
PROVERBS 16: 1 The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.

Man prepares, but God governs. God has made all things for himself; he hates pride. The judgments of God. The administration of kings; their justice, anger, and clemency. God has made all in weight, measure, and due proportion. Necessity produces industry. The patient man. The lot is under the direction of the Lord.

Verse 1

The preparations of the heart in man - The Hebrew is לב מערכי לאדם leadam maarchey leb, which is, literally, "To man are the dispositions of the heart; but from the Lord is the answer of the tongue." Man proposes his wishes; but God answers as he thinks proper. The former is the free offspring of the heart of man; the latter, the free volition of God. Man may think as he pleases, and ask as he lists; but God will give, or not give, as he thinks proper. This I believe to be the meaning of this shamefully tortured passage, so often vexed by critics, their doubts, and indecisions. God help them! for they seldom have the faculty of making any subject plainer! The text does not say that the "preparations," rather dispositions or arrangements, מערכי maarchey "of the heart," as well as "the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord;" though it is generally understood so; but it states that the dispositions or schemes of the heart (are) man's; but the answer of the tongue (is) the Lord's. And so the principal versions have understood it.

Hominis est animam preparare; et Domini gubernare linguam - Vulgate. "It is the part of man to prepare his soul: it is the prerogative of the Lord to govern the tongue." " מן בר נש תרעיתא דלבא ומן " min bar nash taritha delibba; umin yeya mamlala delishana - Chaldee. "From the son of man is the counsel of the heart; and from the Lord is the word of the tongue."

The Syriac is the same. καρδια ανδρος λογζεσθω δικαγια, 'Ina υπο του θεου διορθωθη τα διαβηματα αυτη - Septuagint. "The heart of man deviseth righteous things, that its goings may be directed by God."

The Arabic takes great latitude: "All the works of an humble man are clean before the Lord; and the wicked shall perish in an evil day." Of a man fit to maken redy the inwitt: and of the Lorde to governe the tunge. - Old MS. Bible. "A man maye well purpose a thinge in his harte: but the answer of the tonge cometh of the Lorde. - Coverdale.

Matthew's Bible, 1549, and Becke's Bible of the same date, and Cardmarden's of 1566, follow Coverdale. The Bible printed by R. Barker, at Cambridge, 4th., 1615, commonly called the Breeches Bible, reads the text thus: - "The preparations of the hart are in man; but the answer of the tongue is of the Lord." So that it appears that our first, and all our ancient versions, understood the text in the same way; and this, independently of critical torture, is the genuine meaning of the Hebrew text. That very valuable version published in Italian, at Geneva, fol. 1562, translates thus: Le dispositioni del cuore sono de l'huomo, ma la risposta del la lingua e dal Signore. "The dispositions of the heart are of man; but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord."

The modern European versions, as far as I have seen, are the same. And when the word dispositions, arrangements, schemes, is understood to be the proper meaning of the Hebrew term, as shown above, the sense is perfectly sound; for there may be a thousand schemes and

arrangements made in the heart of man which he may earnestly wish God to bring to full effect, that are neither for his good nor God's glory; and therefore it is his interest that God has the answer in his own power. At the same time, there is no intimation here that man can prepare his own heart to wait upon, or pray unto the Lord; or that from the human heart any thing good can come, without Divine influence; but simply that he may have many schemes and projects which he may beg God to accomplish, that are not of God, but from himself. Hence our own proverb: "Man proposes, but God disposes." I have entered the more particularly into the consideration of this text, because some are very strenuous in the support of our vicious reading, from a supposition that the other defends the heterodox opinion of man's sufficiency to think any thing as of himself. But while they deserve due credit for their orthodox caution, they will see that no such imputation can fairly lie against the plain grammatical translation of the Hebrew text.

PROVERBS 16: 2 All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weighs the motives.

PROVERBS 16: 3 Commit your deeds to the LORD, and your plans shall succeed.

Verse 3

Commit thy works unto the Lord - See that what thou doest is commanded; and then begin, continue, and end all in his name. And thy thoughts shall be established - these schemes or arrangements, though formed in the heart, are agreeable to the Divine will, and therefore shall be established. His thoughts - his meditations - are right; and he begins and ends his work in the Lord; and therefore all issues well.

PROVERBS 16: 4 The LORD has made everything for its own end— yes, even the wicked for the day of evil.

Verse 4

The Lord hath made all things for himself - He has so framed and executed every part of his creation, that it manifests his wisdom, power, goodness, and truth.

Even the wicked for the day of evil - רשע ליום רעה וגם vegam rasha leyom raah. The whole verse is translated by the Chaldee thus: "All the works of the Lord are for those who obey him; and the wicked is reserved for the evil day." As רעה raah literally signifies to feed, it has been conjectured that the clause might be read, yea, even the wicked he feeds by the day, or daily.

If we take the words as they stand in our present version, they mean no more than what is expressed by the Chaldee and Spriac: and as far as we can learn from their present confused state, by the Septuagint and Arabic, that "the wicked are reserved for the day of punishment." Coverdale has given, as he generally does, a good sense: "The Lorde dotll all thinges for his owne sake; yea, and when he kepeth the ungodly for the daye of wrath." He does not make the wicked or ungodly man; but when man has made himself such, even then God bears with him. But if he repent not, when the measure of his iniquity is filled up, he shall fall under the wrath of God his Maker.

PROVERBS 16: 5 Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD: they shall certainly not be unpunished.

Verse 5

Though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished - The day of wrath shall come on the wicked, whatever means he may take to avoid it. See Pro 11:21.

PROVERBS 16: 6 By mercy and truth iniquity is atoned for. By the fear of the LORD men depart from evil.

Verse 6

By mercy and truth iniquity is purged - This may be misunderstood, as if a man, by showing mercy and acting according to truth, could atone for his own iniquity. The Hebrew text is not ambiguous: **בְּחַסֵּד וְאֱמֶת יִכְפֹּר עוֹן** *bechased veemeth yechapper avon*; "By mercy and truth he shall atone for iniquity." He - God, by his mercy, in sending his son Jesus into the world, - "shall make an atonement for iniquity" according to his truth - the word which he declared by his holy prophets since the world began. Or, if we retain the present version, and follow the points in **יִכְפֹּר** *yecuppar*, reading "iniquity is purged" or "atoned for," the sense is unexceptionable, as we refer the mercy and the truth to God. But what an awful comment is that of Don Calmet, in which he expresses, not only his own opinion, but the staple doctrine of his own Church, the Romish! The reader shall have his own words: "'L'iniquite se rachete par la misericorde et la verite.' On expie ses pechez par des oeuvres de misericorde envers le prochein; par la clemence, par la douceur, par compassion, par les aumones: et par la verite-par la fidelity, la bonne foi, la droiture, requite dans le commerce. Voyez Pro 3:3, Pro 14:22, Pro 20:28." "'Iniquity is redeemed by mercy and truth.' We expiate our sins by works of mercy towards our neighbor; by clemency, by kindness, by compassion, and by alms: and by truth - by fidelity, by trustworthiness, by uprightness, by equity in commerce." If this be so, why was Jesus incarnated? Why his agony and bloody sweat, his cross and passion, his death and burial, his resurrection and ascension? Was it only to supply a sufficient portion of merit for those who had neglected to make a fund for themselves? Is the guilt of sin so small in the sight of Divine justice, that a man can atone for it by manifesting good dispositions towards his neighbors, by giving some alms, and not doing those things for which he might be hanged? Why then did God make such a mighty matter of the redemption of the world? Why send his Son at all? An angel would have been more than sufficient; yea, even a sinner who had been converted by his own compassion, alms-deeds, etc., would have been sufficient. And is not this the very doctrine of this most awfully fallen and corrupt Church? Has she not provided a fund of merit in her saints, of what was more than requisite for themselves that it might be given, or sold out, to those who had not enough of their own? Now such is the doctrine of the Romish Church - grossly absurd, and destructively iniquitous! And because men cannot believe this, cannot believe these monstrosities, that Church will burn them to ashes. Ruthless Church! degenerated, fallen, corrupt, and corrupting! once a praise now a curse, in the earth. Thank the blessed God, whose blood alone can expiate sin, that he has a Church upon the earth; and that the Romish is not the Catholic Church; and that it has not that political power by which it would subdue all things to itself.

PROVERBS 16: 7 When a man's ways please the LORD, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.

Verse 7

When a man's ways please the Lord - God is the guardian and defense of all that fear and love him; and it is truly astonishing to see how wondrously God works in their behalf, raising them up friends, and turning their enemies into friends.

PROVERBS 16: 8 Better is a little with righteousness, than great revenues with injustice.

PROVERBS 16: 9 A man's heart plans his course, but the LORD directs his steps.

Verse 9

A man's heart deviseth his way - This is precisely the same sentiment as that contained in the first verse, on the true meaning of which so much has been already said.

PROVERBS 16: 10 Inspired judgements are on the lips of the king. He shall not betray his mouth.

Verse 10

A divine sentence - $\text{D}\text{O}\bar{\text{7}}$ kesem, "divination," as the margin has it. Is the meaning as follows? Though divination were applied to a righteous king's lips, to induce him to punish the innocent and spare the guilty, yet would not his lips transgress in judgment; so firmly attached is he to God, and so much is he under the Divine care and influence. Whatever judgment such a one pronounces, it may be considered as a decision from God.

PROVERBS 16: 11 Honest balances and scales are the LORD's; all the weights in the bag are his work.

Verse 11

All the weights of the bag are his - Alluding, probably, to the standard weights laid up in a bag in the sanctuary, and to which all weights in common use in the land were to be referred, in order to ascertain whether they were just: but some think the allusion is to the weights carried about by merchants in their girdles, by which they weigh the money, silver and gold, that they take in exchange for their merchandise. As the Chinese take no coin but gold and silver by weight, they carry about with them a sort of small steelyard, by which they weigh those metals taken in exchange.

PROVERBS 16: 12 It is an abomination for kings to do wrong, for the throne is established by righteousness.

Verse 12

It is an abomination to kings, etc. - In all these verses the wise man refers to monarchical government rightly administered. And the proverbs on this subject are all plain.

PROVERBS 16: 13 Righteous lips are the delight of kings. They value one who speaks the truth.

PROVERBS 16: 14 The king's wrath is a messenger of death, but a wise man will pacify it.

PROVERBS 16: 15 In the light of the king's face is life. His favour is like a cloud of the spring rain.

PROVERBS 16: 16 How much better it is to get wisdom than gold! Yes, to get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver.

Verse 16

How much better - to get wisdom than gold? - Who believes this, though spoken by the wisest of men, under Divine inspiration?

PROVERBS 16: 17 The highway of the upright is to depart from evil. He who keeps his way preserves his soul.

Verse 17

The highway of the upright - The upright man is ever departing from evil; this is his common road: and by keeping on in this way, his soul is preserved.

PROVERBS 16: 18 Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Verse 18

Pride goeth before destruction - Here pride is personified: it walks along, and has destruction in its train.

And a haughty spirit before a fall - Another personification. A haughty spirit marches on, and ruin comes after.

In this verse we find the following Masoretic note in most Hebrew Bibles. חצי הספר chatsi hassepher: "the middle of the book." This verse is the middle verse; and the first clause makes the middle of the words of the book of Proverbs.

PROVERBS 16: 19 It is better to be of a lowly spirit with the poor, than to divide the plunder with the proud.

PROVERBS 16: 20 He who heeds the Word finds prosperity. Whoever trusts in the LORD is blessed.

PROVERBS 16: 21 The wise in heart shall be called prudent. Pleasantness of the lips promotes instruction.

PROVERBS 16: 22 Understanding is a fountain of life to one who has it, but the punishment of fools is their folly.

Verse 22

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

PROVERBS 16: 23 The heart of the wise instructs his mouth, and adds learning to his lips.

Verse 23

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

PROVERBS 16: 24 Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.

Verse 24

Pleasant words are as a honey-comb - The honey of which is sweeter than that which has been expressed from it, and has a much finer flavour before it has come in contact with the atmospheric air.

PROVERBS 16: 25 There is a way which seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.

Verse 25

There is a way that seemeth right - This whole verse is precisely the same as that Pro 14:12.

PROVERBS 16: 26 The appetite of the labouring man labours for him; for his mouth urges him on.

Verse 26

He that laboureth - No thanks to a man for his labor and industry; if he do not work he must starve.

PROVERBS 16: 27 A worthless man devises mischief. His speech is like a scorching fire.

Verse 27

An ungodly man diggeth up evil - How will the following suit?

Effodiuntur opes irritamenta malorum "Wealth, the incitement to all evil, is dugged up out the earth."

A wicked man labors as much to bring about an evil purpose, as the quarryman does to dig up stones.

In his lips - a burning fire - His words are as inflammable, in producing strife and contention among his neighbors, as fire is in igniting dry stubble.

PROVERBS 16: 28 A perverse man stirs up strife. A whisperer separates close friends.

PROVERBS 16: 29 A man of violence entices his neighbour, and leads him in a way that is not good.

PROVERBS 16: 30 One who winks his eyes to plot perversities, one who compresses his lips, is bent on evil.

Verse 30

He shutteth his eyes to devise, etc. - He meditates deeply upon ways and means to commit sin. He shuts his eyes that he may shut out all other ideas, that his whole soul may be in this.

PROVERBS 16: 31 Gray hair is a crown of glory. It is attained by a life of righteousness.

Verse 31

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

PROVERBS 16: 32 One who is slow to anger is better than the mighty; one who rules his spirit, than he who takes a city.

Verse 32

He that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city - It is much easier to subdue an enemy without than one within. There have been many kings who had conquered nations, and yet were slaves to their own passions. Alexander, who conquered the world, was a slave to intemperate anger, and in a fit of it slew Clytus, the best and most intimate of all his friends, and one whom he loved beyond all others.

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

Latius regnes, avidum domando

Spiritum, quam si Libyam remotis

Gadibus jungas, et uterque Poenus

Serviat uni. "By virtue's precepts to control

The furious passions of the soul,

Is over wider realms to reign,

Unenvied monarch, than if Spain\

You could to distant Libya join,

And both the Carthages were thine."

Francis.

And the following from Ovid is not less striking: -

Fortior est qui se, quam qui fortissima vincit

Moenia, nec virtus altius ire potest. "He is more of a hero who has conquered himself, than he who has taken the best fortified city."

Beyond this self-conquest the highest courage can not extend; nor did their philosophy teach any thing more sublime.

PROVERBS 16: 33 The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.

Verse 33

The lot is cast into the lap - On the lot, see the note on Num 26:55. How far it may be proper now to put difficult matters to the lot, after earnest prayer and supplication, I cannot say. Formerly, it was both lawful and efficient; for after it was solemnly cast, the decision was taken as coming immediately from the Lord. It is still practiced, and its use is allowed even by writers on civil law. But those who need most to have recourse to the lot are those who have not piety to pray nor faith to trust to God for a positive decision. The lot should never be resorted to in indifferent matters; they should be those of the greatest importance, in which it appears impossible for human prudence or foresight to determine. In such cases the lot is an appeal to God, and he disposes of it according to his goodness, mercy, and truth. The result, therefore, cannot be fortuitous.