxims were committed to writing. What is said of him in one of the books of the Kings, may satisfy that it was at the time when his faculties were most bright and shining,

when he spake of trees from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon, to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall; and there came of all people to hear him.

The book of the Proverbs itself, seems to be a collection of the most approved things; but eminently so as pointing in many parts to the Person and office of Christ; so that as we pass through the holy volume, in the perusal of it, and discover, through the Spirit's teaching, the leading features of Jesus: we are frequently constrained to cry out, *A greater than Solomon is here.*

I shall only detain the Reader, before he enters upon the perusal, to observe that this book of instruction receives great sanction and authority from the Lord Jesus, as to the mode that is here adopted of conveying divine truths. So much was it the custom of the East to teach in this way, that it was the universal maxim. And in conformity to it, our adored Lord at one time, delivered his discourses so much in parables, that we are told, *without a parable spake he not unto them.* I only pray Him, who is the Almighty Teacher in his church, that while we read this and every other of the sacred books of God, he may so graciously give to us a right understanding in all things, that while to others it is only in parables, to us may be given, *to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven;* and that in that knowledge and enjoyment, we may find the same grace as was imparted to his disciples when he said, *Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear.*

## CHAP. I.

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*The general design of parables is here described. A number of select maxims are given, and the object of the whole volume is set forth in shewing that it is to bring men acquainted with God, as the beginning and end of all wisdom.*

**T**HE proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel;

We have here the title of the book and the name of the Author of it. But as the book itself forms a part of the sacred scriptures, and carries with it in many parts, decided testimonies of its inspiration, we should be always upon the look out for Him, on whose account all scripture was written, and for the promotion of whose glory in the salvation of his church and people all was intended. Reader! let you and I study to find Christ as we go over the book of the Proverbs. And while we are reading the Proverbs of Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel, recollect that our *Jedidiah*, our beloved of the Lord, was also the Son of David, after the flesh, and both king of Israel, and King of kings and Lord of lords. Precious Jesus! do thou, by both Writer and Reader, while we are attending to these parables, as thou didst by thy

disciples in the days of thy flesh, *when we are alone with thee, do thou expound all things to us concerning thyself.* Mark, iv. 34. 2 Sam. xii. 25.

2 To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding;

3 To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity;

4 To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion.

5 A wise *man* will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels;

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

7 ¶ The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of knowledge: *but* fools despise wisdom and instruction.

These verses seem to be designed as a preamble or general preface to the book itself. And I particularly beg the Reader to remark with me, that under this idea, a proverb is said to be *a dark saying*, intimating that there is much more in it than might at first sight be supposed. And therefore, through the whole of the proverbs, we are taught to be looking beyond the surface for the grand substance that is concealed. And this if I do not greatly err, we shall find to be Christ. He is the wisdom which is here spoken of, and for which the proverbs are given. He calls himself by the name, Luke vii. 35. Lord, I would pray, give to him that writes, and to him that reads, *a right understanding in all things*; that we may discover Christ to be both *the wisdom of God and the power of God, for salvation to every one that believeth.* 1 Cor. i. 21—24.

8 My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother:

9 For they *shall be* an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.

10 ¶ My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.

11 If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause;

12 Let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole, as those that go down into the pit:

13 We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil:

14 Cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse:

15 My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path:

16 For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood.

17 Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird.

18 And they lay wait for their *own* blood; they lurk privily for their *own* lives.

19 So *are* the ways of every one that is greedy of gain; *which* taketh away the life of the owners thereof.

The sacred writer of this book having given the preface of his book, here enters upon the subject of it; and that he might enforce what he had to say still more, he begins it with an exhortation. Under the character of an Instructor, as a father of his children, he endeavours to gain their affection by such a tender appellation, as that of a father addressing his son. And if the Reader observes, the opening of his discourse is altogether upon the plan and principles of the gospel. For it points to the corruption of the heart in the enticement of sinners, and the propensity of our nature to listen to the temptation. Among the first offices of the Holy Ghost, the convincing of sin stands pointed out by him, whose office character is that of *wisdom*. And I hope the Reader hath not now to learn that the very apprehension of Christ as a Saviour, pre-supposes that we have a thorough sense of our need of Christ in the consciousness of our being sinners. John, xiv. 7, 8.

20 ¶ Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets:

21 She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates; in the city she uttereth her words, *saying*,

22 How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?

23 Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.



24 ¶ Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;

25 But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof:

26 I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh;

27 When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you.

28 Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me:

29 For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD:

30 They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof.

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

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

33 But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.

These verses are introduced with great beauty after the former. Having in some measure prepared the heart for receiving instruction, by turning up *the fallow ground, to sow in righteousness*. Christ is here introduced in his gracious office, as calling upon the sinner, wounded under a sense of sin, *to look unto him and to be saved*. Hosea, x. 12. Isaiah, xlv. 22. I do not think it necessary to detain the Reader with a long commentary on the several parts of this divine sermon; for if (as I pray the Lord may be the case) the Lord the Holy Ghost be our Teacher, it is his gracious office to take of the things of Jesus and shew them to us. And under his teaching it will not be difficult to find Jesus in every part of it. John, xvi. 14. I must not, however, omit one observation in this place, because it is important. The word here translated, *wisdom*, is in the original, in the plural number *wisdoms*. I do not positively presume to say, wherefore it is so; but I venture to believe, that as wisdom is a well-known office-character of Jesus, as the Christ; that is in his united natures of God and man in one Person; it was intended to convey to the church, that Christ is in the abstract, all wisdoms in one; for *in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*. Coloss. ii. 3. And I am the more inclined to this opinion, because the sacred writers, in their reference to Jesus, seem to delight in plurals. We

have a beautiful example of this kind in the first Psalm. *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, &c.* The man here spoken of, can be no other than Christ, for very obvious reasons, as I have shewn in the commentary on that part of scripture. For none among the fallen sons of men can be said with truth to be blessed, but in him. But what I particularly request the Reader to observe with me now is, that the word translated in that psalm *blessed*, is also in the plural number, and implying all blessedness in one. And Christ is all this; for as blessedness doth not consist in one good thing, but a thorough and complete blessedness takes in all, so Christ and Christ alone is this: and He that is wisdom, being the essential source and fountain of all wisdom to all the different streams of it, is no less the whole sum and substance of *blessedness* in giving existence to it in all the distributions of it among his creatures. Reader! I pray you pause over the thought! And think what an infinite mind must our Jesus possess, since every portion of knowledge, and intellect, and wisdom, is derived from Him, who is in himself wisdoms. Conceive, if possible, what *blessedness* in all the fulness of infinity, must constitute Him, who is our Christ, *in whom all nations of the earth can alone be blessed!* Psalm, lxxii. 17. And Reader! do indulge me with adding one thought more for your meditation on this sweet subject, as well as my own. If Jesus be thus *wisdoms* and *blessedness* in the full aggregate of both, to the total exclusion of every other, but as derived from him; think what unspeakable felicity must it be to be interested in him, yea, to be a part in him, by virtue of our union with him, as the Head of his church, and consequently entitled to all such proportions both of wisdom and blessedness, as shall be for his glory, and his church's happiness! For we do not come to him to give us wisdom only, but for himself to be our wisdom; not only to give us blessedness, but himself to be our blessedness; and thus not only to bring us to the everlasting enjoyment of both; but to be himself the sum and substance of both, in being our wisdom, blessedness, and portion for ever. Oh! the unspeakable blessedness of Christ, well may we cry out with the apostle, *Now thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!* 2 Cor. ix. 15.

#### REFLECTIONS.

READER! Is it indeed Jesus that thus crieth without and uttereth his voice in the streets? And shall not you and I go to him, and attend to him, and listen with suitable earnestness of soul, to what this divine Teacher teacheth? Did all the earth seek to hear the wisdom of Solomon, were they gathered from every part of it to his court? and shall not we be earnest to receive instruction, when a greater than Solomon is here? Oh! thou, whose name is indeed *Wisdoms!* because nothing that is wise can be found, but in thee: do thou, blessed Jesus, while thou art calling without, incline my heart within to seek for thee as for hidden treasure, and to value thy love more than the choicest gold. And while thousands, and tens of thousands, are ignorant of thee, and know not where wisdom is to be found, and where is the place of understanding; while the depth saith, it is not in me; and the sea saith, it is not with me: oh! Lord, give me to see, that in thee are hid all the

treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and that in possessing thee, I possess all things. Be thou, Lord, to me, the Wonderful Counsellor, for then shall I understand this book of the Proverbs, the words of the wise, and their dark sayings: then, through thy grace, will my feet be kept from evil, neither shall I run into the congregation of sinners. Yes! blessed Lord, I shall delight to sit at thy footstool, to hear the gracious words which proceed from thy mouth. And I shall more and more discover in thee, that thou art all in all, the Lord, my wisdom, and my righteousness, and that thou art made of God, unto me *wisdom, and righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; and that all my glorying is in thee, O Lord.*

## CHAP. II.

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*Wisdom continueth her sermon through this chapter, which she had begun in the former. Blessings are promised to the faithful, and destruction shewn to be the sad portion of the wicked.*

**M**Y son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee;

2 So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding;

3 Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding;

4 If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures;

5 Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.

The subject continues the same as in the former chapter; and the address as from a father to a son, is carried on under the same endearing appellation, by way of enforcing what is said. And this doth not at all lessen the idea, that it is Christ who is here personated; for he fills all relations, and is included in all the charities of life. He is the everlasting Father, as well as the husband of his church, and the Brother born for adversity. Isaiah, ix. 6. Prov. xvii. 17. Isaiah, liv. 5.

6 For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.

7 He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: *he is* a buckler to them that walk uprightly.

8 He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints.

Is it not God our Father, that is here particularly spoken of? For who gave Christ to the church, but the Father? John, iii. 16. Who

was it called him in righteousness, or laid up salvation in him, and laid our iniquities upon him? Isaiah, xlii. 6. To whom is the church entrusted by Christ, and who is the Almighty Keeper of the church but the Father? John xvii. 11. Psalm, cxxi. 5. 1 Sam. ii. 9.

9 Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; *yea*, every good path.

10 ¶ When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul;

11 Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee:

12 To deliver thee from the way of the evil *man*, from the man that speaketh froward things;

How beautiful, if explained upon gospel terms, and with an eye to Christ, as wisdom, are these verses! If Christ be indeed formed in the heart, the hope of glory, then will all gracious principles be the fruit thereof. And this blessed effect differs wholly from all assumed wisdom, as much as the spring and source differs from all outward motives. Jesus becomes then in the heart the well of water, springing up to everlasting life. Well may every heart made sensible of these things, cry out with the poor Samaritan woman, Lord, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither seek elsewhere to draw. John, iv. 14, 15.

13 Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness;

14 Who rejoice to do evil, *and* delight in the frowardness of the wicked;

15 Whose ways *are* crooked, and *they* froward in their paths:

16 To deliver thee from the strange woman, *even* from the stranger *which* flattereth with her words;

17 Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God.

18 For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead.

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

20 ¶ That thou mayest walk in the way of good *men*, and keep the paths of the righteous.

21 For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it.

22 But the wicked shall be cut off from the

earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it.

I include the whole of these verses under one view, because they are all to the same effect. Where there is no regeneration of the heart, no grace, no principle, no teaching or influence of the Spirit, there will be confusion and every evil work. And where there is no awakening of the Holy Ghost, the original death by sin, is followed by eternal death in that state from which there is no return. Oh! for a part in that blessed and holy state of the first resurrection, for on such *the second death hath no power.* Rev. xx. 6.

### REFLECTIONS.

MY soul! ponder well the striking contrast which this chapter hath drawn between the righteous and the wicked; between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not!

How truly lovely is the soul that crieth after knowledge, that is, that is seeking for Jesus, as for hidden treasure. Every thing in him, and about him, is ornamental. In private life, in public station, whenever engaged, however occupied, he adorneth the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. Small, and inconsiderable as his knowledge may be in the present attainments of it, yet it will be with him as the light of the morning, that *shineth more and more unto a perfect day.*

On the other hand, how wretched is the man who is destitute of grace! Every part of his life is perverse, and every portion of his conduct crooked. The calls of God, the warnings of his providence, the alarms of death; all lose their effect upon his unthinking and worthless heart! His joy is in evil, and the frowardness of the wicked his delight. His life how wretched!—his death how fearful!

Precious Jesus! be thou my wisdom, for then shall I delight myself in the Lord, and triumph in the Holy One of Israel. Fill my soul with true understanding and knowledge, for sure I am, in thee I shall find every possible happiness of light and life, and the fulness of joy in my soul. And while the wisdom of this world gives pride to the worldly wise; and the might of this world gives confidence to the mighty, and the rich man glorieth in his riches; this will be my glory, that I understand and know thee, that thou art the Lord, and that in these things thou delightest, O Lord. Here, Lord, let my soul rest convinced, that however poor in myself, in thee I possess all things. Thou art the strength of my heart, and thou my portion for ever.

## CHAP. III.

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*The same subject is continued in this chapter as in the former; but with additional arguments. Here are many earnest exhortations to the exercise of the graces of the Holy Spirit, and the sad effects of a contrary conduct fully set forth.*

**M**Y son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments:

2 For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.

3 Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart:

4 So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man.

It was one of the great blessings of the covenant, that the Lord undertook to write his law in the minds and hearts of his people in the last days, whereby they should know him. And hence Solomon describes in these verses the blessing of such a state, and the comforts arising out of it. Jerem. xxxi. 31—34.

5 ¶ Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

Here is a divine precept, and a divine promise sweetly blended. And in many other parts of scripture we find the same confirmed. Isaiah, xlii. 16. Psalm lv. 22. 1 Peter, v. 7.

7 ¶ Be not wise in thine own eyes; fear the LORD, and depart from evil.

8 It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.

9 ¶ Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase:

10 So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.

If I do not mistake, here is a sweet reference to Christ in these verses. The first fruits offered to the Lord was to be all in faith. Thus Abel by faith offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. Heb. xi. 4. Every first fruit had certainly reference to Christ. The promise to this is striking. The barns and the wine presses shall not only recompense, but abound. It is most blessed to do all things by faith, *for whatsoever is not of faith, is sin.* Rom. xiv. 23.

11 ¶ My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction:

12 For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son *in whom* he delighteth.

The apostle quotes this passage in his epistle to the Hebrews, and

makes a beautiful comment upon it. Heb. xii. 5—11. It is blessed to be altogether patient and passive under chastisements. Not with sullemness to receive them, for this would argue a mind determined not to bow to the rod, neither with faintings to sink under them, for this would imply unbelief and distrust, as though the Lord had forgotten to be gracious; but to receive all as the chastisements of a kind and wise father, who cannot mistake the welfare of his children, and is ordering all things for their good. Jesus hath said; *As many as I love I rebuke and chasten.* Rev. iii. 19. They are chastisements, not vindictive punishments, not in a way of law judgment, for that hath been borne by Christ; but in a way of correction, to accomplish many blessed purposes in grace. Sweet thought, and ever to be kept alive in the heart.

13 ¶ Happy is the man *that* findeth wisdom, and the man *that* getteth understanding.

14 For the merchandize of it is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.

15 She is more precious than rubies: and all the things that thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.

16 Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour.

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

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

There can be no question but that the attainment of Christ and all his blessings *with* him, and *in* him, must be the summit of happiness. And it is delightful to see in these verses how sweet the correspondence is between what is here said of finding wisdom, and what the gospel speaks of finding Christ. *We have found him* (said one that had through grace made this discovery) *of whom Moses and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth.* John, i. 45. He is the goodly pearl, which the wise merchant-man long sought, and when found, sold all that he had and bought. Matt. xiii. 45, 46. And while all other pursuits, and all other attainments are found never to satisfy, but everlastingly disappoint; Jesus gives to them that seek and find him, *durable riches and righteousness.* Proverbs viii. 18, 19. Jesus is indeed the tree of life in the paradise of God, under whose shadow by faith, believers now sit and find the fruit sweet to their taste: and ere long they will sit down for ever to enjoy his whole fulness by the river of life, in the kingdom of glory. Song ii. 3. Rev. xxii. 1, 2.

19 The LORD by wisdom hath founded the

earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens.

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

There is another confirmation of Christ's office-name as *Wisdom*, for the scriptures with one voice declare that the Lord *created all things by Jesus Christ*. Ephes. iii. 9. Heb. i. 2.

21 ¶ My son, let not them depart from thine eyes: keep sound wisdom and discretion:

22 So shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck.

23 Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble.

24 When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.

These are all so many gracious lessons suited to a life of grace. The subject is still kept up and pursued, under the idea of an adopted, regenerated son, in whose heart the Spirit witnesseth that he is born of God. Rom. viii. 16.

25 Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh.

26 For the LORD shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken.

27 ¶ Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it.

28 Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee.

29 Devise not evil against thy neighbour, seeing he dwelleth securely by thee.

30 ¶ Strive not with a man without cause, if he have done thee no harm.

31 ¶ Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways.

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

33 ¶ The curse of the LORD *is* in the house of



the wicked: but he blesseth the habitation of the just.

34 Surely he scorneth the scorners: but he giveth grace unto the lowly.

35 The wise shall inherit glory: but shame shall be the promotion of fools.

Here again, as before, the blessed practical effects of vital godliness, will appear by such evidences as are here set forth. And the termination of a life of grace, and a life of ungodliness, will invariably produce the different states here described.

### REFLECTIONS.

READER! let us attend to the several very interesting subjects which arise out of this chapter, and by reading them in the sweet spirit of the gospel, to which they plainly refer, we shall through grace make no small improvement of them.

In the *first* place, while Solomon recommends such attention to the law as never to forget it; let us examine whether God the Father's promise is fulfilled in our experience, and he hath *put his law in our inward parts and written it in our hearts*. Oh! the blessed work of regeneration, when *the heart of stone is taken away, and the heart of flesh given*. And when the spirituality of God's law is so read and understood in the soul, that Christ is discovered to be *the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*.

In the *next* place let us see to it, Reader, that we have such confidence, and such well grounded trust in God's mercy through Christ, as to commit every thing for time and for eternity into his almighty hands; for this will be *to honour him with our whole substance, and with the first fruits of all our increase*.

And as a *third* improvement from this chapter, let us see to it, that as we eye the Lord in all his providences, so we never lose sight of his government in all his chastisements. Not to feel the rod, or not to suppose chastening to be grievous, would be unbecoming; and not to enquire into the causes of the Lord's affliction, would be to forget the improvement intended to be made from it; and not to pray for a deliverance from trouble would be unsuitable to our circumstances. But to bless God for his attention in sending the affliction—to justify the Lord in the appointment of it—to acknowledge that he is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works—and while the Lord is correcting, we are cleaving the closer to him; and to lean upon his promises, when matters are most dark and discouraging; this will be neither to despise his chastening, nor faint under the pressure.

Lastly and above all—while Solomon in this chapter recommends so earnestly to find wisdom and to get understanding; let us see to it that nothing satisfies our souls short of the knowledge and attainment of Christ. He is the wisdom indeed, which in the possession of must make the soul truly happy. In the constitution of his person, the suitable

ness, and all-sufficiency of his salvation; his offices, characters, relations, the manifold wisdom of Jehovah is made known. Reader! may the Lord the Spirit impress it both upon your heart and mine, to find him who is truly and emphatically wisdom himself, and we shall then enter into the full apprehension of those sweet scriptures, *the merchandize of it is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.*

## CHAP. IV.

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*This chapter hath much the same tendency as the former. It contains an exhortation to the pursuit of wisdom. And towards the close of the Chapter the sad effects of a contrary study is pointed out in strong characters.*

**H**EAR, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding.

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

There is but little variety in what is here said by way of enforcing what is taught, unless it be the consideration arising from the repetition of the request. But the tenderness of the Father is brought in by way of intimating both the expediency of the precept, and the real regard with which it is accompanied. And who can overlook, while reading it, the solicitude and love of God our Father, whose endearments are held forth to us under the sweet image of *the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort.* 2 Cor. i. 3.

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

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

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

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

7 Wisdom is the principal thing: *therefore* get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.

8 Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her.

9 She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.

If we pass over Solomon king of Israel, and contemplate Christ as mediator in what is here said, it will help the mind to very pleasing improvement. The love that God the Father had to the person of Christ as Mediator, is set forth in many parts of scripture; and indeed of itself it forms a blessed subject. Isaiah, xlii. i. John, x. 17. I cannot think that Solomon had any reference to Bath-sheba his mother in those words; neither, if read with an eye to Christ, did Jesus mean the Virgin Mary, the natural mother of Christ. But the church, whom Paul the apostle declares to be the mother of us all, is intended here, and consequently of Christ also after the flesh. In proof read those scriptures. Gal. iv. 26. Matt. xii. 49, 50.

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

11 I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths.

12 When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straightened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble.

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

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

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

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

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

We have here the same blessed instructions given in other words, with the motives which ought to prompt to the due attention which they so justly demand. And under the same idea that Christ is all along held forth as wisdom, nothing can be more suited to the pure truths of the gospel than what is here said.

18 But the path of the just *is* as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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

In these verses the contrast is finely drawn, between the state of a

justified soul in Christ, and the unawakened, unsanctified soul of the wicked. Jesus is both the light and the life of his people. And the progressive state of souls justified in his blood and righteousness, is like the advance of the morning to meridian brightness. But on the contrary, the darkness at which the ungodly stumble is growing to more and more darkness, where even the light is darkness. Job x. 22.

20 ¶ My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings.

21 Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart.

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

23 ¶ Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it *are* the issues of life.

24 Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee.

25 Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.

26 Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.

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

There is not much variety in these verses, but they contain the same wholesome admonitions. They are all in perfect conformity to the gospel precepts. And while they very strongly recommend an uniform attention to keep the heart with all diligence, they imply the necessity of looking to God to keep it, *because out of it are the issues of life*. The apostle recommends diligence in the work of grace upon the same principle, because he saith, that it is *God that worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure*. Phil. ii. 13.

#### REFLECTIONS.

How delightful is it to see the beautiful similitude the wise man adopts in this book of Proverbs, by way of recommending attention to this great subject of getting wisdom and understanding. Beholding Christ as the pearl of great price, every one engaged in the pursuit of getting him, may be justly compared to the wise merchant-man. The treasure is hidden in the field of the scripture and must be sought for, if obtained, with suited diligence, and earnestness of inquiry. And though it is without money and without price, freely given, and as freely to be enjoyed; yet like the merchant-man, there must be an early search, a daily enquiry, and a constant pursuit. Happy the souls that so search as to obtain, and so seek as to find. In possessing him they possess all things, and find a treasure that fadeth not away. Reader! have you

found Christ? Is he the pearl of great price in your esteem? Oh! the blessedness of such a discovery! Jesus will be, as this sweet chapter expresseth it, an ornament of grace to the head, and a crown of glory will he deliver to them that love him. He saith himself, *hold fast that which thou hast; let no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out.*

## CHAP. V.

### CONTENTS.

*We have in this Chapter, and in a similar strain to the former chapter, an exhortation to the study of wisdom: and both the blessed effects of that study and the sad consequences of the neglect of it, are strikingly set forth.*

**M**Y son, attend unto my wisdom, and bow thine ear to my understanding :

2 That thou mayest regard discretion, and that thy lips may keep knowledge.

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

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

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

6 Lest thou shouldest ponder the path of life, her ways are moveable, that thou canst not know them.

It forms a delightful feature through the whole of this book of God; that the instructions given in it are all with a view to make the soul wise unto salvation, through the faith that is in Jesus Christ. For as the one great object to which the wise man directs the whole attention is wisdom, or Christ under the character of wisdom; so the precepts he enjoins are all with an eye to him. I hope the Reader will not have overlooked this distinguishing character in the whole book. It is as if Solomon had said: If, my son, thou attend to wisdom, and art sweetly taught of Jesus, then will all those blessed effects follow, which mark the life of the faithful. *Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.* 1 Tim. iv. 8.

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

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

9 Lest thou give thine honour unto others, and thy years unto the cruel :

10 Lest strangers be filled with thy wealth : and thy labours *be* in the house of a stranger ;

11 And thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed,

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

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

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

I desire the Reader to remark with me the alteration of persons with which this portion of Solomon's discourse begins. In the former it seems to have been his address to a single person, but here it is to more than one. But the instructions are the same, and the motives made use of are the same. Perhaps there is no particular reason for the change, unless it be supposed, which I confess I am not a little inclined to think, that the sacred writer upon many occasions, as he passed on in these discourses, had in view, the person of Christ ; and now the people of Christ in him. But whether this be or not, it is always profitable to a child of God to eye Christ in every thing as first in priority of order ; and then his children, his seed, his church, in him. Psalm lxxxix. 1—4.

15 ¶ Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well.

16 Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, *and* rivers of waters in the streets.

17 Let them be only thine own, and not strangers' with thee.

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

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

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

21 For the ways of man *are* before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings.

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

23 He shall die without instruction; and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.

If we read this passage *spiritually* it will not be the less beautiful afterwards, to take it *literally*; for in both views there is great loveliness in it. If Jesus be my fountain, and the church saith he is (Song iv. 15.) then from him, and in him, will all my springs be. And in this sense he will be my own: for as I am his by purchase and by gift; so Christ is mine by gift, and by marriage, having betrothed himself to his people for ever. Hosea ii. 19. And surely such an alliance will induce faithfulness both to the Lord, and to his people. Who takes a more effectual method to observe fidelity in all the departments of chastity, and the several branches of moral life, than the soul that is faithful to Jesus? Dear Lord! be thou to me all I need, and then by thy Spirit and the preventing and restraining influences of thy grace, I shall be following the apostle's maxim both in thinking and in doing, *whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report.* Philip. iv. 8.

### REFLECTIONS.

PRECIOUS Jesus! at the very mention of thy name, how do all lesser objects lose their interest; and what an everlasting security is there found in thee, while living upon thy fulness, and deriving all strength for the practice of every social and religious obligation, in the communications of thy grace! Yes, blessed Lord, the cisterns of my poor soul, which thou hast filled, shall make me love to run to the fountain head, beholding from whence they flow, and how they are supplied continually by thee. And while thou art richly imparting all suited grace from thy fulness, to supply my necessities; gladly will I communicate the joyful tidings around, that the reports of Jesus and his glorious redemption, like rivers of waters in the street, may be circulated in every direction. I will tell to all, as far as my poor stammering tongue can utter, the truth that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. And I will proclaim far and near, and in every direction, that he is a fountain open and not sealed, where every poor needy sinner like myself, whose heart is made willing in the day of the Lord's power, may freely come to wash and be made white in the blood of the Lamb; and to take of the water of life freely when the soul is thirsting for Jesus, as the hart for the water brooks. Oh! thou fountain of Jehovah! cause my soul to drink largely of that river whose streams make glad the city of God.

## CHAP. VI.

### CONTENTS.

*Under the similitude of a surety Solomon opens this chapter, with shewing the consequence of such engagements. He follows up the chapter with divers cautions, which are founded in much wisdom.*

**M**Y son, if thou be surety for thy friend, *if* thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger

2 Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, thou art taken with the words of thy mouth.

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

4 Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eyelids.

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

I cannot possibly read these verses, expressive as they are of the tender concern of a watchful Father over his Son, how he enters into suretyship engagements, with the consequences of them, without having my soul immediately directed to him, who, at the call of his and our Father, stood up the willing, voluntary surety, of his people from everlasting. Surely, thou blessed Jesus, it was thou that was the first surety the world ever heard of, and which when first made known in heaven excited the everlasting wonder of all the angels of light. And of thee it may truly be said, when thou didst strike hands with thy Father in confirmation of the treaty, it was both for thy friend, and yet for a stranger. Friends thou hast called us through thy gracious condescension, (John xv. 13—15.) and yet we were strangers and enemies to God by wicked works, when thou camest to seek and save us by thy blood. Rom. v. 8. Ephes. ii. 12, 13. And though not snared, as this scripture terms it, with the words of thy mouth; yet thou wast taken into engagements by thy promises of love, which thou couldest not afterwards break, neither didst thou wish to break; for the baptism thou hadst in consequence thereof to be baptised with, thou didst say, thou wert straitened until that it was accomplished. Oh! the love of God which passeth knowledge. Luke xii. 50.

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

7 Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler,

8 Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.

9 How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?

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

11 So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.

These are beautiful scriptures in which the Lord sends his people to



gather instruction from the inferior creatures of his creation. For in point of divine knowledge by reason of the fall, man is sunk lower than the instinct of the brute, in providing for his own eternal safety. We have another beautiful passage to the same effect. Jerem. viii. 7.

12 ¶ A naughty person, a wicked man, walketh with a froward mouth.

13 He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers;

14 Frowardness is in his heart, he deviseth mischief continually; he soweth discord.

15 Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly; suddenly shall he be broken without remedy.

One might be prompted to suppose that the sacred Writer had in view, when he thus expressed himself, the seed of the serpent. A naughty person, in scripture language, is a *man of Belial*; and so it might have been rendered. And of such characters it is not sufficiently expressive to say, that they may commit error, but in fact frowardness is in the heart of all such; it forms their very nature. The apostle, under the inspiration of the Spirit, called one of these men of Belial, *child of the devil*. Acts xiii. 10. See another instance. John viii. 44. And the beloved apostle draws the line of distinction between the children of the kingdom, and the children of the evil one. 1 John iii. 10.

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

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

18 An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief.

19 A false witness *that* speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.

Here are the fruits of such a man's conduct as Solomon described, And the Holy Ghost hath given a fuller catalogue, Gal. v. 19—21. And as a beautiful contrast, in the fruit of the Holy Ghost upon the souls of his people, he adds the 22d and 23d verses in the same chapter.

20 ¶ My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother:

21 Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck.

22 When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and *when* thou awakest, it shall talk with thee.

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

24 To keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman.

25 ¶ Lust not after her beauty in thine heart ; neither let her take thee with her eyelids.

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

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

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

29 So he that goeth in to his neighbour's wife ; whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent.

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

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

32 *But* whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding : he *that* doeth it destroyeth his own soul.

33 A wound and dishonour shall he get ; and his reproach shall not be wiped away.

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

35 He wilt not regard any ransom : neither will he rest content, though thou givest many gifts.

I make no interruption through the whole of this paragraph, because the whole forms but one and the same sermon. The binding those graces upon the heart, and wearing them about the neck, is similar to what Moses commanded the Israelites concerning the law. Deut. vi. 6—9. And Reader ! doth it not suggest to the recollection Aaron, in his typifying the Lord Jesus, going in before the mercy-seat with the names of the twelve tribes on his breast ? And doth not Jesus bind his people to him now in all his priestly-office. Exod. xxviii. 29. Rev. viii. 3. What a relief would the recollection of this be to a poor believer in every trying hour, could he but steadily by faith look within the veil, whither our forerunner is for us entered, and behold him thus engaged ? And what a blessed work would it be of God the Spirit

upon the heart, if the believer could also by faith take to him, and bind to him, every thing that concerns the enjoyment of Jesus and his great salvation, to lead him when he went forth; to keep him when he slept, and to talk with him when he was awake.

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### REFLECTIONS.

PRECIOUS Lord Jesus! I feel constrained while reading what is here said of a surety, and the sad state in which such an one involves himself, to call to mind what thy love must have been, which prompted thine infinite breast to enter into suretyship engagements for thy people, and what a state of unequalled sorrows the gracious act induced. In the contemplation of it, I cannot but pass over every other subject which this chapter might otherwise awaken to profit, to consider the greatness of thy love, and the greatness of the calamities which it brought to thy holy soul. Never surely was there an act so truly blessed, gracious, and beneficent as this. In this one act thou didst put thyself in the law-place, and room of all thy chosen. And by that act thou didst undertake both for our debt and for our duty; both to cancel sin and to fulfil all righteousness. And now, Lord, in such views of thee and thine unparalleled mercy, where shall I look but to thee? To whom shall I come but to Jesus? Hast thou struck out my name from the dreadful bond debt where it stood, and where it must for ever have stood but for thee, hast thou paid it all, cancelled it all; and when I lay for ever insolvent, hast thou redeemed me from all? And shall I, can I reject thine infinite love, and go about to establish mine own righteousness, and forget the wormwood and the gall, the prison and the pit from which thou hast freed me? Oh! infinite love, passing all knowledge. Let me, blessed Redeemer, since thou hast brought me off, and brought me out, let me live to thy glory and to thy praise; and among all thy ransomed, bless for ever the almighty surety whose hand was stricken for such a stranger, and whose soul travail became so exquisite to redeem me from death. May the life thus saved by grace be spent to thy service, and since by purchase and redemption I am thine, may my soul bless thee, love thee, and delight in thee for ever.

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## CHAP. VII.

### CONTENTS.

*In this Chapter under the representation of an harlot, the deception that is practised upon our fallen nature is strikingly set forth, and the departure from God in sin and uncleanness is in strong colours painted.*

**M**Y son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee.

2 Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye.

3 Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart.

4 Say unto wisdom, 'Thou *art* my sister; and call understanding *thy* kinswoman:

5 That they may keep thee from the strange woman, from the stranger *which* flattereth with her words.

The Chapter is opened in a general preface, by way of preparing the mind for the subject that is to follow. And there are several endearing titles made use of, by way yet more of enforcing the subject. But what I would particularly request the Reader to attend to in those appellations of sister and kinswoman, is the very interesting matter they contain considered with an eye to Christ. Jesus, in the song of loves calls his church his sister, as well as his spouse. For as he took upon him our common nature, so he hath declared that whosoever doeth the will of his Father which is in heaven, the same is his brother, and sister, and mother. See Song iv. 9. Matt. xii. 50. And as Christ hath condescended to put himself into all relations with his people, so he authorizeth his people to look up to him under all relations. But we must not stop here in contemplating the nature of the relationship, but go on and consider the cause for which the Lord hath put himself into these condescending affinities, and is not ashamed to call his people brethren; namely, that they may come to him under these characters, in order to be kept by him from spiritual fornication and every species of apostacy. Blessed Jesus! it is delightful to see how thy people are kept by thee, and that in thee all their security is found.

6 ¶ For at the window of my house I looked through my casement,

7 And beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding,

8 Passing through the street near her corner; and he went the way to her house.

9 In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night:

10 ¶ And, behold, there met him a woman *with* the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart.

11 (She *is* loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house:

12 ¶ Now *is she* without, now in the streets, and lieth in wait at every corner.)

13 So she caught him, and kissed him, *and* with an impudent face said unto him,

14 *I have* peace offerings with me; this day have I payed my vows.

15 Therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy face, and I have found thee.

16 I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved *works*, with fine linen of Egypt.

17 I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.

18 Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning: let us solace ourselves with loves.

19 For the good man *is* not at home, he is gone a long journey.

20 He hath taken a bag of money with him, *and* will come home at the day appointed.

21 With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him.

22 ¶ He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks;

23 Till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it *is* for his life.

Who can read this account, and call to mind the numberless scenes of a like nature that are going on every day in every town, city, and perhaps even village of the whole world, in the different transactions of sin and uncleanness, but must feel affected. Who that knows in himself what fallen nature is, or beholds in others the dreadful instances of the deceitfulness of the human heart, but must tremble. And who that conceives what a mass of such perpetrations of wickedness is continually coming up before God, but must be humbled to the very dust of the earth in the consciousness of universal depravity. Alas! what is man in his highest attainments. But is there not beside the particular feature of sin in uncleanness here pointed out, is there not a spiritual subject opened to our meditation in relation to our whole nature departing from Christ our husband? Jesus has gone for a little space, and the good man will return at the time appointed. But while the bridegroom tarrieth we all slumber and sleep. Oh! Lord keep the souls of thy redeemed in the hour, and from the power of temptation. Let us not go forth as the daughter of Jacob did to see the daughters of the land,

so as to seek danger and then fall by it; but make us chaste keepers at home, and living upon Jesus. Gen. xxxiv. 1, 2. Matt. xxv. 5.

24 ¶ Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth.

25 Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths.

26 For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong *men* have been slain by her.

27 Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.

The conclusion is very beautiful and striking. And if we behold Christ as speaking to his people in these words, there is somewhat truly affectionate and interesting to work upon the mind in due attention to them. The obedience to what is here said, in leading to Christ, is life. The disobedience is, and must be, death. Rom. vi. 23.

#### REFLECTIONS.

MY soul! pause over this chapter. Behold what a strong and affecting representation it holds forth of the carnal, graceless, and ungodly. In every state, and in every stage of life, they are the same. Young persons, from the heat of youth, and corruption of nature, are most exposed to the awful ruin here set forth; but all periods of life are open to the particular and special temptations of it. And is this human nature altogether! Are such portraits of it taken from life? Do all prefer the momentary enjoyment of the body, to the everlasting welfare of the soul! Can nothing but fleshly lusts which war against the soul satisfy them? And is it, my soul, a most certain and unquestionable truth, that they that are in the flesh cannot please God. Pause, my soul! and in contemplating such a picture of human life, see whether what Paul saith of the Corinthians doth not correspond to thy case and circumstances. *And such were some of you.*

Lord! give me to hear and feel what the close of this sweet chapter utters, and from henceforth to attend to the words of my God. And oh! ye young men, see, from what is here set forth, the danger to which you are exposed, and flee youthful lusts which war against the soul. *I have written unto you young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abideth in you.* Oh! think how blessed it must be to remember the Creator in the days of youth. And what a blessedness in having Christ for a portion, that the age of life may be accompanied with grace, and the knowledge and enjoyment of Jesus become the portion for ever.

## CHAP. VIII.

## CONTENTS.

*We have in this Chapter a most sublime account of some ancient events in eternity, and whi h, under the character of wisdom, the great speaker is calling upon the church to attend to. From beginning to end the subject is carried on by one and the same person. The chapter closeth with an exhortation.*

**D**OTH not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice?

2 She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths.

3 She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors.

4 Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man.

The chapter opens with the cry of wisdom, and both the earnestness of the subject, and the earnestness with which it is enforced, recommend the whole to our attention. I do not presume to speak with a positiveness of determination; the general design of this Commentary being more to enquire than assert; more to seek the teaching of the Spirit, to be led by him into all truth, than to lead the Reader's mind concerning truth. But with all humbleness of soul while going over this most sublime chapter, I would venture to say, that as it appears to me the whole contents of it are concerning Christ as God-man Mediator, set up from everlasting. And under this one well known title, and office character of wisdom, Christ is here calling upon his church to attend to some things spoken respecting himself, and the Father's appointment of him to this office, which, if he had not communicated to the church, and by his holy Spirit given an understanding to know, never could have been known or believed. Hence the chapter begins with the cry of this glorious person, and the subject is proposed in a way of question, Doth not wisdom cry? Is it not plain enough to be heard in the numberless ways by which Christ as Mediator is proclaimed, throughout the whole book of God? What indeed doth the Bible treat of beside? There is nothing in it from beginning to end but Jehovah's love, and mercy, and grace, and favour, in the gift of his Son for the salvation of sinners; and the glories of Christ's person, and the grace, and love of his heart in voluntarily standing up their great surety, and Saviour in redemption. Is not the whole voice of wisdom lifted up to proclaim these things? And to whom is salvation thus proclaimed, and the Lord Jesus the great author of it set forth, but to you O ye sons of men, that need both Christ and his salvation so very highly?

5 O ye simple, understand wisdom: and, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart.

6 ¶ Hear; for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips *shall be* right things.

7 For my mouth shall speak truth; and wickedness *is* an abomination to my lips.

8 All the words of my mouth *are* in righteousness; *there is* nothing froward or perverse in them.

9 They *are* all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge.

10 ¶ Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold.

11 For wisdom *is* better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it.

Here we have both the glories of Christ, and the wretchedness of man strikingly represented. Jesus, well knowing how deaf and senseless our poor fallen nature is, and that unconscious of our own misery, and therefore unwilling to be prevailed upon to listen to what is proposed for our good, first declares to us our simplicity, and then the infinite importance of the things which he is going to declare to us. Excellent things they may well be called, for what can be equally excellent as the glories of his person, the riches of his grace, his suitableness to poor sinners, and the everlasting riches the possession of him must impart? And excellent things these are also in the view of the Father's appointment of them for poor sinners, and the Father's will and delight that they should be received by poor sinners, and made use of for his glory and the sinner's joy. Reader! are not these things excellent things, and right things, and coming from the lip of truth? And further, allow me to ask whether there be an apprehension of them as such in your soul? Hath the loud cry of Jesus reached *your* ear? Hath the voice of understanding been heard in the chambers of your *heart*? Do you from day to day with the *eye* of faith behold Jesus standing in the top of high places; that is by way of ordinances in the gates of his word, in the ministry of his paths, and both at the entering in, and going out of his providences, in all that is going on in the world? Surely it is in all these, and by all these, Jesus cries and calls upon the sons of men. Neither is there a faculty of the mind, in the hearing ear, the seeing eye, and the understanding heart, but what hath daily appeals made to each and to all, to listen to the heavenly preacher, and to be made wise unto salvation through the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

12 ¶ I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions.

13 The fear of the LORD *is* to hate evil: pride,



and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.

14 Counsel *is* mine, and sound wisdom: I *am* understanding; I have strength.

This is a short but very comprehensive statement of who Christ is, and what is in him. Observe, he doth not say that he will give wisdom only, but that he is wisdom itself. He doth not declare that he, and he only, imparteth understanding, but that he himself is understanding. There is a vast deal more in these expressions than simply giving promises concerning them. For if Jesus be himself in the abstract these things, then must it undeniably follow, that neither wisdom nor understanding can be elsewhere, but in Christ. And it must further follow, that if Christ be both wisdom and understanding, in possessing him we possess all with him. Oh! precious wisdom! give me to know thee, and so to know thee, as to be sensible of my union and interest with thee, and in thee. Then shall I enter into a right apprehension of those excellent things of the love of the Father, Son, and Spirit towards poor sinners, which thou hast come forth to proclaim, and which in possession secures the everlasting happiness of thy redeemed, in time, and to all eternity.

15 ¶ By me kings reign, and princes decree justice.

16 ¶ By me princes rule, and nobles, *even* all the judges, of the earth.

Reader! do pause over these verses, and in the midst of admiring and adoring Christ in his sovereign distinction of character, as the Wisdom-Mediator, here behold him also as the Power-Mediator of God for salvation, to every one that believeth. 1 Cor. i. 24. There is nothing more refreshing to the soul than the contemplation of Jesus in his mediatorial kingdom and government, the church's head and king in Zion. And what I particularly beg the Reader not to lose sight of, in this glorious distinction of character in our Jesus is, that Christ being king of Zion, by whom kings reign and princes decree justice, is Jehovah's king in Zion. It is Jehovah that hath set him there, and set him as his king in Zion. For so he saith, Psm. ii. 6. For over and above his natural and essential right to all sovereignty and supremacy in common with the other persons of the Godhead as God, our Jesus hath a *donative* right as Mediator-head of the church, to this universal plenitude of power. *All power*, said Christ, in the moment of his ascension, *is given unto me, in heaven and in earth.* Matt. xxviii. 18. *Given* unto him, that is, as Mediator. Both for the *reward* of his redemption-work, and for the purposes of *giving* out all that should be needful in grace here, and glory to his people hereafter. I pray the Reader to be sure and keep this in remembrance; for it forms the sweetest view of Jesus in this almightiness of power, in that what he is in this light he is for his people. *He hath power over all flesh to give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given him.* John xvii. 2. And while to the providential events that are going on in the world, from the government of kings to the numbering of the hairs of our

head, it is Jesus ordains, di-poseth, commands, controuls, and appoints all; think, Reader, what a sweet thought this is also, that this sovereign power of Jesus is no less to gather to himself a church; to call poor sinners, to comfort distressed saints; to stop the proud man's oppression, and to lift up the humble from the dust. Precious, powerful Saviour! manifest, Lord, thy sovereignty by reigning in me, and ruling in me, and bringing every thought and imagination of my heart into subjection to the sceptre of thy grace.

17 I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me.

18 ¶ Riches and honour *are* with me; *yea*, durable riches and righteousness.

19 My fruit *is* better than gold, *yea*, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver.

20 I lead in the way of righteousness; in the midst of the paths of judgment:

21 That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures.

Reader! when Jesus saith, as he doth in the first of these verses, that he loves them that love him, do not imagine that it is meant to say, that our love of him becomes the cause of his love to us; for if we love him it is because he first loved us. 1 John iv. 19. And certain it is that his love to us, and for us, is the sole cause of ours. Nay, more than this: if Jesus had not done more than merely looking upon us with love, and by his grace, shedding abroad his love in our hearts by his Holy Spirit, he had not subdued the natural enmity of our nature against him, and both planted love in us towards him, and drawn out that love in exercise upon him, never should we have loved him, notwithstanding all that he hath done for us, to all eternity. By what the loving and all lovely Redeemer here saith, of loving them that love him, we are to understand that in those precious souls where a love to him is shewn, as he himself is the author as well as the object of that love, such may be well assured that he loveth them who love him. And Jesus means, no doubt, at the same time to say by the expression, that he values such love, and his eye is continually upon it. And he will preserve it and keep it alive, and when they seem to feel their love towards him cool, still he will not suffer the flame to go out. Sweet thought to cherish. Song viii. 7. And see, Reader! what blessings are held forth to the lovers of Jesus, here are durable riches and righteousness. Not the fleeting, dying, transitory enjoyments of the world! Not the silver and gold of Peru! Not the righteousness of creatures, nor the bread of creatures which perisheth with using. But the durable riches of Christ's blood and righteousness which are for ever, and the salvation which cannot be abolished. Oh! what fruit can be equal to the fruit of the Spirit, what revenue of choice silver and gold, to the possession of the everlasting income of Christ's righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost. Yes, precious Jesus, thine is substance indeed, to all who possess thee and thy treasures. All other attain-

ments are hollow, unsubstantial, and insecure. Reader! what saith your soul's experience to these things? Do you enjoy Christ; is he your portion, your treasure, your happiness, your substance? If your heart can answer *yes* to the enquiry, then will you have a better apprehension of these things, than by any words which I can make use of, to shew the blessedness of their state, who in the love of Christ, and the possession of Christ, and an interest in his blood and righteousness, find a revenue indeed, of durable riches and pleasure.

22 ¶ The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old.

23 I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.

24 When *there were* no depths, I was brought forth; when *there were* no fountains abounding with water.

25 Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth:

26 While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world.

27 When he prepared the heavens, I *was* there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth:

28 When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep:

29 When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth:

30 Then I was by him, *as* one brought up *with him*: and I was daily *his* delight, rejoicing always before him;

31 Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights *were* with the sons of men.

In these few verses are contained very many of the most sublime truths of the gospel, if we consider (as I have been all along considering through the chapter), that it is Jesus as Mediator, God and man in one person, here speaking to his church of himself and of his Father. In this sense Christ was indeed possessed, set up, constituted and determined upon in the beginning of his ways. Set up secretly, not as yet openly to the church, but secretly in the divine decrees. And set up, not as God only, for then in this case the expression would not be suited to the divine nature, for how can God be said to be set up, who

inhabiteth eternity. Neither as man only, for how could man be set up as man from everlasting. But in both natures as God-man Mediator he might be said to be set up, and possessed in the divine mind from all eternity. And in this sense also Christ might be said to be set up as the Wisdom-Christ, the pattern and sampler of the future creation of man. Paul, speaking to the same effect saith, that he is the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature. Coloss. i. 15. Intimating that though there is nothing visible in God, yet there was an *holy thing*, so called, Luke i. 35, to be openly born in after ages, which subsisted in the Son of God; and in this union of character, the Wisdom-Mediator elect stood by, when there were no depths, nor fountains abounding with water, and before an atom of the dust of the world was made. And in this sense also the expression *as one brought up with him*, is plain and intelligible. For the sacred persons of the God-head had not then gone forth in acts of creation. The Son of God had not then taken into union with himself the manhood. But the contemplation of the future event of this mysterious union with all the blessed consequences of it, in the glories of the Mediator, and Jehovah's glory in him, together with all the salvation of his church; these made the Mediator Jehovah's delight, and the Mediator's delights were in contemplating his love and duty to his Father in redemption-work, and the final happiness of his church, thus rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth, and his delights were with the sons of men. The same word rendered *brought up* in this chapter, is in the book of the Canticles, chap. vii. 1. translated *cunning workmen*; meaning, jointly concerned in the works of creation, redemption, providence, and grace. As one brought up with him; wrapt up in the very bosom of the Father, embosomed, if the expression be allowable. So that there are *two* most blessed and glorious truths here contained. The sacred persons were unceasingly enjoying and solacing themselves in one another. This is *one* sweet thought. And the *other* is, that one of their enjoyments arose from the salvation they had determined for our nature. I was daily his delight, said Jesus; and my delights were with the sons of men.

32 Now therefore hearken unto me; O ye children: for blessed *are they that keep my ways*.

33 Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not,

34 Blessed *is* the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.

35 For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD.

36 But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death.

The chapter sweetly concludes as it begun. Christ as Wisdom Mediator having called aloud to the church to listen to him, and having

opened his commission and shewn his love to his people, and the blessedness of knowing him; now folds up the whole in an earnest exhortation that his church will listen to him; and declares the happy effects of following his advice, and the awful consequence of rejecting it, in becoming their own soul's murderers.

### REFLECTIONS.

AND now, Reader! having gone over this blessed chapter, pause and enquire at your own heart what are your views concerning the contents of it? Doth it strike your mind that the wisdom here spoken of, and here speaking, is the Wisdom-Mediator the Lord our righteousness, thus unfolding the sweet and secret transactions in that high character of God-man, which took place before the world began? Was the Son of God thus constituted, thus appointed, and by the union of natures, as the Redeemer elect, thus possessed by Jehovah in the beginning of his ways, and before his works of old? And was it indeed, thou blessed Jesus, was it thou that didst then stand intentionally, as thou didst afterwards stand openly and in reality, in the streets of thy city Jerusalem, and speaking to thy church in all these endearing terms, to invite poor sinners to be happy in thy blood and righteousness. Oh! Lord, cause poor sinners then, by the sweet constraining influences of thy Holy Spirit, to listen to thy call, and to regard thy gracious invitation. Cause both the Writer and the Reader of these lines, if consistent with thy holy counsel and will, to enter into an heartfelt apprehension of all these precious truths connected with the knowledge of thyself, and the enjoyment also; that thy love may be so shed abroad in our hearts that we may inherit substance, and that thou thyself mayest be our treasure and fill all of them. Oh! precious Lord! let a daily knowledge of thee, and a daily enjoyment of thee be our portion; for then will all these blessings follow, and we shall find indeed that riches and honor are with thee; yea, *durable riches and righteousness.*

## CHAP. IX.

### CONTENTS.

*In this chapter we have set before us the very different proposals of wisdom and folly. And we are shewn no less, how certainly the former leads to happiness, and the latter to misery.*

**W**ISDOM hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars.

2 She hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table.

3 She hath sent forth her maidens: she crieth upon the highest places of the city,

4 ¶ Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither.

as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him,

5 Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine *which* I have mingled.

6 Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding.

We must still behold Christ under the office character of Wisdom, proclaiming grace and a fulness of blessings to his church and people. The house here said to be built with seven pillars, and the feast here said to be furnished, and the invitation sent forth for guests with the blessedness of those who accept thereof, and are made the partakers of it; these are plain representations of the gospel fulness, and the infinite mercy provided for poor sinners in Jesus. The house which Jesus hath built in the body of his temple, is the whole church at large; and the seven pillars spoken of, whether intended as an indefinite number to represent the whole, or referring by any allusion to what is said of the seven spirits which are said to be before the throne, the sense is the same. The Holy Ghost hath explained the whole of this subject to the church, when saying by his servant Paul, that it is *built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone, in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.* Ephes. ii. 20, 21. And that Christ, the Wisdom-Mediator hath prepared and built the whole, the Holy Ghost confirmed, when drawing a comparison between Moses as a servant in this house, and Christ as the Lord of this house; and determining the glory of Christ therefrom as proving his Godhead by having built all things. Heb. iii. 3, 4. Perhaps by the seven pillars may be intended to represent the seven-fold gifts of the Holy Ghost. Rev. i. 4. And we know that the whole gospel is uniformly represented throughout the Bible, under the similitude of a rich feast. Jesus hath prepared it, and it is he which giveth it. He hath mingled it also. For here is his body broken, and his blood shed; his flesh being meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed, to all that partake. And it is mingled as the paschal feast, which was typical of it set forth; for it is received by faith with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. A whole unleavened Christ into a broken, leavened, contrite heart. The righteousness, peace, and joy, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, are the blessed food of the soul, received, and lived upon by faith; when the poor sinner is made to see and feel his need, and turns in at wisdom's gracious invitation to the rich table. Isaiah xxv. 6—8. Exod. xii. 7, 12. 1 Cor. v. 7, 8. The servants sent forth to call in the guests correspond to the gospel call by the ministers, and the plentiful means adopted to bring in the objects, for whom both the house and the feast are prepared; namely, the poor and the needy, the wretched and the miserable. Luke xiv. 16—24.

7 He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame; and he that rebuketh a wicked *man* getteth himself a blot.

8 Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.

9 Give *instruction* to a wise *man*, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just *man*, and he will increase in learning.

10 The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy *is* understanding.

11 For by me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy life shall be increased.

12 If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself: but *if* thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear *it*.

These are so many various ways of setting forth the happy consequences of those, that at wisdom's call are made wise unto salvation. They find all the blessed effects of that grace in the heart, in following what is here said, and giving themselves up to the guidance of wisdom.

13 ¶ A foolish woman *is* clamorous: *she is* simple, and knoweth nothing.

14 For she sitteth at the door of her house, on a seat in the high places of the city,

15 To call passengers who go right on their ways:

16 ¶ Whoso *is* simple, let him turn in hither: and *as for* him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him,

17 Stolen waters are sweet, and bread *eaten* in secret is pleasant.

18 But he knoweth not that the dead *are* there; and *that* her guests *are* in the depths of hell.

We have in these verses the contrast to what was given in the former part of the chapter. Under the figure of a foolish woman, meaning ignorance altogether, is set forth the rival of Christ, the god of this world, blending the human mind with the delusions of his several temptations. 2 Cor. iv. 4. The similitude of sitting at the door of her house to call passengers, who are going the right way, to turn aside, and the proposals she makes of stolen waters and bread in secret; these are most apt representations of the devices of Satan. For I would have the Reader observe that the call here given, is given to such as are going the *right way*. Yes! Satan never gives any interruption to his servants, while going the *wrong way* in his drudgery. *While the strong man armed keepeth the palace, the goods are in peace.*

Luke xi. 21. But if wisdom's call be heard among the household of Satan, where the Lord Jesus causeth it to be heard, for *we all*, (saith an apostle,) *had our conversation in times past with the children of disobedience.* Ephes. ii. 2, 3. No sooner doth a poor sinner attempt to run out of his kingdom, than all hell is up in arms to bring him back. And what a correspondence is here made of stolen waters and bread in secret, rendered pleasant *to the lusts of the flesh and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.* 1 John ii. 16. And how surely are the *wages of sin death.* Rom. vi. 23.

### REFLECTIONS.

READER! do not too hastily dismiss this chapter. Can any thing be more happily chosen to represent the path of grace, and the broad road of destruction, than the very different representations here made. Pause, and contemplate the vast distinction between them. Behold the house, the feast, the fatness, fulness, and eternal duration of those provisions which Jesus hath made for them that love him. Behold the wretched, empty, unsatisfying, deceitful, and stolen pleasures which sin proposeth; and do not forget the close of all, *the dead are there, and her guests in the depths of hell.*

Oh! for grace to hear wisdom's voice. Oh! blessed Jesus, let thy seven pillars resting upon thyself be the foundation of my house; and thy table the one at which my soul may daily sit by grace here, and in glory eternally hereafter. And do thou, Lord, I pray thee, who hast spread all, furnished all, mingled all, and given freely all, *without money and without price*; give me every suited preparation to enjoy all, that I may never listen to the noise of the clamorous women, but be unceasingly eating of thy bread and drinking of the wine which thou hast mingled. Yea, Lord, may my whole soul be so hungry, and thirsting, and longing for the everlasting enjoyment of thee, that daily by faith here, and ere long in the fruition of thee in glory, I may live to thee, and with thee, and upon thee for ever.

## CHAP. X.

### CONTENTS.

*We are now in this Chapter, entering upon the Proverbs. From this Chapter to the twenty-fifth, we meet with a great abundance of those divine sayings. The one part is descriptive of the blessed effects of following wisdom's ways; and the other of the contrary consequences.*

**T**HE proverbs of Solomon. A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.

If the Reader, while going over the whole body of Proverbs, will pray the Holy Ghost, that he may be always on the look out for his



divine teaching, I think very frequently he will discover in these Proverbs, that *a greater than Solomon is here*. I am very free to confess and believe, that many of the maxims here found, are maxims of morality and sound policy. But while I say this, I must be allowed to believe also, that very many sweet spiritual instructions are veiled under them. And I would beg the Reader to recollect what was said in the very first opening of the book of Proverbs, that the design for which they are given to us among the books of God, and as a part of the Bible was, that *we might understand a Proverb, and the interpretation thereof; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings*. Chap. i. 6. If a mere code of moral sayings was all that was intended, what dark sayings are there in the very plain truths, which for the most part those Chapters from the 10th. to the 25th contain? I cannot therefore refrain from desiring the Reader to be as attentive as possible at every verse, more or less, as he passeth through to the enquiry; what further than the first and most obvious sense, the passage may, without violence be supposed to imply. And while I beg his close attention towards a discovery, that may be for his own profit; I yet more earnestly desire that his eyes and his heart may be directed to Him, *from whom* cometh every good, and every perfect gift: *with whom* is the residue of the Spirit; and *in whom* are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And once for all, now at the commencement of the Proverbs, I would desire to impress these views of them upon his mind, and in this manner recommend the perusal of them to his heart. And having said thus much, which if diligently followed by the Reader, will tend to his improvement in the knowledge of this blessed book of God, better than by any thing that I can propose for his help in the perusal, I beg to observe that I shall make but short comments here and there, as a passage may strike me, in order to avoid swelling this Commentary unnecessarily, and which hath indeed already extended very much beyond what was originally intended.

2 Treasures of wickedness profit nothing: but righteousness delivereth from death.

There is a righteousness indeed, which delivereth from death, even the righteousness of Jesus, and which God hath set forth for this purpose. Rom. iii. 21, 22.

3 The LORD will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish: but he casteth away the substance of the wicked.

See this blessing insured, as it concerns the Lord's people. Psm. xxxiii. 18, 19.

4 He becometh poor that dealeth *with* a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich.

5 He that gathereth in summer *is* a wise son: *but* he that sleepeth in harvest *is* a son that causeth shame.

6 Blessings *are* upon the head of the just: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.

7 The memory of the just *is* blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot.

8 The wise in heart will receive commandments: but a prating fool shall fall.

9 He that walketh uprightly walketh surely: but he that perverteth his ways shall be known.

10 He that winketh with the eye causeth sorrow: but a prating fool shall fall.

11 The mouth of a righteous *man is* a well of life: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.

12 Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.

13 In the lips of him that hath understanding wisdom is found: but a rod *is* for the back of him that is void of understanding.

14 Wise *men* lay up knowledge: but the mouth of the foolish *is* near destruction.

15 The rich man's wealth *is* his strong city: the destruction of the poor *is* their poverty.

The Reader will find here somewhat either by direct allusion, or by indirect inference, that will lead the heart to Jesus, if the Holy Ghost be the Commentator; as for example in this last verse of the passage. The rich man here spoken of, may be considered as *the rich in faith*, of whom James speaks, James ii. 5. And this wealth of faith, being all founded in Christ; he gives them *to inherit substance*; and is their refuge into which they *run and are safe*. Prov. xviii. 10.

16 The labour of the righteous *tendeth* to life: the fruit of the wicked to sin.

17 He *is in* the way of life that keepeth instruction: but he that refuseth reproof erreth.

18 He that hideth hatred *with* lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander, *is* a fool.

19 In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips *is* wise.

20 The tongue of the just *is as* choice silver: the heart of the wicked *is* little worth.

21 The lips of the righteous feed many: but fools die for want of wisdom.

22 The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.

23 *It is* as sport to a fool to do mischief: but a man of understanding hath wisdom.

24 The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him: but the desire of the righteous shall be granted.

25 As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more: but the righteous is an everlasting foundation.

26 As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him.

27 The fear of the LORD longeth days: but the years of the wicked shall be shortened.

28 The hope of the righteous *shall be* gladness: but the expectation of the wicked shall perish.

29 The way of the LORD is strength to the upright: but destruction *shall be* to the workers of iniquity.

30 The righteous shall never be removed: but the wicked shall not inhabit the earth.

31 The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom: but the froward tongue shall be cut out.

32 The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable: but the mouth of the wicked *speaketh* frowardness.

I detain not the Reader through these verses. They are all very plain to the understanding of one taught of God. The way of life is Jesus, for he saith himself that *he is the way, and the truth, and the life.* John xiv. 6; and he that is in this way, is in Jesus. And Jesus points out an infallible method by which all such are known. He keepeth instruction, Solomon saith. And Jesus saith *if a man love me, he will keep my words.* And the greatest of all blessings is annexed to this. Pray, Reader, turn to that sweet scripture, and read it, until that the very life of the passage is engraven upon your heart, John xiv. 23. and you will find, by comparing scripture with scripture, similar illustra-

tions; and of consequence, how the Proverbs of Solomon are to be read and explained.

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### REFLECTIONS.

READER! let us both look to Him that gave to Solomon wisdom, that while some will run through these Proverbs as men may pass over a field where treasure is hidden, and are unconscious what is under them; you and I may see and know the things which are freely given to us of God. The parables of Jesus were still parables to the unenlightened multitude. But to his disciples *it was given to know the mysteries of the kingdom.*

In these dark sayings, here are many blessed and bright things. But like the Lord's hidden ones, as they are unknown to the world, so is the bread of life which is handed to them in secret. And Reader! let you and I, as we go over those several passages, bring them all to Jesus. He will expound them to us in order, as he did to his disciples, when we are alone. Are not we ourselves, if Christ's followers, men wondered at? Is not our spiritual life a mystery; our new birth, our effectual calling, pardon, justification, adoption, sanctification, with all the blessings, supports, recoveries, helps, refreshments, in short, all the ways of grace here, and the promise of life in Jesus hereafter; is not the whole a mystery, and are we not frequently prompted to cry out as we go along our pilgrimage, and especially when at any time Jesus himself comes to us in a sweet visit of love, *Lord! how is it that thou dost manifest thyself to us, and not unto the world?* And shall it be more a subject of wonder, that the word of his grace is to be read with other eyes, and explained with other tongues than men of the world are acquainted with? Precious Jesus! be thou our Instructor, for thou art a matchless Guide! Lead us into all truth: and if led by thee, we are made to discover thy Person, or thy work, thy grace, or thy favour, sweetly veiled under those parables: surely, Lord, we shall feel, as those disciples felt, *Our hearts burn within us, while thou talkest to us by the way, and while thou expoudest to us in these scriptures, the things concerning thyself.*

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### CHAP XI.

**A** FALSE balance *is* abomination to the LORD; but a just weight *is* his delight.

What a blessed thought is it, that when our poor nature, weighed in the balance *was found wanting*; Jesus more than compensated what we needed, and thereby delighted his Father. Dan. v. 27. Prov. viii. 30. John x. 17.

2 *When* pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly *is* wisdom.

3 The integrity of the upright shall guide

them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them.

4 Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death.

5 The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way: but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness.

6 The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them: but transgressors shall be taken in *their own* naughtiness.

7 When a wicked man dieth, *his* expectation shall perish: and the hope of unjust *men* perisheth.

I pause here to remark the striking expressions, by which the everlasting ruin of the unregenerate is marked. Job xxvii. 8. See as a contrast, a striking portrait, Jerem. xvii. 5—8.

8 The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead.

9 An hypocrite with *his* mouth destroyeth his neighbour: but through knowledge shall the just be delivered.

10 When it goeth well with the righteous, the city rejoiceth: and when the wicked perish, *there is* shouting.

11 By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted: but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked.

12 He that is void of wisdom despiseth his neighbour: but a man of understanding holdeth his peace.

13 A tale-bearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.

14 Where no counsel *is*, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors *there is* safety.

15 He that is surety for a stranger shall smart *for it*: and he that hateth suretiship is sure.

I can never pass over any passage respecting suretiship, without thinking of Jesus. Oh! thou Almighty Surety of thy redeemed! thou didst smart for it indeed; or as the phrase in this verse might have been

rendered, *shall be sore broken*; for thou wast bruised, and broken, and put to grief. Isaiah liii. 4, 5. whereas, hadst thou refused to have stood forth for thy people, or as this verse renders it, hadst thou *hated suretyship, thou hadst been sure*. For resting in thine own eternal, uninterrupted glory with the Father: nothing could have arisen to have broken in upon thy felicity. \*Oh! matchless love! Oh! peerless grace! Teach me, dearest Jesus, to love thee, who hath so loved us!

16 A gracious woman retaineth honour: and strong *men* retain riches.

17 The merciful man doeth good to his own soul: but *he that is* cruel troubleth his own flesh.

18 The wicked worketh a deceitful work: but to him that soweth righteousness *shall be* a sure reward.

19 As righteousness *tendeth* to life: so he that pursueth evil *pursueth it* to his own death.

20 They that are of a froward heart *are* abomination to the LORD: but *such as are* upright in *their way are* his delight.

21 *Though* hand *join* in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished: but the seed of the righteous shall be delivered.

22 *As* a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, *so is* a fair woman which is without discretion.

23 The desire of the righteous *is* only good: but the expectation of the wicked *is* wrath.

24 There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth: and *there is* that withholdeth more than is meet, but *it tendeth* to poverty.

I wish that this last verse, and the great truth contained in it, was but better understood, and better put in practice by my poor heart. Jesus, I am sure, taught it in his whole life and glorious example. How hath he scattered grace, mercy, peace, and pardon, among the unworthiest of creatures. And how hath he increased in bringing forth to himself an everlasting revenue of praise and glory, from the millions, which he hath thereby snatched from hell. My Brother! how are we following the plan of Jesus, when we withhold, and in our scanty souls, so far from scattering, are living but to ourselves, and our own enjoyments. Reader! pray turn to that sweet portion of Jesus's sermon, which may be construed in a general way, both for spirituals and temporals, as a gracious direction on this point. Matt. v. 44--48.

25 The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.

26 He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him: but blessing *shall be* upon the head of him that selleth it.

27 He that diligently seeketh good, procureth favour: but he that seeketh mischief, it shall come unto him.

28 He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.

29 He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind: and the fool *shall be* servant to the wise of heart.

30 The fruit of the righteous *is* a tree of life; and he that winneth souls *is* wise.

31 Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner.

If Joseph was blessed in Egypt for *selling* corn, how blessed is Jesus in our spiritual Egypt in *giving* it? Gen xli. 55—57; and that giveth it for ever; and that giveth without upbraiding; and all this in opposition to unworthiness, ingratitude, and a thousand, and ten thousand provocations of evil.—Yea, more; that giveth not merely the corn of this life, but the wine, and oil, and bread of eternal life: yea, becometh all these, and infinitely more, in giving himself to them and for them. Precious Jesus! thou art indeed the bread of life, and the bread of God, which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world! *Lord! evermore give me this bread!* John vi. 32—34.

#### REFLECTIONS.

I BESEECH thee, gracious Master, to give me a right understanding in all things. Taught by thee, I shall then discover, that thou art here folded up in this chapter. And however, as so many parables, I may first read what is here written, soon, under thy teaching, I shall learn that of thee they treat, and to thee they are intended to lead me.—And have I, my soul, so learned Christ? Was Jesus the parable of the Gospel upon many occasions? And is he not very frequently in the Old Testament scripture? Was Jesus the Lazarus there depicted, poor, and without food, or resting place: bruised, and laying at the gate of the rich Scribes and Pharisees, despised, and at length dead; and while they knew him not, carried amidst the chariots of Angels to his Father's bosom—and do I not behold him here, amidst the parables, the surety for the poor stranger and smarting for it?—him that scattereth, and yet increaseth: the liberal soul that maketh fat—and having watered the thirsty souls of sinners, is now glorified of his Father; and all power is given to him, as the glory-man mediator, in

heaven and in earth? Hail! blessed, precious Jesus! thou art he whom thy people shall adore, and blessings shall be upon the head of him that was separated from his brethren; whom God our Father, hath made Universal Lord of our Egypt; and in whose wisdom, provision is laid for selling corn, for the salvation of our souls, when without thee, the famine of the bread of life, would have caused us to have perished for ever.

## CHAP. XII.

**W**HOSO loveth instruction loveth knowledge:  
but he that hateth reproof *is* brutish.

2 A good *man* obtaineth favour of the LORD:  
but a man of wicked devices will he condemn.

Is it not Christ here spoken of, who in our nature fulfilled all righteousness, and for which he obtained favour for himself and people? See the Commentary on the first and the fifteenth Psalms in confirmation.

3 A man shall not be established by wickedness: but the root of the righteous shall not be moved.

4 A virtuous woman *is* a crown to her husband:  
but she that maketh ashamed *is* as rottenness in his bones.

5 The thoughts of the righteous *are* right: *but*  
the counsels of the wicked *are* deceit.

6 The words of the wicked *are* to lie in wait  
for blood: but the mouth of the upright shall deliver them.

7 The wicked *are* overthrown, and *are* not: but  
the house of the righteous shall stand.

8 A man shall be commended according to his  
wisdom: but he that is of a perverse heart shall be despised.

9 *He that is* despised, and hath a servant, *is*  
better than he that honoureth himself, and lacketh bread.

The man here said to be despised, but who hath the servant of Jehovah for his portion, is preferable to the self-righteous who is destitute of the bread of life. Isaiah, xlii. 1. Matt. xx. 27, 28.

10 A righteous *man* regardeth the life of his



beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked *are* cruel.

11 He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread: but he that followeth vain *persons is* void of understanding.

12 The wicked desireth the net of evil *men*: but the root of the righteous yieldeth *fruit*.

13 The wicked is snared by the transgression of *his* lips: but the just shall come out of trouble.

14 A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of *his* mouth: and the recompence of a man's hand shall be rendered unto him.

15 The way of a fool *is* right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel *is* wise.

16 A fool's wrath is presently known: but a prudent *man* covereth shame.

17 *He that* speaketh truth sheweth forth righteousness: but a false witness deceit.

18 There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise *is* health.

David gives one of the best comments upon the words, that are like the piercings of the sword. Psm. cxli. 5. And the apostle shews wherefore it is so. Heb. iv. 12, 13.

19 The lip of truth shall be established for ever: but a lying tongue *is* but for a moment.

20 Deceit *is* in the heart of them that imagine evil: but to the counsellors of peace *is* joy.

21 There shall no evil happen to the just: but the wicked shall be filled with mischief.

22 Lying lips *are* abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly *are* his delight.

23 A prudent man concealeth knowledge: but the heart of fools proclaimeth foolishness.

24 The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute.

25 Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad.

What but Jesus, the uncreated word, can give comfort to an heart born down under the pressure of sin? *Thy love* (saith the church) *is better*

*than wine*; Song, i. 2. Yes! for though wine may raise the drooping spirits as a momentary cordial, yet Jesus's love raiseth the dead. Ephes. ii. 1.

26 The righteous *is* more excellent than his neighbour: but the way of the wicked seduceth them.

27 The slothful *man* roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious.

28 In the way of righteousness *is* life; and in the pathway *thereof there is* no death.

All these are expressive of one and the same thing. The margin of the Bible renders it, *The righteous is more abundant than his neighbour. Unto every one that hath* (saith our Lord) *shall be given and he shall have abundance.* Matt. xxv. 29; intimating that grace is an increasing gift from the Lord. So that while the sinner is waxing worse and worse, he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger. Job xvii. 9.

#### REFLECTIONS.

How blessed is every portion of the divine word, when read with an eye to Christ. Wherever Christ is seen, and known, and enjoyed, there the word becomes life and spirit to the heart. *I found thy words and did eat them*, (saith one of the prophets) *and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart.* And what rendered God's word so sweet was, that Christ filled every part of it. These were the green pastures in which God caused his servant to lie down, when he fed him *beside the still waters.* When Christ is seen in them, and the Holy Ghost gives the soul to taste Christ in them; then as the church said, so all the people find; it is blessed to sit down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit is sweet to the taste. Reader! do you find it to be so? Have you found Christ in this chapter? Depend upon it, the grace of God, and the word of God, which bringeth salvation, brings it from this source: and it then flows in upon the soul, in rich, full, free, and blessed streams of Christ as the salvation of God for poor sinners. Oh! for grace so to find, so to enjoy, so to relish, and so to live upon Jehovah's precious gift to men. *In this way* of Jesus and his righteousness *is life*, and in the very *path-way thereof*, the private, as well as the public ordinances of grace, *there is no death.*

#### CHAP. XIII.

A WISE son *heareth* his father's instruction: but a scorner *heareth* not rebuke.

2 A man shall eat good by the fruit of *his*

mouth: but the soul of the transgressors *shall eat* violence.

3 He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: *but* he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.

4 The soul of the sluggard desireth, and *hath* nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.

5 A righteous *man* hateth lying: but a wicked *man* is loathsome, and cometh to shame.

6 Righteousness keepeth *him that is* upright in the way: but wickedness overthroweth the sinner.

7 There is that maketh himself rich, yet *hath* nothing: *there is* that maketh himself poor, yet *hath* great riches.

I pause at this last verse to ask the Reader if he hath marked the striking difference between the one here spoken of, as making himself rich, while poor; and the other, who having great riches, yet hath made himself poor. Every eye that reads what is here said, and looks into the world, may be struck with the application, when he seeth thousands like the church of the *Laodiceans*, fancying themselves *rich, and increased with goods, and having need of nothing, while ignorant that they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* Rev. iii. 17, 18. In the spiritual sense of these words, (and it is in this sense that they are evidently spoken,) what multiplied instances are every day occurring. But, Reader! passing for the moment the consideration of such characters by, you cannot need, I should hope, any help to enable you to discover one, most eminently represented in the character of making himself poor, while possessing great riches. Must not every eye be directed instantly to the contemplation of the precious Jesus? Who but He hath ever so humbled himself, and manifested a lowliness of soul like him? *Ye know*, saith Paul to the Corinthian church, *ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet, for your sakes, he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.* 2 Cor. viii. 9. And what another lovely account to the same effect is that passage of Paul, Phillip. ii. 5—11. But, Reader! do not pass over the verse, until that you have questioned your own heart, whether the conscious sense of Jesus's unequalled humbleness, and his immense treasure, hath brought your soul in love with him? Hath he blessed you with such views of him, as to delight in him; such views as to desire him, and such views as to choose him for your portion?

8 The ransom of a man's life *are* his riches: but the poor heareth not rebuke.

9 The light of the righteous rejoiceth: but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out.

10 Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised *is* wisdom.

11 Wealth *gotten* by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase.

12 Hope deferred maketh the heart sick; but *when* the desire cometh, *it is* a tree of life.

Surely Christ is the hope of Israel, and if he who is the hope of Israel, deferreth his visits to a sin-sick soul, that soul will languish? He is also *the desire of all nations*, and must be the desire of every truly awakened heart, and when he cometh, he is indeed *the tree of life* in the paradise of God. Oh! what a verse of Christ and his fulness, suitability, and blessedness is here? Jerem. xiv. 8. Haggai, ii. 7. Rev. xxii. 2.

13 Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed: but he that feareth the commandments shall be rewarded.

14 The law of the wise *is* a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.

15 Good understanding giveth favour; but the way of transgressors *is* hard.

16 Every prudent *man* dealeth with knowledge: but a fool layeth open *his* folly.

17 A wicked messenger falleth into mischief; but a faithful ambassador *is* health.

18 Poverty and shame *shall be to* him that refuseth instruction: but he that regardeth reproof shall be honoured.

19 The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul: but *it is* abomination to fools to depart from evil.

20 He that walketh with wise *men* shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.

Several blessed things are within these verses. The wicked messenger, and the faithful ambassador: what a contrast for those who minister in the church of Christ to ponder over. The consideration of walking with the wise, and the awfulness of being the companion of fools, what volumes are contained in those short, but striking sentences for all to consider. Precious Jesus! make all thy servants faithful! Keep thy saints from dangerous society. Be it my portion, Lord, to walk with thee!

21 Evil pursueth sinners: but to the righteous good shall be repayed.

22 A good *man* leaveth an inheritance to his

children's children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just.

23 Much food *is in* the tillage of the poor; but there is *that is* destroyed for want of judgment.

24 He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.

25 The righteous eateth to the satisfying of his soul: but the belly of the wicked shall want.

Lord, impress all thy ponderous truths upon my soul, and give me to search for thee in all thy word, as for hidden treasure.

### REFLECTIONS.

READER! amidst many sweet and blessed things which this chapter furnisheth for improvement in reflection, I feel my mind particularly led to contemplate yet more the grace of our Jesus, in his wonderful condescension as here expressed, in making himself poor, when possessed of all the riches of heaven and earth. There is somewhat in this view of Christ, extremely engaging; and when connected with that view, we consider the cause and design of it, surely it holdeth out one of the most delightful subjects the human mind is capable of contemplating.

Jesus, though Lord of all, made himself servant of all: and went on in a continued series of humiliation, until that he humbled himself unto the accursed death of the cross. So that it was grace in all his actions; grace in his first design, and grace in every purpose. And what an everlasting revenue of love, praise, and glory, must result from such acts of beneficence!

But, Reader! as an improvement from this view of Jesus, think what on opposition to this loveliness of Christ, must be the self-righteous; and if Christ be so truly amiable in this condescension, how truly unamiable must be the proud in his own self-importance! *There is that maketh himself rich, and yet hath nothing.* To be nothing is bad enough: and yet it is to be worse than nothing, when a man fancieth himself he is something, when in reality he is nothing. To be poor indeed in good works, and without holiness before God; and yet talking of our good works and holiness: to be blind to our own sin, and blind to Christ and his righteousness; and yet confident of our own worth, and fancying we have no great need of a Saviour: to be naked of all spiritual cloathing to appear in before God; and yet taking to ourselves a covering, but not of God's Spirit.—Reader! I pray you pause: can there be upon the face of the earth a more pitiable character? To have the spots of death upon us, and yet unconscious that we are sick. Oh! that souls in this state would hear, and attend to the blessed words of Christ. *I counsel thee (saith Jesus) to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and while raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see.* Precious Jesus! thou who givest this counsel, give grace also to follow it!

## CHAP XIV.

EVERY wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.

2 He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the LORD: but *he that is* perverse in his ways despiseth him.

3 In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride: but the lips of the wise shall preserve them.

4 Where no oxen *are*, the crib *is* clean: but much increase *is* by the strength of the ox.

5 A faithful witness will not lie: but a false witness will utter lies.

I pass over these several verses, plain and instructive as they all are, to dwell on the sweet feature of Christ, as the faithful and true witness. Rev. i. 5. And, I hope that I need not remind the reader, that it is one of the gracious assurances given to us of our covenant God, that *he is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man, that he should repent.* Numb. xxiii. 19. And the apostle makes this a most blessed argument of comfort, in the contemplation of the word and oath of Jehovah, that *God willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before us.* Heb. vi. 17, 18. Is it not precious, Reader, to consider how sure the divine promises are, founded in the merits of Christ's blood and righteousness, and the covenant engagements of Jehovah? This is what Paul calls *grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.* Rom. v. 21.

6 A scorner seeketh wisdom, and *findeth it not*: but knowledge *is* easy unto him that understandeth.

7 Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not *in him* the lips of knowledge.

8 The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way: but the folly of fools *is* deceit.

This verse of *fools making a mock at sin*, is very expressive: for surely none but fools can do so; to laugh at that which offends God, ruins men, and which nothing but the blood of Christ can expiate; this must be supreme folly indeed.

9 Fools make a mock at sin: but among the righteous *there is* favour.

This is a sweet verse, and fully explained by every gracious soul in his

own feelings. Who knows the secret transactions between God and the soul on account of sin! Who shall sum up the sorrows of a wounded conscience? And who is competent to describe the sweet intercourse between Christ and the soul, when, through the operations of the Holy Ghost, all that rich and heart-rejoicing communion takes place, which lifts the soul into the very suburbs of heaven?

10 The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy.

11 The house of the wicked shall be overthrown: but the tabernacle of the upright shall flourish.

12 There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death.

13 Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth *is* heaviness.

14 The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man *shall be satisfied* from himself.

God hath said this, and the soul knows the truth of it experimentally. See that scripture, Jerem. ii. 19.

15 The simple believeth every word: but the prudent *man* looketh well to his going.

16 A wise *man* feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident.

17 *He that is* soon angry dealeth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated.

18 The simple inherit folly: but the prudent are crowned with knowledge.

19 The evil bow before the good; and the wicked at the gates of the righteous.

20 The poor is hated even of his own neighbour: but the rich *hath* many friends.

The poor in spirit is the object of the rich man's hatred, if the one be a possessor of grace in his poverty, and the other not. But, what rich are here spoken of? Perhaps the rich of this world. Yes; such have many friends, at least, many who profess to be so; but not many promises. *Go to now, ye rich men* (saith Jesus) *weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.* James, v. 1. But if Solomon means by the rich having many friends, *the rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom*, they have indeed multitudes of friends. God is their Father and friend; Jesus is their friend, that loveth at all times: the Holy Ghost is their friend. Angels, and all the church of the first-born in

heaven are their friends; and all the redeemed below. Precious thought to the exercised followers of the sinner's friend!

21 He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth; but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy *is* he.

22 Do they not err that devise evil? but mercy and truth *shall be* to them that devise good.

23 In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips *tendeth* only to penury.

24 The crown of the wise *is* their riches: but the foolishness of fools *is* folly.

25 A true witness delivereth souls: but a deceitful *witness* speaketh lies.

26 In the fear of the LORD *is* strong confidence; and his children shall have a place of refuge.

27 The fear of the LORD *is* a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.

28 In the multitude of people *is* the king's honour: but in the want of people *is* the destruction of the prince.

29 *He that is* slow to wrath *is* of great understanding: but *he that is* hasty of spirit exalteth folly.

30 A sound heart *is* the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones.

31 He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker; but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor.

32 The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death.

33 Wisdom resteth in the heart of him that hath understanding: but *that which is* in the midst of fools is made known.

34 Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin *is* a reproach to any people.

35 The king's favour *is* toward a wise servant: but his wrath *is against* him that causeth shame.

I detain not the Reader with offering any comment upon those verses. If they be read with an eye to Christ, and the Holy Ghost be the teacher, many are the gracious instructions which will arise out of them.



## REFLECTIONS.

READER! amidst several very interesting views given in this chapter of God and of Christ, I know not what your feelings are, but I confess that my mind is led to reflect again and again on what Solomon saith of a faithful witness. And, precious as it is to find among the general perfidy of mankind any of this character, yet, how much more blessed is it to contemplate this perfection in the faithful, unchangeable God. It was the very character by which Jehovah demanded that he should be known to Israel of old. *Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God!* And, herein hath Jehovah pledged himself to Christ, and pledged, if it may be so expressed, even his holiness to him, for the fulfilment of all his covenant promises. *Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David.* Oh! the rich charter of grace! Oh! the security of God's people! Blessed God! cause me to live upon it, to rest upon it, and never, no not for a moment, to call in question God's faithfulness: but to know that *righteousness is the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.* And as a man binds up his girdle around him, and fastens it to himself; so Jehovah takes to himself his faithfulness, for his people to lay hold of, and to hang upon. Precious God! here will I hang, and nothing, no, not even death itself shall unclasp my dying holdfast; for when both heart and strength shall fail, *thou shalt be the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.*

## CHAP. XV.

**A** SOFT answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.

2 The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.

3 The eyes of the LORD *are* in every place, beholding the evil and the good.

4 A wholesome tongue *is* a tree of life: but perverseness therein *is* a breach in the spirit.

5 A fool despiseth his father's instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent.

6 In the house of the righteous *is* much treasure: but in the revenues of the wicked is trouble.

I should not think it necessary to make any break in the reading of those proverbs, were it not that the Reader thereby may be prompted to make a pause here and there, to ponder over the golden words, and to gather from these precious sentences, both the spiritual and moral im-

provements from them, as he passeth on. And, the Reader will find, if he maketh a pause after every verse, more or less, that there is scarce one, but what, without violence to the expressions, carries with it a sweet gospel signification. And, surely it is both gracious and blessed, when we can thus bring with us the New Testament into the Old. Thus for example, if we read the several verses we have gone through in this chapter, what can induce *a soft answer* to turn away wrath, until that our poor nature is regenerated and *we have the Spirit of Christ*. It is by the Spirit only, we are told, that we can *mortify the deeds of the body*; and by his influences that *we put off all these, anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of our mouth*. Rom. viii. 9—13. Coloss. iii. 8. So again, the proverb saith, that *the tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright*. Yes! when the Lord hath done by the sinner as by the prophet, laid *the live coal taken from the Holy Altar upon his mouth, and touched the lips, his iniquity is taken away and his sin purged*. Isaiah, vi. 7. But without this, *who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one*. Job, xiv. 4. Reader! if through a gospel medium we thus read the Proverbs, we shall find them *words fitly spoken, like apples of gold in pictures of silver*. Prov. xxv. 11.

7 The lips of the wise disperse knowledge: but the heart of the foolish *doeth* not so.

8 The sacrifice of the wicked *is* an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright *is* his delight.

9 The way of the wicked *is* an abomination unto the LORD: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness.

10 Correction *is* grievous unto him that forsaketh the way: *and* he that hateth reproof shall die.

11 Hell and destruction *are* before the LORD: how much more then the hearts of the children of men?

12 A scorner loveth not one that reproveth him: neither will he go unto the wise.

13 A merry heart maketh a chearful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.

I should apprehend that the mirth here spoken of, means the true joy of the soul, arising from the consciousness of being at peace with God. There can be no mirth, no real comfort while the soul is at enmity with God by wicked works. Solomon hath expressed his sense of this passage, I apprehend, in another, where he saith, *Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God now accepteth thy works*. Yes! a soul accepted in Jesus, may indeed,

both eat and drink the common bread and water, for the body's sustenance, with joy, and the sacred bread and wine, in token of communion with Jesus, for the soul's health, with delight, when brought nigh by the blood of the cross! Here is a solid foundation for the most heart-fealt joy, and for making the countenance always cheerful. Eccles. ix. 7.

14 The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge: but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness.

15 All the days of the afflicted *are* evil: but he that is of a merry heart *hath* a continual feast.

16 Better *is* little with the fear of the LORD, than great treasure and trouble therewith.

17 Better *is* a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.

Better is it to sit down to the poorest table where Jesus is, and his love manifested in blessing the scanty fare, than all the luxuries of unsanctified fulness. Reader! if we eye Christ in every thing, then shall we truly enjoy Christ in every thing.

18 A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but *he that is* slow to anger appeaseth strife.

19 The way of the slothful *man is* as an hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous *is* made plain.

20 A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother.

21 Folly *is* joy to *him that is* destitute of wisdom: but a man of understanding walketh uprightly.

22 Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.

23 A man hath joy in the answer of his mouth: and a word *spoken* in due season, how good *is it!*

24 The way of life *is* above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath.

25 The LORD will destroy the house of the proud: but he will establish the border of the widow.

26 The thoughts of the wicked *are* an abomi-

nation to the LORD : but *the words* of the pure are pleasant words.

27 He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house ; but he that hateth gifts shall live.

28 The heart of the righteous studieth to answer : but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things.

29 The LORD *is* far from the wicked : but he heareth the prayer of the righteous.

30 The light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart : and a good report maketh the bones fat.

31 The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise.

32 He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul : but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding.

33 The fear of LORD *is* the instruction of wisdom ; and before honour *is* humility.

Every word, more or less, in these verses is precious, and as I before remarked, if read with reference to the gospel, cannot fail of leading the soul to Jesus. I hope the Reader will not have neglected this all the way as we have come along through these proverbs. He will have found, I am persuaded, if so, upon many occasions, the truth of what we have just read in this chapter, *a word spoken in due season, how good is it.*

### REFLECTIONS.

READER! pause with me over the review of this chapter, and let us mark together the improvements which an heart, taught by grace, can readily make out of it. To an enlightened eye, which discerns Christ in the whole field of scripture, there is not a flower in it, but will yield both beauty and sweetness to our taste. And, like the bee, we shall gather by faith food from all. But, if the eye be not enlightened to see *him*, many a lovely step, which would lead to *the Plant of renown*, we shall never take ; but like the wild beast of the wood, tread the whole under our feet. Oh ! for grace, so to read the scriptures, as to discover in them *the mysteries of the kingdom*. All, in every part, treat of Jesus in his Person, offices, relations, characters, ordinances, communion. Let us, my brother, continually pray for this grace, to lead us, and to guide us, that we may *walk in the Spirit, and be taught by the Spirit*. For, if the Holy Ghost bring us thoroughly to be acquainted with our Lord, no part of the divine word will suffer us, at any time to turn from it, until that we have discovered Jesus in it. And, when, in going over the field of the scriptures, like *the merchant-man*, Jesus himself speaks of

*seeking goodly pearls*, we have found Him the one of great price, of whom Moses and the Prophets did write; such a Pearl, indeed, in whom all grace, glory, yea, God himself, in all his fulness dwells, being once found; oh! how gladly shall we go and sell all that we have, and part with all that before we valued the possession of, to obtain him, and to acquire every day an increasing knowledge of him, and communion with him, whom truly to know, and as truly to enjoy, is life eternal.

## CHAP. XVI.

**T**HE preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD.

This chapter opens with a doctrine that we should do well to keep always uppermost in our remembrance, at whatever part of the divine word we open. Yea, not only when we are about to read, but when we are about to pray: in every state, under every undertaking, at all times, and in all places, in life and death. Oh! for grace to remember this sweet scripture, and for strength in grace to wait humbly at the throne of God in Christ, for the accomplishment of it. See the confirmation of the same. James, i. 17. Psalm x. 17. Phillip. ii. 13.

2 All the ways of a man *are* clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits.

3 Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.

4 The LORD hath made all *things* for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.

I beg the Reader to mark particularly this last verse. That the Lord is the maker of all, is a truth well known. But all things are not only made by him, but for him, we are here told: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil. Reader! pray pause. The design of redemption, Paul was commissioned to tell the church was, that God might in *the dispensation of the fulness of times, gather together in one all things in Christ*. Ephes. i. 10. Consequently all things include both good and bad; the one for happiness, the other for destruction; and the whole for the divine glory in the everlasting felicity of his redeemed, and the everlasting misery of the damned. And the song in heaven John heard was to the same effect, that God had made all things for himself. It was addressed to the Lamb, but the glory terminated not there; God in Christ, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, had the ascription, *Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood*. Rev. v. 9. From Jehovah is the first cause, and to Jehovah as the final end. And what a world of mystery, wonder and glory is folded up in that short scripture, *the deceived and the deceiver are his*. Job xii. 16.

5 Every one *that is* proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD: *though* hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished.

6 By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD *men* depart from evil.

7 When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.

All these are most certain and solemn truths. The latter verse should always be in the believer's recollection. We are so apt to look to second causes, that we frequently overlook the first great, and predisposing cause of all. Whereas did we but keep in remembrance what we cannot but know, that the hearts of all men are in the Lord's disposal, neither the frowns nor smiles of men would have any more than their proper effect. In proof of this, Reader, pray read Joseph's faith on this occasion: Gen. xlv. 4—8. And then read the church's account to the same: Psalm cv. 25. And then read the words of a greater than all, and upon the greatest of all occasions: John xix. 10, 11.

8 Better *is* a little with righteousness, than great revenues without right.

9 A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.

10 A divine sentence *is* in the lips of the king: his mouth transgresseth not in judgment.

11 A just weight and balance *are* the LORD's: all the weights of the bag *are* his work.

12 *It is* an abomination to kings to commit wickedness: for the throne is established by righteousness.

13 Righteous lips *are* the delight of kings; and they love him that speaketh right.

14 The wrath of a king *is as* messengers of death, but a wise man will pacify it.

15 In the light of the king's countenance *is* life; and his favour *is* as a cloud of the latter rain.

16 How much better *is it* to get wisdom than gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver.

17 The highway of the upright *is* to depart from evil: he that keepeth his way preserveth his soul.

18 Pride *goeth* before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

19 Better *it is to be* of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.

20 He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good: and whoso trusteth in the Lord, happy is he.

21 The wise in heart shall be called prudent: and the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning.

22 Understanding *is* a well-spring of life unto him that hath it: but the instruction of fools *is* folly.

23 The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips.

24 Pleasant words *are as* an honey-comb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.

25 There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death.

26 He that laboureth, laboureth for himself; for his mouth craveth it of him.

27 An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips *there is* as a burning fire.

28 A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends.

29 A violent man enticeth his neighbour, and leadeth him into the way *that is* not good.

30 He shutteth his eyes to devise froward things: moving his lips he bringeth evil to pass.

31 The hoary head *is* a crown of glory, *if* it be found in the way of righteousness.

32 *He that is* slow to anger *is* better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.

33 The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof *is* of the Lord.

If the Reader hath his eye constantly waiting upon the Holy Ghost, as he goes through these many verses, very sure I am that that blessed Spirit will give him to see Christ in many a part. And his conclusion therefrom will be like the beginning, and the end of this chapter. It is the Lord that prepares the heart. And it is the Lord that disposeth the heart, and all things, when the lot is cast into the lap.

## REFLECTIONS.

READER! I cannot better direct both your heart and my own, to a suitable subject for the Lord to bless to our joint reflections, than what this chapter, both at the opening and close, brings before us. If it be the Lord that prepares the heart, and gives the answer of the tongue; where shall we look both for habitual and actual preparations, but from him? Oh! that there may be always such a going forth of our minds upon the person and graces of the Lord Jesus, by the sweet influences of the Holy Ghost, that whether we read, or hear, or pray, or praise; faith in him and his great salvation may be always uppermost in our affections. Yes! blessed glorifier of my Lord! I do beseech thee to give to me this constant, habitual, and unceasing preparation, *that the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart may be always acceptable in thy sight, O Lord my strength and my Redeemer.* Sure I am, that without thee I can do nothing. There is nothing in me disposed to do what is good. Nay, Lord, there is in me every thing that is indisposed. And therefore, Lord! undertake for me. *Work in me both to will and to do of thy good pleasure.* And then, Lord, *my voice shalt thou hear betimes in the morning, yea, I will direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.*

## CHAP. XVII.

**B**BETTER is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices *with* strife.

2 A wise servant shall have rule over a son that causeth shame, and shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren.

Whether it was the intention of God the Holy Ghost in this account of a wise servant to lead to Jesus, I must not presume to determine; but when I call to mind that God the Father hath put Jesus at the head of all offices, and characters, that *in all things he might have the pre-eminence*; I confess that in reading the account here given, I find my heart instinctively as it were prompted to contemplate under this character the ever-blessed Jesus. Coloss. i. 18. For was not Christ Jehovah's servant? Nay, did not the gracious Lord himself stoop to become the servant of all, and take upon him the form of a servant? *I am among you* (said Christ) *as him that serveth.* Luke, xxii. 27. And who so wise as Jesus? Who so zealous in his Father's service? Who so diligent in the accomplishment of our salvation, and in doing *the work which his Father gave him to do?* and hath he not rule over every son, every adopted son whose rebellion and departures from God our Father hath caused shame? Reader! hath not your unworthiness and mine caused shame? And is it not your glory now, that Jehovah's wise servant hath rule over you? Do you not delight to bow the knee to Jesus, and to confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father?



And hath not Jesus part in the inheritance which he himself hath purchased and recovered among the brethren? Oh! the blessedness of the thought, *he is not ashamed to call them brethren*: and in all that concerns them he takes part. Precious Jesus! may I delight to contemplate thee under this as well as every other tender office and character, into which thou hast condescended to put thyself. And I will say of thee as the church said, *Oh! that thou wert as my brother that sucked the breasts of my mother, when I should find thee without I would kiss thee; yea, I should not be despised. I would lead thee and bring thee into my mother's house, who would instruct me. I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate.* Song viii. 1, 2.

3 The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold: but the LORD trieth the hearts.

4 A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips; and a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue.

5 Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker: and he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished.

6 Children's children are the crown of old men: and the glory of children are their fathers.

7 Excellent speech becometh not a fool: much less do lying lips a prince.

8 A gift is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it: whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth.

9 He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends.

10 A reproof entereth more into a wise man than an hundred stripes into a fool.

11 An evil man seeketh only rebellion: therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him.

12 Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly.

13 Whoso rewardeth evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house.

14 The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with.

15 He that justifieth the wicked, and he that

condemneth the just, even they both *are* abomination to the Lord.

16 Wherefore *is there* a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing *he hath* no heart to it?

17 A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

I am constrained again to pause over this verse, in which methinks I see a volume that might be made of it concerning Jesus. He is indeed both the friend and the brother. *For verily* (saith an apostle) *he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham.* Heb. ii. 16. As such therefore, he both belongs to our nature and is a true descendant indeed of Abraham. Hadst thou, blessed Jesus, when thou camest to redeem us come only as an angel, and in an angel's nature; though that would have been according to our view of things, staying nearer at home in point of dignity; yet in this case, though thy people still must have loved thee for thy works sake in redeeming us, if redemption could have been accomplished that way; yet surely we should not have known thee as we now know thee; neither have felt our hearts drawn as we now feel them into the sweetest of all loves, in beholding thee as our brother. Neither, dear Lord! could thy people have felt the confidence which they now feel, in coming to thee under all their multiplied wants, and the ten thousand times ten thousand occasions, which they find for thy love, and grace, and mercy, to be displayed upon them, and thy endearing manifestations towards them. Oh! what a source of inexpressible joy doth my poor heart this moment find in this one view of Jesus, the friend that loveth at all times, and the brother born for adversity.

18 A man void of understanding striketh hands, *and* becometh surety in the presence of his friend.

19 He loveth transgression that loveth strife: *and* he that exalteth his gate seeketh destruction.

20 He that hath a froward heart findeth no good: and he that hath a perverse tongue falleth into mischief.

21 He that begetteth a fool *doeth it* to his sorrow: and the father of a fool hath no joy.

22 A merry heart doeth good *like* a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.

23 A wicked *man* taketh a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment.

24 Wisdom *is* before him that hath understanding; but the eyes of a fool *are* in the ends of the earth.

25 A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him.

26 Also to punish the just is not good, *nor* to strike princes for equity.

27 He that hath knowledge spareth his words: *and* a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit:

28 Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: *and* he that shutteth his lips is *esteemed* a man of understanding.

It is very sweet to remark in these Proverbs what a striking contrast the wise man is perpetually drawing, between the wisdom which is from above, and the folly which is from beneath. And by thus putting both in their different shades of colouring, surely he hath adopted the most effectual method of answering the plan of teaching, by such a way as a proverb is calculated to accomplish in carrying conviction to the mind of the blessedness of the one and the sure ruin of the other; and as he saith elsewhere, while *the wise shall inherit glory, shame must be the promotion of fools.* Prov. iii. 35.

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### REFLECTIONS.

I PASS by, for the Reader's own improvement, the consideration of every other passage contained in this chapter, to dwell upon that heavenly character of Jesus suggested in this view of him, *the friend that loveth at all times, and the brother born for adversity.* Jesus was indeed peculiarly born for adversity. For had not our ruined circumstances been what they are, never surely had the Son of God any need to have been born in our nature, or have come into such an alliance with us, as a brother. But it was because our situation was desperate, because we were exposed, justly exposed to the wrath of Almighty God, as helpless as we were miserable, and beyond all the possibility, in ourselves, of doing any thing towards our own recovery; it was on these accounts that Jesus stood forth as our helper. So that he was indeed *born for adversity.* And if he will engage for us in this high character of a Redeemer; he must (justice so requiring) put himself in our very place and circumstances; and as such he must become our brother. This therefore he hath done. And Reader! do observe how all along he hath shewn himself to be the brother eminently born for adversity. He stood in our stead, paid our whole debt, crossed the book which was full of our outstanding debts, with marks to intimate the complete payment in the red letters of his own blood; and not only purchased our lost inheritance but purchased our persons, and hath put his poor indigent brethren, of whom he is not ashamed, into such a state of affluence in his fulness, by giving them a right to all he hath, and commanding them to draw upon him for all they need. And what is it now?—but the brother and the friend still. *Having loved his own that are in the world, he loveth them unto the end.* Though to heaven he is returned, to take posses-

sion of his kingdom; yet he saith himself, that this is also but for them and in their name. *He will come again and receive them to himself, that where he is there they shall be also.* In the mean time he assures them of his spiritual presence, his watching over them for good, with his whole heart and his whole soul. *Lo! (he saith) I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.* Hail! thou almighty friend at all times, thou brother born for adversity. Never, blessed Jesus, let my soul for a moment lose sight of thee under those endearing characters. Though I have slighted thee, forgotten thee days without number; and requited all thy love with baseness and ingratitude; still compassionate brother! do thou continue thy grace and tenderness, and overcome my unworthiness with thy love. *Thou knowest my frame, thou rememberest that I am but dust.* And do thou cause me by thy sweet Spirit amidst all my undeservings to be still hanging upon thee, and cleaving to thee; and, like another Peter, under the siftings of Satan, and the deceitfulness of my poor sinful heart, still may I always like him be enabled to appeal to thy knowledge in testimony of my adherence to Jesus, and say as he did; *Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.*

## CHAP. XVIII.

**T**HROUGH desire a man, having separated himself, seeketh *and* intermeddleth with all wisdom.

I rather accept the expressions in this verse as referring first to the person of Christ in his human nature, and next in him to all his people. The desires of Jesus were wholly of this kind. They were all his own. *His desire is towards me,* saith the church. Song vii. 10. And it was for the sake of the church that Christ separated, that is sanctified, set apart, himself. John, xvii. 19. And when a child of God is also set apart, and sanctified, is not his desire towards Jesus in all wisdom? Paul's account of himself suits all of Paul's sentiments. *When it pleased God (saith he) who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace to reveal his Son in me, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.* Gal. i. 15, 16.

2 A fool hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover itself.

3 When the wicked cometh, *then* cometh also contempt, and with ignominy reproach.

4 The words of a man's mouth *are as* deep waters, *and* the wellspring of wisdom *as a* flowing brook.

5 *It is* not good to accept the person of the wicked, to overthrow the righteous in judgment.

6 A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes.

7 A fool's mouth *is* his destruction, and his lips *are* the snare of his soul.

8 The words of a talebearer *are* as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.

9 He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster.

10 The name of the LORD *is* a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.

What a refuge there is in a covenant God in Christ for a believer, however buffeted, to take shelter in? Let a child of God sit down if he will, and ponder over all his discouragements and difficulties; and I will be bold to say, that in the Lord's name, that is in Christ Jesus, he will find somewhat exactly corresponding to suit and answer for all. Is he poor? Christ's name is riches; yea, durable riches and righteousness, Prov. viii. 18. Is he surrounded with enemies? Then Christ is the mighty God. Isaiah, ix. 6. Is he sick? He saith, *I am the Lord that healeth thee.* Exod. xv. 26. Do his people need in critical moments a thousand supplies, they know not what, and they know not how? How blessed is that name by which Abraham called the Lord in his moment of necessity; Jehovah-jirah, the Lord shall provide; *and at this day in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.* Gen. xxii. 14. In short, in the name of Jehovah we have all; wisdom to guide, power to help, grace to save, mercy to pardon, righteousness to justify, and all temporal, spiritual, and eternal blessings. Surely, Lord, *they that know thy name will put their trust in thee; for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.* Psalm ix. 10.

11 The rich man's wealth *is* his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit.

12 Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour *is* humility.

13 He that answereth a matter before he heareth *it*, it *is* folly and shame unto him.

14 The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?

15 The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge; and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge.

16 A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men.

If a man's gift which at the utmost must be of a scanty and transitory nature, hath such a power of opening the heart, what effect ought

the great, the glorious, durable, and eternal gift of God's dear Son to have in opening our souls to love him who hath so loved us? Oh! that a deep sense of this unspeakable mercy may bring my soul continually before the Lord, with all the acknowledgments of love, and obedience, and faith, and praise.

17 *He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him.*

18 The lot causeth contentions to cease, and parteth between the mighty.

19 A brother-offended *is harder to be won* than a strong city: and *their contentions are* like the bars of a castle.

20 A man's belly shall be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth; *and* with the increase of his lips shall he be filled.

21 Death and life *are* in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.

22 *Whoso* findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord.

23 The poor useth intreaties; but the rich answereth roughly.

24 A man *that hath* friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend *that* sticketh closer than a brother.

I pass over again all the intermediate verses, to dwell upon this very sweet one in the end of the chapter. Amidst all the ingratitude and unfriendliness which my heart hath shewn to Jesus, the best of friends; still he is, and will be the *friend that sticketh closer than a brother*. When I call to mind how I have treated him, and shewn myself towards him; and this, not only before I knew him but since he manifested himself to me, otherwise than he doeth to the world; I blush to think of his unequalled grace, and my unequalled undeservings. In him I behold that description of him by his servant the prophet, and more especially as it concerns myself, most strikingly set forth and confirmed: *He will rest in his love.* Zech. iii. 17. He doth indeed rest in his love, for the Lord God of Israel saith, *that he hateth putting away.* Malachi, ii. 16.

#### REFLECTIONS.

READER! what a blessed thing it is to sit down under the teaching of the Holy Ghost; and while this book of God appears indeed truly parables, and must continue so unexplained, until that Jesus by his Spirit

opens it to our understanding, for us to be led therefrom to see the mysteries of his kingdom: *To the pure* (saith an apostle) *all things are pure, but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure.* Mark it down; my brother, among the gracious things of God, to be brought out of the darkness of a natural state and to be introduced into the kingdom of his dear Son; what an unspeakable mercy is here! By this one act of sovereign grace all the blessings, privileges, titles, inheritance; all are made over and secure in the everlasting covenant. The Father engageth to bestow all the blessings of it. Jesus hath secured them by his blood and righteousness. And the Holy Ghost undertakes to instruct them into all the knowledge suited to their adopted state and character. He will guide them into all truth. *He shall take of mine* (saith Jesus) *and shew unto you.* All mysteries, parables, proverbs, essential for their furtherance in grace, and the knowledge of the Lord, shall be explained unto them. *Unto you is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to others in parables.* Hence, saith the Lord God, in one of the sweetest and most encouraging portions of scripture, *wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?* Jerem. iii. 4.

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## CHAP. XIX.

**B**BETTER *is* the poor that walketh in his integrity, than *he that is* perverse in his lips, and is a fool.

2 Also, *that* the soul *be* without knowledge, *it is* not good; and he that hasteth with *his* feet sinneth.

3 The foolishness of man perverteth his way: and his heart fretteth against the LORD.

4 Wealth maketh many friends; but the poor is separated from his neighbour.

5 A false witness shall not be unpunished, and *he that* speaketh lies shall not escape.

6 Many will intreat the favour of the prince: and every man *is* a friend to him that giveth gifts.

7 All the brethren of the poor do hate him: how much more do his friends go far from him? he pursueth *them with* words, *yet they are* wanting to him.

8 He that getteth wisdom loveth his own soul: he that keepeth understanding shall find good.

9 A false witness shall not be unpunished, and *he that speaketh lies shall perish.*

I pause over this last verse particularly, to remark to the Reader that there must be somewhat more than of ordinary importance in it, it being the repetition of the same sentiment as was just before delivered, only with stronger marks of the awful sin of which it treats. Both the Writer and the Reader may well pause over these solemn expressions, and consider the very solemn meaning. A false witness is the very reverse of Christ, the faithful and true witness. Rev. i. 5. And therefore it may serve to shew what an awful state those men are in, who are found witnessing to lies, to any thing, and every thing, in a way of religion, short of Christ and his salvation. The Holy Ghost witnesseth wholly of Jesus. *He shall testify of me*, saith Christ. John, xv. 26. And how doth he do this? He shews to the sinner the evil of his way, he testifieth that Christ only can deliver the soul from going down to the pit; he points to the blood and righteousness of Jesus, as the only possible means of salvation, and he sets to his seal in the heart of the regenerate, that *there is salvation in no other; neither is there any other name under heaven, given among men, whereby they must be saved.* Acts, iv. 12. And what then must those be but false witnesses, that would direct a sinner to any other Saviour; or would tempt the heart to believe, that partly in ourselves and partly in Christ we are to seek acceptance? Lord! in compassion to perishing sinners, send forth faithful men to be witnesses for God and his Christ. Jerem. iii. 15.

10 Delight is not seemly for a fool; much less for a servant to have rule over princes.

11 The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and *it is his glory to pass over a transgression.*

12 The king's wrath *is* as the roaring of a lion; but his favour *is* as dew upon the grass.

Of what king doth the scriptures here speak but of Jesus? Of his wrath we have a striking account, Psalm ii. 12. And both the wrath of the Lamb, and the lion of the tribe of Judah, are characters under which Jesus is spoken of. Rev. v. 5, 6. See a most striking description. Rev. vi. 12—17.

13 A foolish son *is* the calamity of his father: and the contentions of a wife *are* a continual dropping.

14 House and riches *are* the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife *is* from the LORD.

15 Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger.

16 He that keepeth the commandment keepeth his own soul; *but* he that despiseth his ways shall die.



17 He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.

18 Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.

19 A man of great wrath shall suffer punishment: for if thou deliver *him*, yet thou must do it again.

20 Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in the latter end.

21 *There are* many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.

22 The desire of man *is* his kindness: and a poor man *is* better than a liar.

23 The fear of the LORD, *tendeth* to life: and *he that hath it* shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil.

24 A slothful *man* hideth his hand in *his* bosom, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again.

25 Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware: and reprove one that hath understanding, *and* he will understand knowledge.

26 He that wasteth *his* father, *and* chaseth away *his* mother, *is* a son that causeth shame, and bringeth reproach.

27 Cease, my son, to hear the instruction *that causeth* to err from the words of knowledge.

28 An ungodly witness scorneth judgment: and the mouth of the wicked devoureth iniquity.

29 Judgments are prepared for scorners, and stripes for the back of fools.

I do not wish to swell the commentary for the reasons before given. And indeed if the Reader be under divine teaching, this will supersede all observations of mine. But I hope he will find in all these verses, more or less, somewhat to lead his mind to Christ, and in Christ to find the truest application.

## REFLECTIONS.

I TAKE occasion from what this chapter hath suggested of *a false witness*, to admonish the Reader, while I pray for grace to receive at the same time in my own heart, the full admonition; to be always upon our watch-tower for the faithful and true witness concerning Jesus; even God the Holy Ghost, who is *to bring all things to our remembrance, whatsoever Christ hath taught us*.

And Reader! it is most blessed and refreshing to a seeking soul to mark the footsteps of his coming. For he comes to us in the Son's name from the Father, to propose to us, not in proverbs only, but in the plain words of God, the gracious proclamation of pardon, mercy, and peace, in the blood of the cross. He not only proposeth to us these mercies, but he disposeth the heart to receive what he brings. He not only shews us the loveliness and suitableness of the Saviour; but he inclineth the soul to see and feel the want of him, and to seek salvation in his blood. And when by his grace he hath powerfully pleaded in our conscience for Christ, and against ourselves; in shewing how gracious Jesus is, and how unworthy we are; how very suited he is to us, and how suited we are to him; he puts a cry into our hearts in leading us to the throne of grace, *where we may find mercy and grace to help in every time of need*. Reader! do suffer me to ask you, hath the Holy Ghost thus witnessed in your heart? Oh! for grace not to grieve the Holy Spirit of the Lord, whereby souls are sealed unto the day of redemption. Lord! grant that my soul may have this faithful Teacher witnessing with my spirit that I am a child of God. Keep me, Lord, from every false witness, convinced that this chapter twice hath marked it down, that the end of it is death.

## CHAP. XX.

**W**INE *is* a mocker, strong drink *is* raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.

2 The fear of a king *is* as the roaring of a lion: *whoso* provoketh him to anger sinneth *against* his own soul.

3 *It is* an honour for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling.

4 The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; *therefore* shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing.

5 Counsel in the heart of man *is like* deep

water; but a man of understanding will draw it out.

6 Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find.

When the question is asked, where a faithful man is to be found? The answer is direct. There is a friend that loveth at all times, and a brother born for adversity. Prov. xvii. 17. Precious Jesus! thou art indeed a friend, for thou hast shewn thyself most friendly.

7 The just *man* walketh in his integrity: his children *are* blessed after him.

8 A king that sitteth in the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his eyes.

9 Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?

Pause, Reader, over this solemn inquiry. Who can say this? No man. But every man ought to say, *cleanse thou me, O Lord, from secret faults.* Psalm xix. 12.

10 Divers weights, *and* divers measures, both of them *are* alike abomination to the LORD.

11 Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work *be* pure, and whether *it be* right.

12 The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the LORD hath made even both of them.

What a sweet thought ariseth out of this account, that it is the Lord who hath given sight to the eyes, and hearing to the ears. And was not Jesus anointed by the Spirit to *preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the broken in heart, and to give sight to the blind.* Isaiah, lxi. 1. Luke, iv. 18, 19.

13 Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty; open thine eyes, *and* thou shalt be satisfied with bread.

14 *It is* nought, *it is* nought, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth.

15 There is gold, and a multitude of rubies: but the lips of knowledge *are* a precious jewel.

16 Take his garment that is surety *for* a stranger: and take a pledge of him for a strange woman.

17 Bread of deceit *is* sweet to a man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel.

18 *Every* purpose is established by counsel : and with good advice make war.

19 He that goeth about *as* a talebearer revealeth secrets : therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.

20 Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness.

21 An inheritance *may* be gotten hastily at the beginning ; but the end thereof shall not be blessed.

22 Say not thou, I will recompense evil ; *but* wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee.

23 Divers weights *are* an abomination unto the LORD ; and a false balance *is* not good.

24 Man's goings are of the LORD ; how can a man then understand his own way ?

Nothing can be more important to know, nor needful to have a right conception of, than that all our mercies, both in preparation work and in performing work, are of the Lord. *It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.* Jerem. x. 23. And of all the blessed lessons that by grace we are taught, this is among them, that our inability is discovered, and the expediency of receiving strength from the Lord as clearly made known.

25 *It is* a snare to the man *who* devoureth *that which is* holy, and after vows to make inquiry.

26 A wise king scattereth the wicked, and bringeth the wheel over them.

27 The spirit of man *is* the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.

28 Mercy and truth preserve the king : and his throne is upholden by mercy.

29 The glory of young men *is* their strength : and the beauty of old men *is* the grey head.

30 The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil : so *do* stripes the inward parts of the belly.

Under the various images here represented, the wise man aims to enforce the infinite importance of the maxims he had been setting forth, and the happiness of those that follow them.

#### REFLECTIONS.

I HOPE that the Reader is perpetually gathering sweet instructions from this part of the word of God ; and in nothing more so, than in the

discovery of his own incompetency to enter far into the apprehension of divine things. Among the improvements of grace this is eminent, to learn, the further we go, the more of our ignorance. If at any time we do not find the sweet savour in the reading of the scriptures as heretofore, the consciousness of past enjoyments ought to become the excitement to future expectations.

If we have known the name of Christ to have been precious the sweet savour of his name ought to leave a fragrantcy now; like some rich perfume, which though the thing itself be taken away, the effects remain. And though we see Christ not, yet former experiences should quicken present desires. Man's goings (Solomon saith in this chapter) are of the Lord. Am I waiting for some renewed visit from Christ? Am I longing for his return, expecting him, on the look out for him? Is not this very frame the state in which Jesus prepares his people for the renewals of his love? Nay, is there not in this very desire and expectation of his coming even a present enjoyment, in that desire and expectation? Surely *all these worketh that one and the self same spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.* Blessed Lord! grant me a sweet savour of past enjoyments, in the absence of present communion; and when I have no immediate view of thy glory, and the sweet communications of thy love; still let my prayer, awakened by thy grace, be the prayer of the church; *draw me and we will run after thee, until thou shalt bring me into thy chambers.*

## CHAP. XXI.

**T**HE king's heart *is* in the hand of the LORD,  
as the rivers of water : he turneth it whither-  
soever he will.

There can be no question but that all hearts, and all the ways of men are, like the current of waters, subject to divine direction; and they that are made kings and priests to God and the Father, find sweet comfort in the conviction of this undoubted truth. Even Jesus in his human nature had all the blessedness of this promise of the Father. From the union of the human nature with his Godhead, his holiness, and purity of the manhood was altogether preserved; but he needed, and therefore had, all that communication from the Father which might fit him, strengthen him, and carry him through *the work which the Father gave him to do.* Hence we read, that *God gave not the Spirit by measure unto him.* John iii. 34. And hence also we read, that *he was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows.* Psm. xlv. 7. So that Jesus King Mediator was directed, fitted for his work, assisted in it, and carried through it by God the Father. See Isaiah xlii. 1—4. Psm. xxii. 9—11. And observe what is said of him at the close of all his labours. Psm. xxi. 1—7.

2 Every way of a man *is* right in his own eyes :  
but the LORD pondereth the hearts.

3 To do justice and judgment *is* more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.

4 An high look, and a proud heart, *and* the ploughing of the wicked, *is* sin.

5 The thoughts of the diligent *tend* only to plenteousness; but of every one *that is* hasty only to want.

6 The getting of treasures by a lying tongue *is* a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death.

7 The robbery of the wicked shall destroy them; because they refuse to do judgment.

8 The way of *man is* froward and strange: but *as for* the pure, his work *is* right.

Solomon hath set forth in these verses the striking contrast, between the possession and exercise of the graces of the Spirit, and the fruits and effects of the works of the flesh. I do not think it necessary to offer any comment upon either, under the teaching of the Holy Ghost their different origin, issue, and termination will be abundantly plain. The apostle Paul hath given also a striking view of both, in one and the same scripture. Gal. v. 19—24.

9 *It is* better to dwell in a corner of the house-top, than with a brawling woman in a wide house.

10 The soul of the wicked desireth evil: his neighbour findeth no favour in his eyes.

11 When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise: and when the wise is instructed, he receiveth knowledge.

12 The righteous *man* wisely considereth the house of the wicked: *but God* overthroweth the wicked for *their* wickedness.

13 Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.

14 A gift in secret pacifieth anger: and a reward in the bosom strong wrath.

15 *It is* joy to the just to do judgment: but destruction *shall be* to the workers of iniquity.

16 The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead.

17 He that loveth pleasure *shall be* a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich.

18 The wicked *shall be* a ransom for the righteous, and the transgressor for the upright.

19 *It is* better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman.

The first and last of these verses are to the same effect. They both express the dreadful state of a sinful unregenerate heart, which pours forth evil, and that continually. Alas! what cause have we in the view of such things, to lament over a sinful, fallen, nature. Precious Jesus! what, but for thy great undertaking in the redemption of that nature, and the regeneration of the heart, could have saved from the wrath to come? James iii. 14—16. And what a beautiful contrast follows in verses 17, 18?

20 *There is* treasure to be desired, and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man spendeth it up.

What treasure is this, but that which is derived from him, *in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*. Coloss. ii. 3. And how doth the foolish spend it up? Surely, when despising his great salvation and rejecting this counsel of God against their own souls.

21 He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life, righteousness, and honour.

22 A wise *man* scaleth the city of the mighty, and casteth down the strength of the confidence thereof.

Are not these things marked in opposition to what was said of the foolish man which went before? Surely that man is wise who followeth after Jesus, who is the righteousness of his people, and *the mercy promised*. And is not such a pursuit like scaling all the walls of opposition, that stand in the way of attainment? In confirmation, read those scriptures where Christ is said to be the salvation of Jehovah, and from whom alone righteousness is found. Isaiah xlix. 6. and again Isaiah liv. 17. And Christ is the very mercy promised. Luke i. 72.

23 Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles.

24 Proud *and* haughty scorner *is* his name, who dealeth in proud wrath.

25 The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour.

26 He coveteth greedily all the day long : but the righteous giveth and spareth not.

27 The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination : how much more, *when* he bringeth it with a wicked mind?

28 A false witness shall perish : but the man that heareth speaketh constantly.

29 A wicked man hardeneth his face : but *as for* the upright, he directeth his way.

30 *There is* no wisdom, nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD.

31 The horse is prepared against the day of battle : but safety is of the LORD.

I include the whole under one view that the Reader may form his own conclusions under the Spirit's guidings, and which I am persuaded will correspond to the sentiment the wise man closeth the chapter with. Whatever are our plans or our devices, the counsel of the Lord standeth sure. All our attainments are but as the strength of horses in battle ; there can be no safety but in Jesus. If he be our portion all is well. *If Christ be for us, who can be against us?* But if void of him, he can make even our very comforts minister to our destruction. Reader! pray take in with these scriptures that blessed portion of the apostle's, as a divine confirmation of the whole ; Romans viii. 31 to the end.

### REFLECTIONS.

READER! amidst the mingled view this chapter affords of grace and corruption, in all their opposite effects and consequences, as well as their origin and termination, oh ! that God the Holy Ghost may be our teacher, to give us a right understanding in all things. If the heart of man be subject to divine direction, and man of himself cannot guide his steps aright ; can there be any argument wanting to induce the soul to look unto him, with whom are the issues of life, and who turneth the heart like rivers of waters whithersoever he pleaseth ?

Reader! look closely to what this chapter relates of the unawakened and ungodly. They are uncircumcised in heart and ears. How prone to all evil, how averse to all good ; they are in drudgery to sin and Satan, and are led captive by him at his will. Oh ! that *the prey may be taken from the mighty ; and the lawful captive delivered.*

Look at the souls of the regenerate, and those of whom Jesus hath opened the eyes, and brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death. Their delight is in the law of the Lord, and in that law do they exercise themselves day and night. They have God for their Father, Christ for their portion, and the Holy Ghost for their teacher and guide. Lord, help both Writer and Reader, to be thus blessed, thus led, and thus made happy! May we be conducted on *from strength to strength until that we appear before our God in Zion.*



## CHAP XXII.

**A** *GOOD* name is rather to be chosen than great riches, *and* loving favour rather than silver and gold.

2 The rich and poor meet together: the LORD is the maker of them all.

There is a vast dissimilarity in those two verses, but both have great and important truths contained in them. What name so precious as Christ's, and what riches like his. This name is like ointment poured forth for fragrancy. Song i. 3. Eccles. vii. 1. All the inequalities of life are of divine appointment. It is blessed when both characters find their equality in Jesus. The Lord is then both the Maker and the Redeemer of all.

3 A prudent *man* foreseeeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.

4 By humility *and* the fear of the LORD are riches, honour, and life.

5 Thorns *and* snares are in the way of the forward: he that doth keep his soul shall be far from them.

6 Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

7 The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.

8 He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity: and the rod of his anger shall fail.

9 He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor.

To whom can this eye of bounty be applied in an equal degree, but to that of Jesus? He indeed is the heavenly Pelican that giveth of his body and blood to his young.

10 Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease.

11 He that loveth pureness of heart, *for* the grace of his lips the king *shall be* his friend.

12 The eyes of the LORD preserve knowledge, and he overthroweth the words of the transgressor.

13 The slothful *man* saith, *There is* a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets.

14 The mouth of strange women *is* a deep pit: *he* that is abhorred of the LORD shall fall therein.

15 Foolishness *is* bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.

If there were no other passage in scripture in proof of original corruption than this last, this alone would confirm the doctrine. Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; it is innate, born there, and inwrought in the very constitution. Psm. li. 5.

16 He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, *and* he that giveth to the rich, *shall* surely come to want.

17 Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge.

18 For *it is* a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee; they shall withal be fitted in thy lips.

19 That thy trust may be in the LORD, I have made known to thee this day, even to thee.

20 Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge,

21 That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth; that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee?

22 Rob not the poor, because he *is* poor: neither oppress the afflicted in the gate:

23 For the LORD will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them.

24 Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go:

25 Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.

26 Be not thou *one* of them that strike hands, or of them that are sureties for debts.

27 If thou hast nothing to pay, why should he take away thy bed from under thee?

28 Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.

29 Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean *men*.

Whatever sameness may appear in these proverbs, there is a great variety; and the same truth is made to appear more striking, from being set and placed forward to view in different ways. Upon the whole the great object intended from them, is evidently with a view to endear Christ and the graces of his Holy Spirit, and to mark out the sad consequences of a contrary pursuit.

#### REFLECTIONS.

READER! a name to live while virtually dead before God, is one of the most awful states into which our poor nature can possibly fall. But to be named with a good name in Christ which the mouth of the Lord shall name, is among the highest felicities our nature is capable of enjoying. Solomon seems to have had this in view while sending forth these proverbs. Every thing that can lead to this enjoyment in Jesus, ought to be our daily pursuit and desire. And what can tend to the attainment of it, but an interest in Christ Jesus? The grace of God which bringeth salvation is the only possible means of procuring it. And under the divine blessing this will ensure *whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are pure, lovely, and of good report*. Reader! let me hope that this grace hath appeared unto *you*; and then it will be found that all these divine principles will have their suited influence upon the heart. *He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, it is the companion of fools that is destroyed.*

#### CHAP. XXIII.

**W**HEN thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what *is* before thee:

2 And put a knife to thy throat, if thou *be* a man given to appetite.

3 Be not desirous of his dainties: for they *are* deceitful meat.

4 Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom.

5 Wilt thou *set* thine eyes upon that which is

not? for *riches* certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.

6 Eat thou not the bread of *him that hath* an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats:

7 For as he thinketh in his heart, so *is* he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee.

8 The morsel *which* thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up, and lose thy sweet words.

The wise man is guarding, in those verses, against two of the great leading sins of a fallen nature; the *lust of the flesh*, and the *pride of life*. The sin of luxury, and the deceitfulness of riches. And what multitudes among the sons of men are continually falling by their means. The Lord Jesus, in his unequalled manner, gives a caution against *the surfeiting and drunkenness and cares of this life*, lest the great day of account come in the midst of our enjoyment and find the soul unprepared. Luke xxi. 34.

9 Speak not in the ears of a fool: for he will despise the wisdom of thy words.

10 Remove not the old landmark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless:

11 For their redeemer *is* mighty; he shall plead their cause with thee.

12 Apply thine heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge.

13 Withhold not correction from the child; for *if* thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die.

14 Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.

15 My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine.

16 Yea, my reins shall rejoice, when thy lips speak right things.

Here are precepts against another great leading sin, the *lust of the eye*, the coveting what is not our own; and in the accomplishment of wishes so dishonourable to trample over the just rights of such as cannot stand up for themselves. 1 John ii. 16. What a blessed security, and indeed the only security is that, which ariseth from resting upon Christ, and having him for our treasure and portion. We have a beautiful sentiment of the Psalmist upon this occasion. Psalm xvii. 14, 15.

17 Let not thine heart envy sinners: but *be thou* in the fear of the LORD all the day long.

18 For surely there is an end; and thine expectation shall not be cut off.

Nothing can be more conclusive, by way of strengthening the faith of the believer, than what is contained in these verses. When we consider the transitory triumph of bad men, and the sure expectation of the just; this becomes enough to prop up the soul under all exercises. I pray the Reader to turn to a most delightful passage to this effect. Psalm xxxvii. 35 to the end.

19 Hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the way.

20 Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh:

21 For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a *man* with rags.

22 Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old.

23 Buy the truth, and sell *it* not; *also* wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.

24 The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise *child* shall have joy of him.

25 Thy father and thy mother shall be glad, and she that bare thee shall rejoice.

26 My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.

27 For a whore *is* a deep ditch; and a strange woman *is* a narrow pit.

28 She also lieth in wait as *for* a prey, and increaseth the transgressors among men.

29 Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes?

30 They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.

31 Look not thou upon the wine when it is

red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, *when it moveth itself aright.*

32 At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.

33 Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things.

34 Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast.

35 They have stricken me, *shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.*

All these verses are directed to one and the same subject, and a very animated subject they form, in dissuading from sin and enforcing an attendance on the means of grace. They are so plain and yet so nervous, that any attempt to illustrate, by way of comment, would weaken, instead of heightening the representation. The figure of a man sleeping on the mast, in the midst of a boisterous sea, is happily chosen, to picture the perilous condition of those, who in the voyage of life sleep on, and fancy themselves secure until they fall to rise no more, amidst the waves beneath. *There is no peace saith my God to the wicked.* Isaiah lvii. 21.

### REFLECTIONS.

WHAT evils spring out of the corruptions of our fallen nature! And until grace hath renewed the heart it is full of uncleanness. Like the poor man under the possession of the enemy whose name was Legion; so troops of lusts, and a legion of foes of darkness lead the heart under continued captivity. Every sin, every vanity of life, as Barrabbas of old, is preferred to the Redeemer. The meanest husks of the world, the dross of fancied happiness, in short any thing and every thing of a carnal nature, takes the lead in the carnal mind. Lord! I would say for myself and Reader, give to us to know and seek the unfading pleasures which are in Christ and his gospel. Here let our desires be directed, and in him and his great salvation let all our wishes centre. Blessed Jesus! thou hast said, and the truth of it is undeniable; he that hath thee hath substance, and *thou wilt fill all his treasures, for riches and honor are with thee; yea, durable riches and righteousness.*

## CHAP. XXIV.

**B**E not thou envious against evil men, neither desire to be with them.

2 For their heart studieth destruction, and their lips talk of mischief.

3 Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established:

4 And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches.

5 A wise man *is* strong; yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength.

6 For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in the multitude of counsellors *there is* safety.

7 Wisdom *is* too high for a fool: he openeth not his mouth in the gate.

8 He that deviseth to do evil shall be called a mischievous person.

9 The thought of foolishness *is* sin: and the scorner *is* an abomination to men.

If we carry on, as undoubtedly we ought, the same idea of wisdom through the whole book of the Proverbs as we began it with, and consider that Christ is the wisdom of God that is spoken of, we shall find some very sweet things concerning Jesus in these verses. It is indeed through Christ, and in Christ, and upon Christ, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, is built. *Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, and which God the Father himself laid in Zion.* Isaiah xxviii. 16. 1 Cor. iii. 11. 2 Cor. v. 1. And as the foundation is Christ, so all the chambers of the covenant are his; and in them the believer finds retreat in times of danger, and every thing of riches that is precious and pleasant. Isaiah xxvi. 20. But as the Proverb here expresseth it, the knowledge and enjoyment of Christ is too high for a fool; the Lord hath not imparted to him this knowledge. Christ is and ever will be to all such while precious to his people, *a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence.* 1 Pet. ii. 7, 8. I detain the Reader in this place to make a short observation upon the scripture expression *of a fool*, concerning whom it is said that wisdom is too high for such an one; and I detain the Reader for this purpose, because it may serve not only for the present but for every other occasion, whensoever he meets with the term in God's word. And the best, indeed the only infallible method of coming to the right knowledge of

this, or any other scriptural expressions, is by comparing scripture with scripture. Now by a fool is meant, one that is ignorant of Christ. Hence therefore the wicked and unregenerate are stiled *men void of understanding*; they have eyes, and see not; ears, and hear not; and the like. So that when the prophet was commissioned to tell the church the final state of such characters, he expresseth himself in those striking words, *for it is a people of no understanding, therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour*. Isaiah xxvii. 11. And that there might be no misapprehension upon a point of such infinite consequence, but that every one might discover the cause of things; and that the folly here and elsewhere spoken of is, not the weakness of intellect, but the ignorance of Christ and the despising of Jesus, the Lord Jehovah's one ordinance, and the only one for salvation; Job was commissioned no less to shew, in naming in what the contrary to this folly manifested itself. *And unto man he said, behold the fear of the Lord that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding*. Job xxviii. 28. Hence therefore, the fools of scripture are the despisers of Christ, the wisdom of God. This is indeed the highest folly: and many, very many such fools it is to be feared, will be found at the last day, among that class of men who pride themselves on great wisdom. I refer the Reader for further light upon this interesting subject to the following scriptures: Romans i. 21, &c. 1 Cor. i. 18—29.

10 *If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small.*

If I pause over this single verse, it is but to desire the Reader to make the subject of it personal to himself, and to beg of him to enquire whether Christ be his strength; for this will explain to the full when it is we are weak without him; and why any believer faints in seasons of exercise. According to the strength imparted from Jesus in the actings of our faith upon him, such will be the exact proportion, either of increase or of decline. When we can say, *the Lord is my strength and my song, and he is become my salvation*; then we shall hear the Lord say, *my grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness*. And then like Paul *we shall gladly glory in our infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon us*. Psm. cxviii. 14. 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10.

11 *If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain;*

12 *If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?*

13 *My son, eat thou honey, because it is*



good; and the honeycomb, *which* is sweet to thy taste:

14 So *shall* the knowledge of wisdom *be* unto thy soul: when thou hast found *it*, then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off.

I need not tell the Reader that the honey and the honey-comb of scripture, means somewhat infinitely higher than the mere food of the body. The land of *Canaan*, which was a type of the gospel church, was promised to flow with milk and honey: and hence the gospel call was, *To buy wine and milk without money and without price.* Ezek. xx. 6. Isaiah lv. 1. Christ is himself the honey and the honey-comb, for *his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed.* His word is *sweet unto my taste* (said one of old) *yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth.* Psm. cxix. 103, so that when Solomon recommends the honey and the honey-comb, the Holy Ghost shews from other scriptures this is meant concerning Christ and his salvation.

15 Lay not wait, O wicked *man*, against the dwelling of the righteous; spoil not his resting place:

16 For a just *man* falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief.

17 Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth:

18 Lest the LORD see *it*, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him.

We have a beautiful comment in the enlargement of part of these verses in the Prophet, Micah vii. 5—10.

19 Fret not thyself because of evil *men*, neither be thou envious of the wicked:

20 For there shall be no reward to the evil *man*: the candle of the wicked shall be put out.

21 My son, fear thou the LORD and the king: and meddle not with them that are given to change:

22 For their calamity shall rise suddenly; and who knoweth the ruin of them both?

23 These *things* also *belong* to the wise. *It* is not good to have respect of persons in judgment.

24 He that saith unto the wicked, Thou art

righteous; him shall the people curse, nations shall abhor him:

25 But to them that rebuke *him* shall be delight, and a good blessing shall come upon them.

26 *Every man* shall kiss *his* lips that giveth a right answer.

I pause over this last verse to detain the Reader with a short observation concerning what is here said of the kissing of the lips, in giving a right answer. The church saith, that she *will kiss Christ her brother, when she hath found him*: which is a similar term to that of giving a right answer. Song viii. 1. And the church is said to be kissed by Christ, when at any time he manifests his love to her in some renewed tokens of it, otherwise than he doeth to the world. So that every man shall kiss his lips, when finding Christ, as the poor woman did Christ's feet, because she loved much and had much forgiven. Luke vii. 38. Reader! do not hastily pass away from this view of affection to the person of Jesus. It is blessed, when at any time a right answer is given to the prayer of faith and the enjoyment of Jesus, to have the soul going forth in desires after Christ; in hanging upon Christ, adhering to Christ, rejoicing in Christ, and having none in heaven or earth we desire in comparison of Christ!

27 Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thine house.

28 Be not a witness against thy neighbour without cause; and deceive *not* with thy lips.

29 Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work.

30 I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding;

31 And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down.

32 Then I saw, and considered *it* well: I looked upon *it*, and received instruction.

33 *Yet* a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep:

34 So shall thy poverty come *as* one that travelleth: and thy want as an armed man.

If we spiritualize what is here said of the diligence of the man that prepares his work, and then builds his house, and what is said of the negligence of the slothful; and if we make application of it to the heart,

a very sweet subject will be found to arise out of the different views. Jesus passed by our whole nature, when in the ruined state of the vineyard here described. And lo! all was covered over with thorns and briars. Reader! what he wrought, and what he accomplished, I need not, I hope, tell you. He purchased our lost inheritance with his blood. He then hedged it round, gathered out the stones of it, renewed the face of it; and by turning up the fallow ground of our hearts, prepared it for himself. And what is it now? Doth he not water it continually with his word and ordinances, the sweet influences of his grace and Holy Spirit? Doth he not watch over it for good with his whole heart and his whole soul? And doth he not come into it, to eat of his pleasant fruits, even the graces of his Spirit which he hath planted? Precious Jesus! may my soul consider it well, and receive instruction! May I look up to thee continually as the Proprietor of all! See to it, my soul, that thou art of *the vineyard of the Lord of hosts, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant.* Isaiah v. 7.

### REFLECTIONS.

My soul! while thou art pondering over the very many sweet and precious sayings in this chapter, hast thou not found thine heart warmed within thee, by Jesus speaking to thee by the way, and opening to thee the things here written concerning himself?

Surely Jesus is the Wisdom here spoken of, and he is, my soul, thy wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption! And while thou art seeking from him strength for the day of adversity, thou wilt not faint, as those must do, whose confidence is founded in the wisdom of this world. The rock of ages will be thy support, when those, who lean on the reeds of Egypt, must fail. Yes, my soul, if Jesus be the honey, and the honey-comb of all thy affections, and confidences, and delights; thou wilt find him sweet indeed to thy taste. And let others do what they may, or find delight from whence they can, thou wilt kiss Him, into whose lips is poured grace, because Jehovah hath blessed him for ever. Jesus will be the right answer given to every case, every trial, every need. Be thou my Lord, and my portion, blessed Jesus, for all thy sayings are indeed right, and all thou hast said, my soul most cordially approveth. Then will my soul humbly kiss thy feet, and I will wash them with my tears, and wipe them in token of my sorrow for sin, like another Magdalene, with the hairs of my head. I will kiss them as a pledge of love, of duty, of obedience, of homage, of reverence; for I earnestly desire to give myself up to thee, and to be wholly for thee and not for another. And oh! thou condescending God and Saviour! *do thou kiss me with the kisses of thy mouth, for thy love is better than wine!*

## CHAP. XXV.

### CONTENTS.

*Here are similar proverbs to what were given before; but as the title of them observes that they were copied by the men of Hezekiah,*

*they are particularly marked from those we have already gone through.*

**T**HESE are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out.

Some have thought that those Proverbs here recorded, were copied from among the *three thousand* which is noted, 1 Kings iv. 32. Some have supposed that what is said, 2 Chron. xxix. 3, hath a reference to this business. And others have concluded, that those who copied out these proverbs of Solomon, were the Prophets, who lived about the times of the Kings, Hosea, Isaiah, or Micah. But it is enough for us that the Proverbs themselves are Solomon's, and carry with them marks of inspiration.

2 *It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter.*

God's glory is manifested to the poor sinner in secret, when he speaks to him by his Holy Spirit, and makes him visits, like Jacob's at Bethel. And those, who are made by him Kings and Priests to God and the Father, should delight to spread abroad his glory. Psm. lxi. 16.

3 The heaven for height, and the earth for depth, and the heart of kings *is* unsearchable.

4 Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer.

5 Take away the wicked *from* before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness.

Such is the love of Christ, unmeasurable! Ephes. iii. 16--19. When the Holy Ghost hath taken away by regeneration, the dross of our fallen nature, and new formed us in Christ Jesus, then as gold and silver from the furnace, we are brought forth as vessels of honor for the master's use. Malachi iii. 3. 2 Tim. ii. 20, 21.

6 Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men:

7 For better *it is* that it be said unto thee, Come up hither; than that thou shouldest be put lower in the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have seen.

Our Lord hath sweetly set forth this grace of humbleness. Luke xiv. 7--11.

8 ¶ Go not forth hastily to strive, lest thou

*know not* what to do in the end thereof, when thy neighbour hath put thee to shame.

9 Debate thy cause with thy neighbour *himself*: and discover not a secret to another:

10 Lest he that heareth *it* put thee to shame, and thine infamy turn not away.

11 A word fitly spoken *is like* apples of gold in pictures of silver.

12 *As* an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, *so is* a wise reprover upon an obedient ear.

This is an elegant figure to represent the golden fruit of the gospel set forth by the word of the Spirit. And who is the wise Reprover but the Holy Ghost himself? John xvi. 7, 8.

13 As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, *so is* a faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refresheth the soul of his masters.

Who is this Messenger, this Interpreter, one among a thousand, but the same Almighty Spirit? Job xxxiii. 23. Oh! how refreshing his doctrine! how grateful his influences! Blessed Lord! be thou the faithful witness in my soul of Jesus!

14 Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift, *is like* clouds and wind without rain.

15 By long forbearing is a prince persuaded, and a soft tongue breaketh the bone.

16 Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it.

This last verse I beg the Reader to observe, is put in the form of a question. Hast thou found honey? If we accept it *naturally* in reference to the body, of eating the things, which perish in using; what follows may be taken literally. But if we take it *spiritually*, who can have too much of Christ, the honey found in scripture? We shall best explain this scripture in this sense by another: *I charge ye, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him that I am sick of love.* Song v. 8. As if she had said, I love Christ so much that I am overpowered with my love of him. It hath induced a sickness of soul to long after him more and more. Sweet thought of Jesus this! And which those who have found Christ the very honey and the honey-comb of the soul, sometimes, I hope, know what it is to feel it.

17 Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbour's

house; lest he be weary of thee, and *so* hate thee.

18 A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour *is* a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow.

19 Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble, *is like* a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint.

20 *As* he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and *as* vinegar upon nitre, so *is* he that singeth songs to an heavy heart.

21 If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink:

22 For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee:

The Apostle hath quoted these last verses with a peculiar reference to the blessed effects of grace in the heart. Rom. xii. 19--21. And what should a child of God, who hath tasted of the preciousness of Jesus, do to an enemy? Surely melt him down with coals of the fire of love, in recompensing good for evil. Is not Jesus here peculiarly pointed at? Did he not do all this, and ten thousand times more to us his enemies, when our souls were famished, and an everlasting unsatisfied state of thirst must have been endured, had not he quenched it? Precious, precious Jesus! thou didst indeed give us bread to eat, and water to drink, even the bread of life, and the water of life: yea, thine own body and blood! And how hath Jehovah rewarded thee with the felicity of having redeemed thy people!

23 The north wind driveth away rain: so *doth* an angry countenance a backbiting tongue.

24 *It is* better to dwell in the corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman, and in a wide house.

25 *As* cold waters to a thirsty soul, so *is* good news from a far country.

Were there ever such tidings proclaimed as the tidings of salvation? And what waters to a thirsty soul, can equal the gratification of the soul's thirst, when satisfied with redemption in Christ's blood. News indeed from a far country, for it comes from heaven to earth, and from God to man. Angels posted down to proclaim it; and Jesus came and confirmed it by his blood: blessings on his name!

26 A righteous man falling down before the

wicked *is as* a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring.

27 *It is* not good to eat much honey: so *for men* to search their own glory *is not* glory.

28 He that *hath* no rule over his own spirit, *is like* a city that is broken down, and without walls.

All these are very plain scriptures, explained upon the same gospel principles; and *where the Spirit of Christ is not, they are none of his.* Rom. viii. 9.

### REFLECTIONS.

READER! many very blessed reflections will be found folded up in the bosom of this chapter, and which I pray the Holy Ghost to open and explain to you and to me. And among the many, that of the eating of the honey comb inducing sickness is not the least. If the blessed Spirit be the faithful Messenger to our souls herein, I hope and trust that we shall both be refreshed in the view, as from the snow of Lebanon in the time of harvest, or *the cold flowing waters that come from another place.*

And what sickness like the sickness of the soul, when from having seen Christ as necessary, and having had such views of him as induce those longings and desires after him, which nothing short of himself can satisfy: the whole heart is sick, and every faculty faint until Christ be enjoyed. Precious Lord! give me this sickness, which is not unto death, but *for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby.* Give me so to long for thee; so passionately to desire thee; that like the church I may cry out, *Stay me with flaggons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love.* Let my soul seek after thee as for hidden treasure; follow hard after thee in ordinances; *set thee as a seal upon my heart, as a seal upon my arm, for love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave: may I delight to hear thy name, sweeter than all the melody of music to my ear, or the fragrance of ointment to the smell.* And never, never, give over, until such renewed manifestations of my Lord be made to my heart, that under the impression of thy soul-reviving presence, I can cry out, *It is the voice of my beloved: behold he cometh leaping upon the mountains and skipping upon the hills.* And oh! do thou haste, my beloved, and come, for *hope deferred maketh the heart sick; and when the desire cometh it is indeed a tree of life.* Yes! blessed Jesus, ere long thou wilt come, and we shall part no more. I shall arrive, borne by thee on eagle's wings, to that blessed climate, *Where the inhabitant shall no longer say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.* Amen.

## CHAP. XXVI.

## CONTENTS.

*Under various similitudes, the Proverbs are continued to shew the wisdom of the wise, and the sad conduct of foolish men.*

**A**S snow in summer, and as rain in harvest,  
so honour is not seemly for a fool.

2 As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying, so the curse causeless shall not come.

3 A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's back.

4 Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him.

5 Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.

6 He that sendeth a message by the hand of a fool cutteth off the feet, *and* drinketh damage.

7 The legs of the lame are not equal: so *is* a parable in the mouth of fools.

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

9 As a thorn goeth up into the hand of a drunkard, so *is* a parable in the mouth of fools.

Every one of these parables, no doubt, hath a very significant and pointed meaning. But, so very different is the plan and stile of the oriental method of writing, compared to ours, that it is not very easy to discover the exact reference. One elucidation may, however, serve to throw a light upon many. The inequality of the legs of the lame should seem to imply, how unsuited mingled things in religion are in general; and especially in things which have reference to divine truths. Thus, for example, if the preachers of the gospel mingle things of human merit with divine excellency, and join creature-works with Christ's salvation; here is a vast disproportion, a lameness from inequality. And by a parity of reasoning, the same may be spiritually applied to the other proverbs.

10 The great *God* that formed all *things*, both rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth transgressors.

11 As a dog returneth to his vomit, *so* a fool returneth to his folly.



12 Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit?  
*there is more hope of a fool than of him.*

13 ¶ The slothful *man* saith, *There is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets.*

14 *As* the door turneth upon his hinges, so *doth* the slothful upon his bed.

15 The slothful hideth his hand in *his* bosom;  
it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth.

16 The sluggard *is* wiser in his own conceit,  
than seven men that can render a reason.

17 ¶ He that passeth by, *and* meddleth with  
strife *belonging* not to him, *is like* one that taketh  
a dog by the ears:

18 *As* a mad *man* who casteth firebrands,  
arrows, and death,

19 *So is* the man *that* deceiveth his neighbour,  
and saith, Am not I in sport?

20 Where no wood *is*, *there* the fire goeth  
out: so where *there is* no talebearer, the strife  
ceaseth.

21 *As* coals *are* to burning coals, and wood to  
fire; so *is* a contentious man to kindle strife.

22 The words of a talebearer *are* as wounds,  
and they go down into the innermost parts of the  
belly.

23 Burning lips and a wicked heart *are like* a  
potsherd covered with silver dross.

24 He that hateth dissembleth with his lips,  
and layeth up deceit within him;

25 When he speaketh fair, believe him not:  
for *there are* seven abominations in his heart.

26 *Whose* hatred *is* covered by deceit, his  
wickedness shall be shewed before the *whole* con-  
gregation.

27 Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein:  
and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon  
him.

28 A lying tongue hateth *those that are afflicted* by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin.

I do not think it necessary to enlarge the volume by offering any comment upon what is here said. If read with a spiritual eye to Christ and his gospel, they are all, more or less, capable of conveying much instruction. And, under this point of view, I would recommend the book of Proverbs to the Reader. Prov. i. 6.

### REFLECTIONS.

If the Reader discovers Jesus in the midst of these verses, he will find what the wise man hath elsewhere observed, and with truth is found to be the case, that *his name is as ointment poured forth*. The discovery of his Person, and the apprehension of his character, relations, and offices, by faith, hath a blessed effect to endear the scriptures to our hearts. And indeed without this discovery, what can we be said to learn in a way of salvation. And Reader! whether we discover him or not, depend upon it here Jesus is. Christ is in all, and through all, and with all. He fills the whole in the church, the word, the promises, and the hearts of his people. Lord! open mine eyes to see the wonderous things of thy law. Open mine heart to feel the full influences of thy grace. Be thou the sum and substance of all my pursuits and desires: and be thou *formed in my heart the hope of glory*.

## CHAP. XXVII.

### CONTENTS.

*The sacred writer in this chapter, is still prosecuting the proverbial method of instruction, and adopting various figures for conveying divine truths.*

**B**OAST not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.

The man that looks into the situation of men and things respecting human instability, will discover the beauty of this divine precept. James iv. 13. Christ hath given an important precept on this very ground. Matt. vi. 34.

2 ¶ Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips.

3 A stone is heavy, and the sand weighty; but a fool's wrath is heavier than them both.

4 Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?

5 ¶ Open rebuke is better than secret love.

6 Faithful *are* the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy *are* deceitful.

7 The full soul loatheth an honey-comb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.

8 As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place.

9 Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so *doth* the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel.

10 Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not: neither go into thy brother's house in the day of thy calamity: *for better is a neighbour that is near than a brother far off.*

Amidst several beauties in those verses, I beg the Reader not to overlook that one of a man's own friend, and our Father's friend, and the neighbour that is near. For what friend like Christ, beloved of the Father? And who so near or dear among the neighbourhoods of life, as Jesus? Boaz said, in reference to this, *There is a kinsman nearer than I.* Ruth iii. 12. And so might every son and daughter of Adam say, when referring to the Lord Jesus Christ. For by marrying our nature, and taking a portion of that nature into himself, *He is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh.* Ephes. v. 30.

11 ¶ My son, be wise, and make my heart glad, that I may answer him that reproacheth me.

12 A prudent *man* foreseeeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished.

13 Take his garment that is surety for a stranger, and take a pledge of him for a strange woman.

14 He that blesseth his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him.

15 A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike.

16 Whosoever hideth her, hideth the wind, and the ointment of his right hand, *which bewreaveth itself.*

17 Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.

18 Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof: so he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured.

19 As in water face *answereth* to face, so the heart of man to man.

20 Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied.

21 *As* the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so *is* a man to his praise.

22 Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, *yet* will not his foolishness depart from him.

23 ¶ Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, *and* look well to thy herds.

24 For riches *are* not for ever: and doth the crown *endure* to every generation?

25 The hay appeareth, and the tender grass sheweth itself, and herbs of the mountains are gathered.

26 The lambs *are* for thy clothing, and the goats *are* the price of the field.

27 And *thou shalt have* goats' milk enough for thy food, for the food of thy household, and *for* the maintenance for thy maidens.

There are many charming things spoken of through these verses, and which, if explained upon gospel principles, have a gracious tendency. But it will be better for the Reader to have them opened to his understanding by the Holy Ghost, whose infallible teaching will secure from the possibility of error. Jesus hath said concerning him, *that he shall guide into all truth*: and it is he which shall *take of the things of Jesus and shew unto his people*. John xvi. 13, 14.

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#### REFLECTIONS.

WHAT the wise man hath said in the close of this chapter, of the diligence of looking well to the state of the flock, and the care of the herds, may well be construed into the diligence every man ought to have to the care of the soul, and to know the state in which he stands before God. *Tell me*, (saith the church upon this momentous subject)

*tell me, O thou, whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flocks to rest at noon. For why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions? We never can be too solicitous on points of this nature. Where Jesus feeds; what he feeds with; and how we are growing up in the nurture and sustenance of the spiritual life. Reader! is Jesus your Shepherd? Doth he, who sits in the midst of the throne, and feeds the church above, feed you in this wilderness state below? Is he the bread of God and the bread of life to your soul? Are the lambs for thy clothing, and the goats the price of the field. In other words, art thou clothed with the garment of salvation wrought out by the Lamb of God? And dost thou eat of the paschal Lamb, whose flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed? Oh! for grace to feed upon Christ! and to hear him say; Take, eat, this is my body, which is given for you! Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved!*

## CHAP. XXVIII.

### CONTENTS.

*The wise man is prosecuting the same subjects in this chapter as in the preceding. By various similitudes he teacheth the blessedness of wisdom's ways, and the awful termination of a contrary conduct.*

**T**HE wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion.

2 For the transgression of a land many are the princes thereof: but by a man of understanding and knowledge, the state thereof shall be prolonged.

3 A poor man that oppresseth the poor is like a sweeping rain which leaveth no food.

4 They that forsake the law praise the wicked: but such as keep the law contend with them.

5 Evil men understand not judgment: but they that seek the LORD understand all things.

The sentiments contained in those verses, are all so plain as to require no comment. And nothing can be more happily chosen than in this way of parable, to shew the life of grace in its consequences, and the life of sin in its eventual ruin. The Reader will not fail, I hope, to perceive that what is said of seeking the Lord, as resulting from an understanding in all things, carries with it a correspondence to the same conduct as the *praying seed of Jacob*, in all ages have adopted in seeking the Lord's face in the Lord's strength. Christ is *the way, and the truth, and the life*. And all his seed seek salvation in this way, and in none other. Psm. xxvii. 8. John xiv. 6.

6 Better *is* the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than *he that is* perverse in his ways, though he *be* rich.

7 Whoso keepeth the law is a wise son: but he that is a companion of riotous *men* shameth his father.

8 He that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance, he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor.

9 He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayers *shall be* abomination.

10 Whoso causeth the righteous to go astray in an evil way, he shall fall himself into his own pit: but the upright shall have good *things* in possession.

11 The rich man *is* wise in his own conceit; but the poor that hath understanding searcheth him out.

12 When righteous *men* do rejoice, *there is* great glory: but when the wicked rise, a man is hidden.

13 He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh *them* shall have mercy.

14 Happy *is* the man that feareth alway: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.

I stay not to point out the several very striking testimonies which are contained in these verses. I hope the Reader will read them through the medium of the gospel; and then he will discover how sure the promises are, *which in Christ Jesus are all yea, and Amen*. Who are the poor here spoken of, but the *poor in spirit who are rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom*? And who is the wise son, but he that keepeth an eye upon *Christ the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth*. In like manner, if the whole be interpreted by the gospel, we shall find much sweetness in every one. James ii. 5. Rom. x. 4.

15 *As* a roaring lion, and a ranging bear; *so is* a wicked ruler over the poor people.

16 The prince that wanteth understanding *is*

also a great oppressor: *but* he that hateth covetousness shall prolong *his* days.

17 A man that doeth violence to the blood of *any* person shall flee to the pit; let no man stay him.

18 Whoso walketh uprightly shall be saved: *but he that is* perverse *in his* ways shall fall at once.

19 He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread: *but* he that followeth after vain *persons* shall have poverty enough.

20 A faithful man shall abound with blessings: *but* he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.

21 To have respect of persons *is* not good: for a piece of bread *that* man will transgress.

22 He that hasteth to be rich *hath* an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him.

23 He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue.

24 Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, *It is* no transgression; the same *is* the companion of a destroyer.

25 He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife: *but* he that putteth his trust in the LORD shall be made fat.

26 He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: *but* whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.

27 He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: *but* he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse.

28 When the wicked rise, men hide themselves: *but* when they perish, the righteous increase.

If the Reader will go diligently over the whole chapter, and read the several parts of it with an eye to Jesus, I venture to assure him that in many places, where he might be at first led to suppose there was least

of Christ, he would still find somewhat leading to him. Surely it is blessed to be always upon the look out for him. And if we have but a glimpse of the *king in his beauty*; if we behold but his shade as he passeth by, it will be an ample recompence to our utmost diligence. Isaiah xxxiii. 17. Prov. viii. 17.

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### REFLECTIONS.

READER! I take occasion from the view of this chapter, and the contents of it, to remind your heart, and my own, how truly blessed it must be to find Christ in his hidden word; and what distinguishing tokens of favour it brings with it, when this is the case. And, indeed, may we not suppose, that if some portions of scripture are made more obscure than others, it is with a design to call up the more awakened attention of the Lord's people; that when Christ is discovered in them, the joy of having found him, may be more blessed. Is not this like the riddle of Samson, *Out of the eater cometh forth meat; and out of the strong cometh forth sweetness?*

Precious Jesus! may my soul know thee as the way to the Father, the truth, and the life eternal! And may my soul be always found in this way, walking in it, and enjoying all divine comforts in it. Yes, blessed Lord! this is the highway which the Prophet was commanded to tell the church should be thrown open, and which should be called *the way of holiness*. And while the foolish see it not, and the proud despise it, and the unclean shall not pass over it: *the way-faring men, though fools*, in human sciences, and human knowledge, *shall not err therein*. Blessed God! do thou strengthen me more and more in this way, that *I may walk up and down in thy Name*.

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## CHAP. XXIX.

### CONTENTS.

*Here are many like words to the former, by way of proverbs in this Chapter to the same purport as before, in holding forth the mysteries of the kingdom.*

**H**E that, being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

2 When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.

3 Whoso loveth wisdom rejoiceth his father: but he that keepeth company with harlots spendeth his substance.



4 The king by judgment establisheth the land: but he that receiveth gifts overthroweth it.

By the king here spoken of, must be meant the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the king uniformly intended through all the scriptures, whose government is in righteousness, and who will minister true judgment unto the people. He is Jehovah's king, and so revealed. Psalm ii. 6. xx. and xxi. &c.

5 A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet.

6 In the transgression of an evil man *there is* a snare: but the righteous doth sing and rejoice.

7 The righteous considereth the cause of the poor: *but* the wicked regardeth not to know *it*.

8 Scornful men bring a city into a snare: but wise *men* turn away wrath.

9 *If* a wise man contendeth with a foolish man, whether he rage or laugh, *there is* no rest.

10 The bloodthirsty hate the upright: but the just seek his soul.

11 A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise *man* keepeth it in till afterwards.

12 If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants *are* wicked.

13 The poor and the deceitful man meet together: the LORD lighteneth both their eyes.

This last verse contains an abundance of gospel truths. When the Holy Ghost shines in upon the soul of the sinner, grace breaks through all the darkness of the mind. The poor in spirit, and the deceitful heart of the proud sinner; both are made equal debtors to the rich, free, and sovereign grace of God. Herein, in an eminent point of view, is that scripture fulfilled, which saith, *God is no respecter of persons*. For in the redemption by Christ, it is not that one sinner merits more than another sinner, in being made the distinguished object of such an unspeakable mercy: but that God's rich grace may be magnified. It is not a respect to our person, but a respect to the everlasting covenant of God in Christ. Rom. ix. 16—21.

14 The king that faithfully judgeth the poor, his throne shall be established for ever.

15 ¶ The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to *himself* bringeth his mother to shame.

16 When the wicked are multiplied, trans-

gress on increaseth: but the righteous shall see their fall.

17 Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest: yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.

18 Where *there is* no vision, the people perish: but *he* that keepeth the law, happy *is* he.

I pause over this last verse, to remark, that by the people perishing where there is no vision, cannot be meant that the people of God perish *everlastingly*: for Jesus hath said, that *they shall not perish; neither shall any pluck them out of his hand.* John x. 28. But even the people of God may perish *temporally*: and if they follow blind leaders, and are found sitting under a carnal ministry; here the lack of knowledge must, and will induce great leanness of soul: therefore they may be truly said to perish for the want of soul-enriching supports, arising from the open vision of the word, and secret manifestation, through the ministry of the word and ordinances, of Jesus and his graces. Reader! think herefrom how inexpressibly valuable must it be to have a soul-strengthening fulness of ordinances, and a faithful ministry of the word to sit under, where Jesus hath promised his presence. Matt. xviii. 20.

19 A servant will not be corrected by words: for though he understand he will not answer.

20 Seest thou a man *that is* hasty in his words? *there is* more hope of a fool than of him.

21 He that delicately bringeth up his servant from a child, shall have him become *his* son at the length.

22 ¶ An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression.

23 A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.

24 Whoso is partner with a thief hateth his own soul: he heareth cursing, and bewrayeth *it* not.

25 The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe.

26 Many seek the ruler's favour; but *every* man's judgment *cometh* from the Lord.

27 An unjust man *is* an abomination to the just: and *he that is* upright in the way *is* abomination to the wicked.

It is blessed to mark, both in the entrance, the progress, and the issue of things, the mighty difference between *him that serveth the Lord, and him that serveth him not*. The Prophet did not, without sufficient cause, deliver that most decided sentence: *Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him.* Isaiah iii. 10, 11.

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### REFLECTIONS.

READER! there is an abundance of matter for raising many profitable reflections in the perusal of this chapter: but I beg particularly to call your attention to that solemn verse contained in it, which in itself forms a volume. *Where there is no vision, the people perish.* The most faithful ministers of Jesus have to lament the little success of their labours in the present day: and when they look round and take a leisurely survey of the languishing state of Zion, much cause have they to weep, *between the porch and the altar*, and to besiege the mercy-seat, night and day, with the cry: *Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach.* But what an awful view doth it afford in the consciousness that in many places of this our guilty land, *There is no vision!* Oh! for the Lord to send forth faithful men, anxious to win souls to Christ! And oh! for the Lord Jesus to come himself in every place, whithersoever he sends his word by faithful Pastors, after his own heart, that shall feed his people in true understanding and knowledge. Reader! where, and under what *open vision*, do you sit? That gospel, which holds forth Jesus in the glories of his person, and in the compleatness of his salvation—which humbles the sinner, and exalts the Saviour—which, by laying the creature low, makes Jesus precious; and tends to promote holiness in the life and conversation, in shewing all our springs to be in him: these are precious truths to keep the soul alive, and to prevent leanness and perishing. Reader! may it be your portion, and mine, to be thus *strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus.*

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## CHAP. XXX.

### CONTENTS.

*Here are mingled, with other divine things, a collection of Proverbs as before: but it should seem to be not of the writings of Solomon. Their tendency is, however, the same; and, no doubt, they are of divine inspiration, being a part of the sacred canon of scripture.*

**T**HE words of Agur the son of Jakeh, *even the prophecy: the man spake unto Ithiel, even unto Ithiel and Ucal,*

The Author, or writer, makes this first verse a preface to the subject. His name is *Agur Ben Jakeh*. And it is called a prophecy, what he

here delivers. He seems to have addressed it to two persons, *Ithiel and Ucal*. But this is not certain. Indeed, from the names themselves of those persons, if they may be supposed to have any signification more to the doctrine herein contained, than to their own character, it should seem to be important. *Ithiel* means in the compound, *God with me*: and *Ucal* means *mighty*. So that it hath been supposed, that what is here delivered by *Agur*, is not to *Ithiel*, and *Ucal*, but concerning Christ, to whom those names are applicable. And this seems to be the more probable, because *Agur* means, in its original, a gatherer. So that if this be the intention, then the preface will be the words which are gathered by *Agur*, in prophecy of *Ithiel*, even of God the mighty one with me. And this seems yet more probable from the similar prophecy in *Isaiah*, chap. vii. 14: and again in chap. ix. 6. But if there be the least authority for this interpretation of *Agur's* preface, we shall be sure to find somewhat corresponding in the prophecy itself, in relation to Christ. I pray the Reader to be very diligent in looking out on this ground. And I yet pray more earnestly for that gracious God, whose office-character it is to take of the things of Jesus, and shew to us, to be with us in our going through this chapter!

2 Surely I *am* more brutish than *any* man, and have not the understanding of a man.

3 I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy.

Certainly these verses contain what may well be supposed to form the creed of one taught of God. He begins his discourse in the best manner, in disclaiming all self-knowledge, and all self-righteousness. Thus far we may safely conclude, that if the writer is about to discourse of Christ, his preface is quite in point.

4 Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what *is* his name, and what *is* his son's name, if thou canst tell?

5 Every word of God *is* pure: he *is* a shield unto them that put their trust in him.

6 Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.

Surely the writer, be who he may, is speaking of God and of his Christ. Nay, he seems to have been speaking in the same words as Christ! See *John* iii. 13. I refer the Reader also to those other scriptures by way of confirmation. *Isaiah* xl. 10—16. *John* i. 1—5. *Ephes.* iv. 9, 10. And when the Reader hath duly pondered over the different passages, I beg of him to say, whether any prophecy can be more pointed, than what is here contained, to the person and glories of Jesus? And I beg the Reader to remark yet further, that in the delightful method he hath here adopted of asking his name, and his Son's

name; is it not decided by saying that his name then was *secret*, which hereafter was to be revealed *openly*. Jacob asked his name and it was then secret. Gen. xxxii. 29. Moses at the bush desired also to have some name of authority to go by, and all he learnt was, that it was a Being self-existent, and eternal, that could, and would give a being to all his promises, *I am, that I am*. Exod. iii. 14. And Manoah was told to the same amount, Judges xiii. 18.

7 ¶ Two *things* have I required of thee; deny me *them* not before I die:

8 Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me:

9 Lest I be full, and deny *thee*, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God *in vain*.

Here is the memorable prayer of Agur. In every point of view, as respecting providence and grace, it is very full. Reader! when a child of God hath learnt with full assurance of faith to commit his soul into the hands of Christ, he finds the greater confidence to depend upon a faithful God in Christ for the supplies of the body. He that saveth the greater will be sure to provide for the less.

10 ¶ Accuse not a servant unto his master, lest he curse thee, and thou be found guilty.

11 ¶ *There is* a generation *that* curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother.

12 *There is* a generation *that* are pure in their own eyes, and *yet* is not washed from their filthiness.

13 *There is* a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up.

14 *There is* a generation, whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.

All the several generations here spoken of are to be accounted for the same way. Every unawakened sinner is sleeping in the security of self-confidence, and his eyes have never been opened to see the spots of his own soul. And how then shall he be washed from his filthiness who denieth, because he knoweth not his own uncleanness. How sweet that prayer of David: *Cleanse thou me from secret faults*. Psm. xix. 12. And how becoming that prayer of the leper: *Lord! if thou wilt thou canst make me clean*. Matt. viii. 2. Reader! can you adopt the

language of both? If so, surely you are not of the generation Agur speaks of.

15 ¶ The horseleach hath two daughters, *crying*, Give, give. There are three *things that* are never satisfied, *yea*, four *things*, say not, *It is enough*:

16 The grave; and the barren womb; the earth *that* is not filled with water; and the fire *that* saith not, *It is enough*.

17 ¶ The eye *that* mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey *his* mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.

18 ¶ There be three *things which* are too wonderful for me, *yea*, four which I know not:

19 The way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with a maid.

20 Such *is* the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness.

21 ¶ For three *things* the earth is disquieted, and for four *which* it cannot bear:

22 For a servant when he reigneth; and a fool when he is filled with meat;

23 For an odious *woman* when she is married; and an handmaid that is heir to her mistress.

24 ¶ There be four *things which* are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise:

25 The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer;

26 The conies *are but* a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks;

27 The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands;

28 The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces

29 ¶ There be three *things* which go well, yea, four are comely in going:

30 A lion *which is* strongest among beasts, and turneth not away for any;

31 A greyhound; an he goat also: and a king, against whom *there is* no rising up.

32 ¶ If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or if thou hast thought evil, *lay* thine hand upon thy mouth.

33 Surely the churning of milk bringeth forth butter, and the wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood: so the forcing of wrath bringeth forth strife.

I include the whole of these verses into one reading. They are all descriptive of one and the same thing, namely, the depth of iniquity in the human heart, which, as the Lord hath said by the Prophet, none but He that searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins can know. Jer. xvii. 9, 10. But Reader! what a strength of argument do all these things furnish, to endear, and make interesting, Jesus, and his great salvation. Where, or to whom, blessed Lord, can such poor polluted creatures as are here described, look for deliverance, but to thee, who art the LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS! Reader! while meditating these things, and learning therefrom the universal depravity and corruption of the heart, can you join issue in that blessed scripture, in a consciousness of being the happy partaker of it! *And such were some of you: but ye are washed; but ye are sanctified; but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.* 1 Cor. vi. 11.

### REFLECTIONS.

BLESSED Lord Jesus! I desire to adore thee, for having added to all thy servants the Prophets in their testimonies concerning thee, this charming portion of Agur. Indeed, O Lord, I cannot but accept what is here said by him, as referring to thee. For who is the *Ithiel* of the scripture, but JESUS? And who is the *Ucal* of his people, but He, that is the Lord our righteousness, mighty to save? I may well find interest in the words of Agur; for I can truly say with him, as referring to nature, void of thy divine teaching; *I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man.* And hadst thou not, by the teaching of thy blessed Spirit, brought me acquainted with thyself, I might have been for ever asking, without obtaining an answer: what is the name of Jehovah; and what the name of Jesus? But now, Lord, through thy grace preventing me, I do know thee, and desire to love thee, and to live to thee, and rejoice in thee. And because of the

savor of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth  
*They that know thy name, will put their trust in thee.*

Matchless Instructor! let all the divine parables of thy word, be opened and explained to me by thyself. May I see in them, and through them, Christ Jesus; and then in Him I shall find all I need. And, however, to the unwakened, they may remain as a vision sealed, yet if thou, Lord, wilt *open mine eyes, I shall see the wondrous things of thy law.*

## CHAP. XXXI.

### CONTENTS.

*This Chapter, like the former, is styled a prophecy. And whether written, as some think, by Solomon, and others not; yet as in form and manner it is exactly like the former, it forms a very proper conclusion to the book of Proverbs.*

**T**HE words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him.

Many construe *Lemuel*, for Solomon: for as the name *Jeddidiah*, beloved of the Lord, was given him, over and above that of Solomon: so *Lemuel*, which signifies *one for God*, they think may be his also. 2 Sam. xii. 25. But this is but conjecture. Taught of his mother, should seem to carry with it, that it means no more than that the mother of *Lemuel* brought him up, as all pious parents are taught to do, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Ephes. vi. 4.

2 What, my son? and what, the son of my womb? and what, the son of my vows?

3 Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings.

4 *It is* not for kings, O Lemuel, *it is* not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink;

5 Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted.

6 ¶ Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts.

7 Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.

What is the strong drink here alluded to, but the rich wine of the gospel? The feast of marrow, and of wine on the lees, which the Lord of hosts hath made for all people, in the mountain of the Lord's house.



If the Reader would see both the fulness and fatness of this feast, I refer him to the account of it, Isaiah xxv. 6-8.

8 Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction.

9 Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy.

When a poor sinner hath once had his mouth and heart opened by grace, the same Lord that wrought the work in grace, will open it also in praise. And then he that hath found mercy, will plead for mercy. 1 Pet. iv. 10.

10 ¶ Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.

11 The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.

12 She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.

13 She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands.

14 She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar.

15 She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.

16 She considereth a field and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.

17 She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms.

18 She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night.

19 She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.

20 She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.

21 She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet.

22 She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing *is* silk and purple.

23 Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land.

24 She maketh fine linen, and selleth *it*: and delivereth girdles unto the merchant.

25 Strength and honour *are* her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.

26 She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue *is* the law of kindness.

27 She looketh well to the ways of her household; and eateth not the bread of idleness.

28 Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband *also*, and he praiseth her.

29 Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.

30 Favour *is* deceitful, and beauty *is* vain: *but* a woman *that* feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.

31 Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.

This is a very beautiful description of a virtuous woman. But is it not the church of Christ, that is intended by it? As the scriptures are full of the praises of Christ, so we find in many portions of the word, similar commendations of the church's beauty. For being made comely by the comeliness which he hath put upon her, she is lovely in his eyes, and no spot is found in her. Song iv. 7. In the forty-fifth Psalm, we have a very delightful account given of the church, to which I refer. And the whole book of the Songs, is full of nothing less than the mutual love between Christ and his church. If the Reader will compare what is here said concerning the virtuous woman, and what is said in the scriptures I have referred to, as well as other parts of the word of God, in reference to the church, he will find that, however individually considered, it may be said of every child of God, what is here rehearsed; yet, it is collectively spoken of the Bride, the Lamb's wife. Rev. xxi. 2--9. Of her as appearing in the eyes of Jesus, it may be truly said; *Many daughters have done excellently, but she excelleth them all.*

#### REFLECTIONS.

AND now, Reader, having gone over this book of the Proverbs, and having seen that in many parts of them, it is of Jesus they principally

treat; I would desire to close this part of the sacred word, with referring all that hath been offered, by way of comment, to the goodness and forbearance of the Lord; beseeching him to pardon the whole, and to let his strength be perfected in human weakness. If Jesus be the wisdom here intended to be set forth (as in many parts of this book, what is said concerning wisdom can be applicable to none but him) it will be our happiest improvement of this delightful scripture, to seek after Christ in, and through all. In Jesus we behold the constellation of wisdom, all the properties of it, concentrated in his one Person. The divine, and human nature, forming one glorious Mediator, the power of God, and the wisdom of God, for salvation to a lost world. In all his offices also, all his characters, as well as in the constitution of his person, wisdom shines out in full splendor. *Here mercy and truth meet together: righteousness and peace have kissed each other.* Blessed Jesus! thou art wisdom itself; even the wisdom of God in a mystery! And in thee are hid *all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* Vouchsafe, dear Lord, both to him that writes, and to him that reads, such suited proportions, as may make us wise unto salvation, through the faith that is in thyself. And let our souls be living under the gracious illuminations of thy holy Spirit here below, until we come to the everlasting enjoyment of thee in glory for evermore.

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## ECCLESIASTES,

OR, THE PREACHER.

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### GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

WE have here another of the Books of Solomon, and written, as the one that precedes it, and as the one that follows, under the Spirit of inspiration.

The title of the book, *Ecclesiastes*, implies a Preachment. And, indeed, the whole scope of it, is to this end. And Solomon the Preacher of it (which is the title he hath assumed upon the occasion) carries with it the idea of *gathering together*, confirms the same. I hesitate not to ascribe this little volume to Solomon, because the first verse proves as much. For though he doth not call himself by name; yet as no son of David was king of Jerusalem but Solomon, it follows by undeniable consequence, that it could be no other than he.