

## INTRODUCTION TO PROVERBS

This book is called, in some printed Hebrew copies, “Sepher Mishle”, the Book of Proverbs; the title of it in the Vulgate Latin version is,

“the Book of Proverbs, which the Hebrews call “Misle”:”

in the Septuagint version it has the name of the writer, the Proverbs of Solomon; and so in the Syriac version, with the addition of his titles,

“the son of David, king of Israel.”

This and Ecclesiastes are both of them by the Jews<sup>f1</sup> called Books of Wisdom: and it is common with the ancient Christian writers<sup>f2</sup> to call the book of Proverbs by the names of “Wisdom” and “Panaretos”; names they give also to the apocryphal books of Ecclesiasticus and the Wisdom of Solomon; and therefore this is to be carefully distinguished from them. The author of this book was King Solomon, as the “first” verse, which contains the inscription of it, shows; for he was not a collector of these proverbs, as Grotius is of opinion, but the author of them, at least of the far greater part; and not only the author, but the writer of them: the Jews<sup>f3</sup> say that Hezekiah and this men wrote them; it is true indeed the men of Hezekiah copied some, (~~25:1~~ Proverbs 25:1); but even those were written by Solomon. R. Gedaliah<sup>f4</sup> would have it that Isaiah the prophet wrote this book; but without any foundation. At what time it was written is not certain; the Jewish writers generally say<sup>f5</sup> it was written by Solomon, as were the books of Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs, in his old age, when near the time of his death; though some think it was written before his fall: and it may be it was not written all at once, but at certain times, when these proverbs occurred unto him and were spoken by him, and as occasion served: however, it is not to be doubted but that they were written under the inspiration of God. The Jews once thought to have made this book of Proverbs an apocryphal one, because of some seeming contradictions in it; but finding that these were capable of a reconciliation, changed their minds, as became them<sup>f6</sup>. Among Christians, Theodore of Mopsuest, in the sixth century, denied the divine authority of this book, and attributed it merely to human wisdom; which opinion of his was condemned in the second council at Constantinople: and in later times it has been treated with contempt by the Socinians, and particularly by Father Simon and Leviticus Clerc; but

the authority of it is confirmed by the writers of the New Testament, who have cited passages out of it; (see ~~<6121>~~Romans 12:20 ~~<8115>~~Hebrews 12:5,6 ~~<6122>~~2 Peter 2:22) from (~~<3150>~~Proverbs 25:21,22 3:11,12 26:11). The book consists of “five” parts; “first”, a preface or introduction, which takes up the first “nine” chapters; the “second”, the proverbs of Solomon, put together by himself, beginning at the tenth chapter to the twenty-fifth; the “third”, the proverbs of Solomon, copied by the men of Hezekiah, beginning at the twenty-fifth chapter to the thirtieth; the “fourth”, the words of Agur, the thirtieth chapter, the “fifth”, the instruction of Solomon’s mother, Bathsheba, the thirty-first chapter.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION TO PROVERBS 1

After the inscription, which gives the title of the book, and describes the author by his name, descent, and dignity, (<sup><2100></sup>Proverbs 1:1), follows the scope and design of it, which is to teach men wisdom and knowledge; even such as are simple and foolish, and particularly young men; nay, hereby wise men may grow wiser, and attain to an higher degree of learning, (<sup><2100></sup>Proverbs 1:2-6); and the “first” doctrine taught in it is the fear of the Lord, or devotion to God; which is the beginning of knowledge, though despised by fools, (<sup><2100></sup>Proverbs 1:7). The next is obedience to parents; whose instructions, attended to, are more ornamental than chains of gold, (<sup><2100></sup>Proverbs 1:8,9). And then follows a dissuasive from bad company; in which the arguments made use of by wicked men to draw in others with them, and the danger of compliance, are most strongly and beautifully represented, (<sup><2100></sup>Proverbs 1:10-19). When Wisdom, who is the instructor and teacher throughout the whole, is introduced as calling upon the simple and the scorers to leave their sins and turn to her, with a promise of the Spirit to them, (<sup><2100></sup>Proverbs 1:20-23); but they slighting and rejecting her call, are threatened with just and irrevocable ruin and destruction, (<sup><2100></sup>Proverbs 1:24-32). And the chapter is closed with a promise of safety and rest to those that hearken to her, (<sup><2100></sup>Proverbs 1:33).

**Ver. 1.** *The proverbs of Solomon*, etc.] Who is said to make three thousand proverbs, (<sup><2100></sup>1 Kings 4:32); but whether any of them are contained in this book cannot be said: however, it is certain that they are not all in it, since, if you except the first “nine” chapters, which are the introduction to the Proverbs, there are but six hundred and fifty-nine verses in it; and if they are taken in, they make but nine hundred and fifteen, which are not a third part of the proverbs said to be made by him: however, here are as many and such as God thought fit should be preserved for instruction in all future ages. It was usual with the ancients in all countries, when any truth was found, and established by experience, to wrap it up in a few apt words, with or without a figure; that it might be the better understood and more easily retained, and which were always venerable and

greatly attended to: and of this kind are these proverbs; only with this difference, that these are of divine inspiration, and the others not. The word used for them comes from one which signifies “similitude” and “dominion”<sup>f7</sup>; because many of them are similes or comparisons, and are delivered out in figurative expressions, in metaphors and allegories, and the like; and have all of them a commanding power, authority, and influence upon the mind, obliging to an attention to them. The name of Solomon is put to them, the more to recommend them; who had a wise and understanding heart, as large as the sand of the sea, and was wiser than all men, (<sup><1049></sup>1 Kings 4:29-31); and was an eminent type of Christ, who spake in proverbs also, (<sup><8165></sup>John 16:25). He is further described by his pedigree and office,

*the son of David, king of Israel*; a wise son of a wise father, and king over a wise and understanding people. These titles are added for the further commendation of the book; and it may be observed that they are such as belong to the Messiah, Solomon’s antitype, one that is greater than he, (<sup><8000></sup>Matthew 1:1 <sup><8049></sup>John 1:49).

**Ver. 2.** *To know wisdom and instruction*, etc.] That is, these proverbs were made, and written, and published, to make known or to teach men wisdom and knowledge; not only in things moral, and therefore these proverbs are by some called Solomon’s “ethics”; and indeed they do contain the best system of morality in the whole world; nothing like it is to be extracted out of all the writings of the Heathen poets and philosophers: nor only in things civil; for which reason they may be called his “politics”, seeing they are instructive to kings and civil magistrates, and to subjects; and also his “economics”, seeing they furnish out rules for husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, worthy of their attention and observance: but also they are a means of and are designed to teach spiritual and evangelical wisdom and knowledge; things relating to Jesus Christ, the wisdom of God, and the way of life and salvation by him, the knowledge of which is life eternal. These words, with others that follow, seem to be synonymous, and signify much one and the same thing; and are used to show that the most consummate wisdom and comprehensive knowledge may be attained by means of this book; which, like the rest of Scripture, with a divine blessing, is able to make a man “wise unto salvation”; and is “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness”, (<sup><8185></sup>2 Timothy 3:15,16); where the apostle seems to allude to this text: since “wisdom” here may stand for “doctrine” in general; and

“instruction” may signify the means of attaining to it; and it may be observed, that the word is used for “discipline” and “correction”, as well as “instruction”. If these words are to be distinguished, the first, “wisdom”, may design a wise scheme and plan of truths, and the theory of them and the latter, “instruction”, the learning it and putting it into practice; and for both theory and practice this book is useful;

*to perceive the words of understanding*; which flow from a good understanding, and give a right understanding of things; so that a man may be able to distinguish between light and darkness, truth and error, right and wrong; particularly the doctrines of the Gospel may be meant, which are eminently so, and exceed the understanding of a natural man, and which are only understood by a spiritual man; the means of knowing which are the Scriptures, under the guidance and direction of the Spirit of God.

**Ver. 3.** *To receive the instruction of wisdom*, etc.] Or “prudence”<sup>f8</sup>; of wise and prudent men; and especially of Christ himself, who bears those names, whose instructions this book is full of; and the design of which is to engage the attention of men to them, and prevail upon them to receive them, and act conformably to them. Which instructions respect the following things; and which are added by way of illustration and amplification, viz.

*justice, and judgment, and equity*; that which is just in itself, and according to the nature of God and his will; and is judged so by right reason; and is equitable between man and man, and agrees with the law of God. These three, R. Levi Ben Gersom says, signify one and the same thing; true righteousness, doing that which is just to God and man; which the doctrines of grace, or the instructions of wisdom, teach men to do; concerning which many rules may be collected from this book.

**Ver. 4.** *To give subtlety to the simple*, etc.] Men of mean abilities, weak capacities, shallow understandings, incautious, credulous, and easily imposed upon: these, by attending to what is herein contained, may arrive to a serpentine subtlety; though they are simple and harmless as doves, may become as wise as serpents; may attain to an exquisite knowledge of divine things and know even more than the wise and sage philosophers among the Gentiles, or any of the Rabbins and masters of Israel; or any of the princes of this world, whose wisdom comes to nought; and become very cautious and circumspect how they are drawn aside by the old serpent the devil, or

by such who lie in wait to deceive; and perform their duty both to God and man;

*to the young man knowledge and discretion*; or “thought”<sup>f9</sup>; who wants both: this book will teach him the knowledge of things moral, civil, and religious: to think and act aright; how to behave and conduct himself wisely and discreetly before men; and be a means of forming his mind betimes for piety and religion; and of furnishing him with rules for his deportment in future life, in all the periods of it; and in whatsoever state and condition he may come into. A “young man [may] cleanse his way”, (<sup>(-330)</sup>Psalm 119:9), reform his manners, behave with purity and uprightness, by taking “heed” to the things herein contained.

**Ver. 5.** *A wise [man] will hear*, etc.] With great attention, and hearken to the proverbs and wise sayings herein delivered; for here are many things entertaining to men of years and wisdom, as well as instructive to young men and simple ones;

*and will increase learning*; or “add”<sup>f10</sup> to his stock of learning; or, as the Targum,

“will add knowledge;”

(see <sup>(-60)</sup>2 Peter 1:5); or, “will be wiser”, as the Vulgate Latin version. This is said to show the excellency of this book, and the extensive usefulness of it; indeed wise men will get knowledge where fools cannot, and increase learning where others can get none: there are few books but a wise man will get something out of; and especially such a book as this, and as the Scriptures are;

*and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels*; a man of a spiritual understanding arrives to the knowledge of the wise counsels of God; the doctrines of the Gospel, which are the “whole counsel” of God; are recondite wisdom, the hidden wisdom of God, which no wisdom of man is comparable to. It is the wisest scheme that was ever formed, and which the wit of man could never have devised, even salvation by Jesus Christ; and which was laid in God’s “counsels of old”, which are “faithfulness” and “truth”; the knowledge of which is attained unto by one that is spiritually wise. Moreover, a man that thoroughly understands the things contained in this book is fit to be a counsellor of others in things human and divine; in things moral, civil, and spiritual: he is fit to be in the cabinet council of princes, to be a counsellor of kings; yea, to have the

reins of government in his hands. “He shall possess government”; so the Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, and Arabic versions: or, “he shall possess the helm”<sup>f11</sup>; sit as a pilot there, as the word may signify, and steer the ship aright in which he is; whether it be his family, or the church of God, or a city or corporation, or a kingdom: this book, rightly understood by him, will furnish him with rules to do all things well and wisely.

**Ver. 6.** *To understand a proverb, and the interpretation,* etc.] This may be connected either with the first verse, “the proverbs of Solomon”, etc. are written, as for the above ends and purposes, so for these; or with (<sup><31005></sup>Proverbs 1:5), a wise and understanding man, by hearkening and attending to what is here delivered, will not only attain to wise counsels, but to the understanding of proverbial sayings, and to see into the “elegancy”<sup>f12</sup>, the eloquence and beauty of them, as the word signifies; and be able to interpret them to others in a clear, plain, way and manner;

*the words of the wise, and their dark sayings;* the words and doctrines, not of the wise philosophers and sages of the Heathen world, but of men truly wise and good; and especially of the wise inspired writers of the Scriptures, whose words come from one Shepherd, (<sup><2121></sup>Ecclesiastes 12:11); and the enigmas or riddles contained in their writings, which are so to a natural man, obscure phrases and expressions, things hard and difficult to be understood, yet to a spiritual man, that judgeth all things, plain and easy, (<sup><4124></sup>1 Corinthians 2:14,15 <sup><6036></sup>2 Peter 3:16).

**Ver. 7.** *The fear of the Lord [is] the beginning of knowledge,* etc.] Here properly the book begins, and this is the first of the proverbs, and an excellent one; it is such an one as is not to be found in all the writings of the Heathens. By “the fear of the Lord” is not meant a servile fear, a fear of punishment, of hell, wrath, and damnation, which is the effect of the first work of the law upon the conscience; but a filial fear, and supposes knowledge of God as a father, of his love and grace in Christ, particularly of his forgiving love, from whence it arises, (<sup><3104></sup>Psalm 130:4 <sup><2035></sup>Hosea 3:5); it is a holy, humble, fiducial fear of God; a reverential affection for him, and devotion to him; it includes the whole of religious worship, both internal and external; all that is contained in the first table of the law, and the manner of performing it, and principle of acting: this is the first of all sciences to be learned, and it is the principal one; it is the basis and foundation of all the rest, on which they depend; and it is the head, the fountain, the root an source, from whence they spring; and unless a man

knows God, knows God in Christ, and worships him in his fear, in spirit and in truth, according to his revealed will, he knows nothing as he ought to know; and all his knowledge will be of no avail and profit to him; this is the first and chief thing in spiritual and evangelical knowledge, and without which all natural knowledge will signify nothing; (see ~~<K33>~~ Job 28:28 ~~<B10>~~ Psalm 111:10);

*[but] fools despise wisdom and instruction*; the same with “knowledge” before; they do not desire the knowledge of God, and of his ways and worship, but despise it, make no account of it, but treat it with contempt; especially the knowledge of God in Christ, in which lies the highest wisdom, for this is “life eternal”, (~~<B7>~~ John 17:3); they despise Christ “the Wisdom of God”, and the Gospel, and the truths of it, which are “the hidden wisdom” of God; and all “instruction” into it, and the means of it; they despise the Scriptures, which are able to make a man “wise unto salvation”; and the ministry of the word, and the ministers of it: such sort of “discipline”,<sup>f13</sup> was this, as the word signifies, they dislike and abhor; and especially “correction” or “chastisement”,<sup>f14</sup> which is also the sense of it; suffering reproach and affliction for the sake of wisdom, a profession of Christ and his Gospel; and they are fools with a witness that despise all this; such fools are atheists, deists, and all profane and wicked men. The Septuagint render it, “the ungodly”; and such sort of men are all along meant by “fools” in this book.

**Ver. 8.** *My son, hear the instruction of thy father*, etc.] This is not to be understood of God the Father of mankind, and of that law which he has given them, as Jarchi and Gersom interpret it, but of Solomon and his son in a literal sense; and of anyone that came to him for instruction, any pupil, hearer, or reader of his; and it is a direction to all children to hearken to the instruction of their parents, and obey their commands; so, next to the fear and worship of God, he exhorts to obedience to parents, and proceeds just in the same order and method in which the decalogue or ten commands were written; the first table respects God and his worship, and the second follows, which begins with “honour thy father and thy mother”, etc. (~~<D2>~~ Exodus 20:12), which, the apostle says, is “the first commandment with promise”, (~~<B1>~~ Ephesians 6:1,2);

*and forsake not the law of thy mother*; meaning not the congregation of Israel, the old synagogue, or Jewish church, as Jarchi; and so in the Talmud<sup>f15</sup> it is interpreted of the congregation of Israel, as is “thy father” in



the former clause of the divine Being; nor the operative faculty of the human understanding, as Gersom; but the mother of Solomon's son; and any and every mother of a child, who having an equal or greater tenderness for her offspring, and a true and hearty regard for their welfare, will instruct them in the best manner she can, give the best rules, and prescribe the best laws she can for their good; and which ought to be as carefully attended to and obeyed as those of a father; and she is particularly mentioned, because the law of God equally enjoins reverence and obedience to both parents, which human laws among the Gentiles did not; and because children are too apt to slight the directions and instructions of a mother; whereas they carry equal authority, and have in them the nature of a law, as those of a father.

**Ver. 9.** *For they [shall be] an ornament of grace unto thy head,* etc.] The instructions and laws of parents being attended unto and obeyed by children, render them more lovely and amiable than any beautiful ornament whatever that can be put upon their heads;

*and chains about thy neck;* be that unto them as chains of gold are to the neck, beautify and adorn them; so good works, done in obedience to God and parents, are ornaments of great price, and preferable to any outward adorning whatever; (see <sup><sup>SABB></sup>1 Timothy 2:9,10 <sup><sup>GIBB></sup>1 Peter 3:3,4). The allusions are unto, and the metaphors taken from, those things which are most pleasing and acceptable to children, as fine top knots and golden chains.

**Ver. 10.** *My son, if sinners entice thee,* etc.] Endeavour to seduce thee from thy parents, and draw thee aside from them, from listening to their instructions, advice, and commands; and make use of all plausible arguments to persuade thee to join with them in the sins they are addicted unto, and are continually employed in: for this is not to be understood of such who are sinners by nature, and through infirmity of the flesh, as all men are; but of notorious sinners, who are guilty of the grossest enormities, who live in sin, and give up themselves to work all manner of wickedness; sin is their trade and business, and the constant course of their lives; they are hardened, impudent, and daring, and not content to sin themselves, but do all they can to draw in others; and to preserve youth from falling into such bad company is this exhortation given in this tender, affectionate, and moving manner; next to the fear of God, and regard to

parents, is this caution given to shun the company of wicked men, which young men are liable to be drawn into, and is of fatal consequence;

*consent thou not*; yield not to their persuasions, listen not to their solicitations, show no liking and approbation of them, assent neither by words nor deeds; do not say “thou wilt”; say “I will not”, and abide by it; be deaf to all their entreaties, and proof against all their persuasions.

**Ver. 11.** *If they say, come with us*, etc.] Leave your father’s house, and the business of life in which you are; make one of us, and become a member of our society, and go along with us upon the highway;

*let us lay wait for blood*; lie in ambush under some hedge or another, waiting till a rich traveller comes up and passes that way, and then rise and shed his blood in order to get his money; and the same word signifies both “blood” and “money”, and wait is laid for one for the sake of the other;

*let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause*; or “let us hide”<sup>f16</sup>, the Vulgate Latin version adds “snares”; so Vatablus and others, as the fowler does for birds; or “let us hide ourselves”<sup>f17</sup>; in some private place, waiting “for the innocent”, the harmless traveller, who has done no injury to any man’s person or property; thinks himself safe, and is not aware of any design upon him; going about his lawful business, and having done nothing to provoke such miscreants to attempt his life or take away his property: and which they do “without cause” as to him; “freely”<sup>f18</sup> as to themselves; and “with impunity”<sup>f19</sup>, as they promise themselves and one another; all which senses the word used will bear.

**Ver. 12.** *Let us swallow them up alive as the grave*, etc.] The innocent person, and those that are with him, his servants; our gang is so numerous that we can very easily dispatch him and all his attendants, and bury them out of sight at once, as if they were swallowed up alive in a grave, and so no more to be seen or heard of; and consequently we shall be in the utmost safety and security, there being no traces of what is done, nor any left to make a relation of it, or to give any information of us, or to pursue us;

*and whole, as those that go down into the pit*; who though whole and in perfect health, shall in a moment be destroyed and cast into the pit, being first plundered of all the riches they have about them; for this swallowing them up alive and whole, which is an allusion to a beast of prey swallowing up another creature all at once, not only intends their cruelty in taking away life, but their rapaciousness in seizing upon their substance.

**Ver. 13.** *We shall find all precious substance*, etc.] Among one or another we meet with; gold and silver and precious stones, everything that is valuable; not considering that hereby they were in danger of losing the more precious substance, their immortal souls; and the most precious substance of all, the enjoyment of God, and happiness with him to all eternity, which is the “more enduring substance”: the things of this world, properly speaking, are not substance, though wicked men so judge them; they are things that are not; nor are they “precious”, in comparison of spiritual and heavenly things; but they are what carnal men set a high price and value upon, and risk the loss of their name, lives, and souls for;

*we shall fill our houses with spoil*; Aben Ezra interprets this of garments; but it may not only design the garments taken from the persons robbed and killed; but also their money, commodities, and goods they were travelling with, which in time would be so large as to fill everyone of their houses; covetousness lies at the bottom of all this wickedness; the love of money is the root of all evil.

**Ver. 14.** *Cast in thy lot among us*, etc.] Or “thou shalt cause thy lot to fall among us”<sup>f20</sup>; though just entered, as soon as any booty is taken thou shalt cast lots with us, and have thy full share with those that have been longer engaged;

*let us all have one purse*; or “we will all have one purse”<sup>f21</sup>; will throw all our booty, taken by us into one common stock, and live upon it comfortably and merrily. Jarchi represents it as putting it to the young man’s option, to do which he would, either to cast lots and take his share separately, or let it be put altogether, and so partake jointly with the rest. According to Gersom the sense is, that there should be such an exact division made, that there should not be more in one purse than in another; their shares should be equally divided by lot, and their purses should be alike; one should not have more than another: these are the arguments used by wicked men to allure and ensnare young men to join with them in their sinful ways and practices; from which they are dehorted, as follows.

**Ver. 15.** *My son, walk not thou in the way with them*, etc.] In the same way as they do, which is the broad way that leads unto destruction; set not one foot in it; make no trial of it, whether it will be pleasant and profitable walking in it; the experiment will be dangerous;

*refrain thy foot from their path*; their manner and course of life; do not follow it, nor join them in it; when there is an inclination or a temptation to it, withstand it; stop in time, do not proceed, but draw back, and go on in the way thou hast been trained up in, and remember the instructions of thy parents.

**Ver. 16.** *For their feet run to evil*, etc.] To the evil of sin, to commit robberies and murder, and all manner of iniquity; they are eager upon it, and in haste and swift to do it, (~~2088~~Proverbs 6:18)<sup>f22</sup>; being carried away with their inordinate affections, which are as feet to the soul; and drawn aside with their lusts, and pushed on by Satan, and, encouraged by one another, and so rush on headlong to the evil of punishment also; and which is a reason why their ways and paths should be abstained from, because they bring upon them swift destruction; it is to their own hurt they run, as Jarchi interprets it; though the first sense seems best to agree with what follows;

*and make haste to shed blood*; the blood of innocent persons, in order to get their substance, to cover their iniquity and shame, and that no information may be given of them; this is mentioned as having something very horrible in it, in order to deter from joining with them.

**Ver. 17.** *Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird*.] Or “without cause”<sup>f23</sup>, as the word is rendered in (~~2011~~Proverbs 1:11); and so the words are an illustration of the preceding; showing that the blood of innocent persons is shed without cause, no injury being done by them to those that do it, but is shed without any provocation at all; just as the net is spread for the innocent bird, which has done no harm to the fowler that seeks to take it; so Gersom: or else the sense is, that though the net is spread by the fowler even in the sight of the bird, yet it is in vain to the bird, though not to the fowler; it is so intent upon the corn that is spread about, that it takes no notice of the net, and so is caught in it; and thus it is with those men that are bent upon their sinful practices, upon theft and murder, though their ruin and destruction are before their eyes; and they daily see their companions in iniquity come to an untimely end; they know that they are liable to suffer death by the hand of the civil magistrate, and to be followed by the justice and vengeance of God, and suffer eternal punishment; yet take no warning hereby, but rush on to their own ruin, as follows.

**Ver. 18.** *And they lay wait for their [own] blood,* etc.] While they lie in wait for the blood of others, they lie in wait for their own; and when they shed the blood of innocent persons, it in the issue comes upon their own heads, and is the cause of their own blood being shed; vengeance pursues them, and justice will not suffer them to live;

*they lurk privily for their [own] lives:* while they are lurking in secret places to take away, the lives of others, they are laying snares for their own souls; and the consequence of it will be, that they will be brought to a shameful and untimely end here, or, however, to everlasting ruin and destruction hereafter.

**Ver. 19.** *So [are] the ways of everyone that is greedy of gain,* etc.] That is set upon getting riches in an unlawful way, by robberies and murder; his ways will end in the loss of his own blood and life, and in the loss of his immortal soul; this will be what his wicked ways and course of life will bring him to, and what will his gain profit him then? it would be of no use and service to him could he have gained the whole world;

*[which] taketh away the life of the owners thereof:* or who, even every one of those that are greedy of gain, and will be rich at any rate; such stick not to take away the life of the proper owners of that gain, or money they are greedy of, in order to get it into their own possession; and such wicked practices cannot fail of meeting with a just recompence of reward: or “which” covetous gain, or gain gotten in such a wicked manner, will be the cause of the life of the injurious masters and wrong possessors of it being taken away from them, either by the hand of the civil magistrate, or by God himself. These sins of robbery and murder are particularly instanced in, not only because other sins lead unto them, as sabbath breaking, drunkenness, and lewdness, and issue in temporal and eternal ruin; but because they were very common among the Jews at the time that Wisdom, or Christ, was here on earth: to which time the whole passage refers, as appears from the following verses; and that those sins were frequent then is manifest both from Scripture; (see <sup>4178</sup> Matthew 27:38 <sup>4180</sup> Luke 10:30 23:19); and from the confessions of the Jews, who say<sup>f24</sup> that forty years before the destruction of the temple the sanhedrim were obliged to remove from place to place, because that murderers increased, and they could not judge and condemn them, for fear of being murdered themselves; and it was because of this great increase they were obliged to stop the beheading of the red heifer<sup>f25</sup>.

**Ver. 20.** *Wisdom crieth without*, etc.] Here the person instructing throughout this whole book is represented under the name of “Wisdom”; by which we are to understand not the attribute of divine wisdom displayed in the works of creation; nor the light of nature in man; nor the law of Moses given to the Israelites; nor the revelation of the divine will in general, as it is delivered out in the sacred Scriptures; nor the Gospel, and the ministry of it, in particular; but our Lord Jesus Christ; for the things spoken of Wisdom, and ascribed to it in this book, especially in the eighth and ninth chapters, show that a divine Person is intended, and most properly belong to Christ; who may be called “Wisdoms”<sup>f26</sup>, in the plural number, as in the Hebrew text, because of the consummate and perfect wisdom that is in him; as he is a divine Person, he is “the Logos”, the Word and Wisdom of God; as Mediator, “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge [are] hid” in him, (<sup>500B</sup>Colossians 2:3); and, as man, “the Spirit of Wisdom” rests upon him without measure, (<sup>2310D</sup>Isaiah 11:2). This, with what follows to the end of the chapter, is a prophecy of the ministry of Christ in the days of his flesh, and of the success of it; and of the calamities that should come upon the Jews for the rejection of him: and Wisdom is here said to “cry”, as Christ did, (<sup>40728</sup>John 7:28,37); the word signifies to cry both in a sorrowful way, as Jesus did when he cried to Jerusalem, weeping over it, (<sup>40237</sup>Matthew 23:37 <sup>42041</sup>Luke 19:41); and in a joyful one, which well suits with the Gospel, as preached by him; a joyful sound expressed by piping, in opposition to John’s ministry, which was a mournful one, (<sup>40117</sup>Matthew 11:17); for crying here means no other than the preaching of the word; which is such a cry as that of heralds, when they publicly proclaim peace or war; so Wisdom or Christ, is said to “proclaim liberty to the captives”, and “the acceptable year of the Lord”, (<sup>23001</sup>Isaiah 61:1,2). This cry was made “without” the city of Jerusalem, and without that part of the country which was properly called Jewry; Christ first preached in the land of Galilee; or this may mean the Gentile world, where Christ preached, though not in person, yet by his apostles, whom he sent into all the world to preach the Gospel to every creature;

*she uttereth her voice in the streets*: of the city of Jerusalem, and other places; nor is this contrary to (<sup>40129</sup>Matthew 12:19); which is to be understood of crying in a bawling and litigious way, of lifting up the voice in self-commendation, neither of which Christ did; and yet might cry and utter his voice in the streets, that is, publicly preach his Gospel there, as he did; and he also sent his servants into the streets and lanes of the city to call

in sinners by the ministry of the word, (<sup><2142></sup>Luke 14:21); which perhaps may be meant of places in the Gentile world; nor is this sense to be excluded here; it may be figuratively understood of the public ministration of the word and ordinances in the church called the streets and broad ways of it, (<sup><2182></sup>Song of Solomon 3:2).

**Ver. 21.** *She crieth in the chief place of concourse*, etc.] Where a multitude of people meet together; the Targum is,

“on the top of palaces;”

but rather it is to be understood of the synagogues of the Jews, where Christ frequently preached; and which, from hence, they build in the highest part of the city<sup>f27</sup>; and best of all the temple, whither the tribes of Israel went up to worship in great bodies, and to which the Jews daily resorted; here Christ taught publicly, as he himself says, (<sup><6182></sup>John 18:20);

*in the opening of the gates*; either of the city, at which people went in and out in great numbers; or of the temple, where they passed and repassed continually on account of worship; (see <sup><6123></sup>John 10:23 <sup><41810></sup>Acts 3:10, 11); in allusion hereunto the public worship of God’s house is signified by the gates of Zion, and also of Wisdom, (<sup><1872></sup>Psalms 87:2 <sup><10834></sup>Proverbs 8:34);

*in the city she uttereth her words*; the doctrines of the Gospel; even in the city of Jerusalem literally, and in other cities of Judea and Galilee, the singular being put for the plural; and figuratively in the church of God, often compared to a city; and so all these expressions of “without”, in the “streets”, in the “chief place of concourse”, “the opening of the gates”, and “the city”, may denote in general the openness and publicness of the Gospel ministry, both by Christ in his apostles, in Judea, and in the Gentile world; more especially the former;

[*saying*], as follows.

**Ver. 22.** *How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity?* etc.] Simple foolish things, agreeably to their character, being weak simple men, men of weak capacities and shallow understandings; and such were the first persons that were called by Christ through the ministry of the word, even effectually; they were babes and sucklings in comparison of others, by whom they were despised as illiterate and ignorant of the law; (see <sup><1125></sup>Matthew 11:25 <sup><674></sup>John 7:49 <sup><4026></sup>1 Corinthians 1:26,27); though it may respect the Jews in general, who were externally called by Christ, and were

a simple and foolish people, addicted to silly customs and usages, to the traditions of the elders, and loved the folly and darkness of them, and to continue in them, rather than the light of the Gospel, (~~ABD~~ John 3:19,20);

*and the scorers delight in their scorning*; at Christ, because of the meanness of his parentage and education; at his disciples and followers, at his doctrines and miracles, sufferings and death;

*and fools hate knowledge*? the knowledge of Christ, and of God in Christ; the knowledge of the Gospel, and the truths of it; they hated the light of it, and did not care to come to it, but rather loved the darkness of the law, and even of error and infidelity; they hated Christ, the teacher of true and useful knowledge; they hated his person, though without a cause; they hated him in his offices, as a Prophet to instruct them, as a Priest to be the propitiation for them, and as a King to rule over them; such “fools” were they, and who are therefore expostulated with by Wisdom or Christ; which expostulations show their continuance in these things, and the danger they were in by them, the pity and compassion of Christ as man and a minister of the word, and the fervour and importunity of his ministrations.

**Ver. 23.** *Turn ye at my reproof*, etc.] Or rather “to my reproof”, for the words are not an exhortation to the conversion of the heart, or to him repentance; but to an attendance to the external ministry of the word preached, which reproves of sin, righteousness, and judgment; and does not design the turning of the heart to it, which is God’s work, but the turning of the face and ears to hear it; and so the Targum,

“turn your face to my reproof,”

and not your backs, as they did, showing a dislike of it; or, as Aben Ezra,

“turn ye to hear my reproof;”

turn your ears and listen to it, and do not pull away the shoulder, or stop your ears that you may not hear it;

*behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you*; not “upon you”, but “unto you”: for the Holy Spirit of God is not here designed, and the effusion of his gifts, ordinary and extraordinary, or of his special grace; but the mind of Wisdom, or Christ, as the word is used in (~~ABD~~ Proverbs 29:11). Some interpret it, “here, my will”<sup>f28</sup>; the external revelation of his will made in the ministry of the word, by whom “grace and truth”, the doctrines of grace



and truth, “came” in their full extent, (<sup><3317></sup>John 1:17); for as the doctrines of “grace [were] poured into [his] lips”, (<sup><3481></sup>Psalms 45:2), so they were poured out by them again, out of his heart, as out of a fountain or well, as the word<sup>f29</sup> here used signifies; which denotes the large and abundant revelation of the Gospel by Christ, and is mentioned as an encouragement to men to attend unto it; which sense is confirmed by what follows;

*I will make known my words unto you*; the doctrines of the Gospel, words of grace and wisdom, and such as never man spake as Christ did, his enemies being witnesses; the words of peace and reconciliation, of life and righteousness, and of eternal salvation, which were made known in a ministerial way by Christ and his apostles; but the Jews were such fools as to hate and despise the knowledge of these things; wherefore it follows:

**Ver. 24.** *Because I have called, and ye refused*, etc.] This is to be understood not of the internal call of Wisdom, or Christ, which is by the special grace of his Spirit; is according to an eternal purpose, the fruit of everlasting love, peculiar to God’s elect, and by a divine power; and is also a call to special blessings of grace, and to eternal glory; and which is always effectual, unchangeable, and irreversible, and can never be refused, rejected, and resisted, so as to become void and of no effect: but of the external call by the word, to the natural duties of religion, and to an attendance on the means of grace; which may be where no election goes before, no sanctification attends, nor salvation follows, (<sup><4116></sup>Matthew 20:16 22:14); and this may be refused and rejected, as it often is; as when men, notwithstanding that call, do not attend on the ministry of the word, or, if they do, it is in a negligent careless way; or, they show an aversion to it, despise, contradict, and blaspheme it, as the Jews did, who were the persons first called to hear it; (see <sup><4121></sup>Matthew 22:2-5);

*I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded*; this is a gesture of persons calling to others, as orators and preachers, requiring silence and attention; and when eager and fervent, and importunate in their discourses; it is attributed to Christ, (<sup><2381></sup>Isaiah 65:2 <sup><5111></sup>Romans 10:21); but, notwithstanding all Wisdom’s eagerness, zeal, warmth, and importunity, expressed by words and gestures, it was all disregarded; no attention was given to it, which is here complained of.

**Ver. 25.** *But ye have set at nought all my counsel*, etc.] The same with “the counsel of God”, (<sup><4417></sup>Acts 20:27). The whole Gospel, and all the truths of it; the entire scheme of salvation by Jesus Christ, which is the

produce of divine wisdom, and is according to the counsel of the divine will, and his eternal purpose in Christ Jesus; this the Jews set at nought, made no account of, but despised and rejected, as they did Christ, the author of it, (<sup><4011></sup>Acts 4:11,12); as also his ordinances, which go by the same name, because of the wisdom and will of God in them; particularly baptism, rejected by the Scribes and Pharisees, (<sup><4071></sup>Luke 7:30);

*and would none of my reproof*; would not hearken to it, nor take it, nor receive any instruction from it nor caution by it; did not like it, but contemned it, and trampled upon it; (see <sup><4237></sup>Matthew 23:37).

**Ver. 26.** *I also will laugh at your calamity*, etc.] By way of retaliation, measuring measure for measure; even as they scorned him, and delighted in their scorning, now he in his turn will “laugh” at them and their distress; which act is ascribed to the Lord by an anthropopathy; (see <sup><1904></sup>Psalms 2:4 37:13); signifying that he should not at all pity them, show no compassion to them, and have no mercy upon them; but rather express a pleasure and delight in displaying the glory of his justice in their destruction: the plain sense is, that no favour would be shown them, (<sup><2271></sup>Isaiah 27:11). The word translated “calamity” signifies a “vapour”,<sup>f30</sup> or cloud; denoting it would be a very dark dispensation with the Jews, as it was when “wrath came upon them to the uttermost”, (<sup><3126></sup>1 Thessalonians 2:16); even on their nation, city, and temple; as in their last destruction by the Romans, which is here intended;

*I will mock when your fear cometh*; which is the same thing in different words; for by “fear” is meant the dreadful calamity on which brought dread, terror, and consternation with it, and of which they had fearful apprehensions beforehand: wherefore this is mentioned among the signs of Jerusalem’s destruction, “men’s hearts failing them for fear”, (<sup><0226></sup>Luke 21:26).

**Ver. 27.** *When your fear cometh as desolation*, etc.] When such will be the calamity that will occasion this fear, that it shall be like some desolating judgment, as famine, sword, and pestilence, which lays all waste: and such was the destruction of the Jews by the Romans; it not only laid Jerusalem and the temple waste, but the whole country of Judea. These are the “desolations” said to be “determined”, or “the consummation and that determined”, which should be “poured upon the desolate”, (<sup><2085></sup>Daniel 9:26,27);

*and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind*; suddenly and unthought of, fierce, and boisterous, throwing down and carrying all before it: so the said destruction did; it threw down the walls and houses of the city of Jerusalem, and the temple, and its fine buildings, so that not one stone was left upon another not thrown down, (<sup><4142></sup>Matthew 24:2);

*when distress and anguish cometh upon you*; as they did at that time with a witness, when Jerusalem was besieged by the Romans: what with the sword of the enemy without, and the famine within; together with the vast number of cutthroats and seditious persons among themselves; it was such a time of distress and tribulation as never was from the beginning of the world, nor ever will be, (<sup><4142></sup>Matthew 24:22). Josephus's history of those times is a proper comment on these words.

**Ver. 28.** *Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer*, etc.] As he called them, and they refused to answer to his call, (<sup><2024></sup>Proverbs 1:24); so it was just in him to return no answer to them, when they called on him to deliver them from the Romans, and save them from ruin: for this was what they called out for, and what they expected, that the Messiah would come and deliver them; this was what they buoyed themselves up with, and made them so desperate to the last;

*they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me*; this is the very thing that Christ told the Jews, and much in the same words with these, (<sup><4173></sup>John 7:34 8:21); for when he was gone, and they were in distress, then they sought after the Messiah, in the desert, and in the secret chambers, and in this and the other place, where they were told he was; but, alas! they could not find him: the true Messiah, whom they had rejected, was come and gone, and would return no more, until his second coming to judgment; or, however, till he came in his kingdom and power, to their ruin and destruction; of which coming of his the Scriptures often speak.

**Ver. 29.** *For that they hated knowledge*, etc.] Spiritual and evangelical; the knowledge of the Scriptures, of the promises and prophecies of them respecting the Messiah, though they were called upon and exhorted to "search" them; the knowledge of the Messiah, his person, offices, and grace; the knowledge of his Gospel, and the doctrines of it; (see <sup><2022></sup>Proverbs 1:22);

*and did not choose the fear of the Lord*; which is the beginning of knowledge, (<sup><2007></sup>Proverbs 1:7); instead of choosing, they cast off the fear of

the Lord; and by their rejection of the Messiah, and their usage of him, it plainly appeared that the fear of God was not before their eyes nor upon their hearts; nor did they choose or care for the pure, spiritual, and evangelical worship of God, introduced in the Gospel dispensation; the ordinances of Christ they did not choose to submit to; and would neither go into the kingdom of God or Gospel church state themselves, nor suffer those that were entering to go in, (<sup><42313></sup>Matthew 23:13); but rather chose their superstition and will worship, according to the tradition of the elders, by which they made the word and worship of God of none effect.

**Ver. 30.** *They would none of my counsel*, etc.] Neither his doctrines nor his ordinances; nor would they attend to the wholesome counsel and advice he gave them in his sermons upon the mount, and in other discourses of his at other times and places;

*they despised all my reproof*; for their hypocrisy, uncleanness, covetousness, and other sins they were addicted to; (see <sup><42313></sup>Matthew 23:1-36); but they “derided” him for it, (<sup><2164></sup>Luke 16:14); where the same word is used as is by the Septuagint here. These things are repeated from (<sup><31025></sup>Proverbs 1:25), to observe their ingratitude, and how just was their ruin, and what the true cause of it.

**Ver. 31.** *Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way*, etc.] Their evil ways; be punished according to their deserts, and receive the just reward of their iniquities; (see <sup><3380></sup>Isaiah 3:10,11);

*and be filled with their own devices*; or “counsels”<sup>f31</sup>: their device and counsel was to put Christ to death; to deliver him to the Roman governor, that he might be crucified, as he was: and they afterwards had their bellyful of crucifixion, as the word<sup>f32</sup> used signifies; such vast numbers of them were crucified by the Romans before the walls of the city, five hundred a day, and sometimes more; insomuch that room was needed for crosses, and crosses for bodies<sup>f33</sup>.

**Ver. 32.** *For the turning away of the simple shall slay them*, etc.] Or be the cause of their being slain; even their turning away from Christ, their aversion to him; their turning their backs on him, and a deaf ear to him; their turning away from his Gospel, and putting it from them, thereby judging themselves unworthy of everlasting life: in all which they showed themselves to be the “simple” and “foolish” persons they were; and for which wrath and ruin came upon them, and they were slain with the sword

and famine, and by one another. Some render it, as Aben Ezra, “the rest” or “quietness of the simple”<sup>f34</sup>, etc. taking up their rest in themselves, and in their observance of ceremonies and traditions; and crying Peace, peace, when sudden destruction was at hand: or a stubborn hardened rest in sin, a seared conscience; having no sense of guilt, nor fear of punishment; living in carnal security till death should seize upon them;

*and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them*; that is, the abuse of it; leading them to commit sins, which bring destruction upon them; or, seeing sinners live with impunity, and prosper in the world, take encouragement from thence to indulge themselves in sin, which is their ruin; or, being in prosperity, think it will always be well with them, and therefore put away the evil day far from them, which comes upon them at an unawares; which was the case of the Jews.

**Ver. 33.** *But whoso hearkeneth unto me*, etc.] To Wisdom, or Christ; to the cry and call above; to the voice of his Gospel, not only externally, but internally; so as spiritually and experimentally to understand it, to distinguish it from the voice of a stranger; so as to approve of it, and receive it in the love of it, and to delight and take pleasure in it; so as to feel the power of it, and believe it; not only give an assent unto it, but by faith receive it, and appropriate the things of it to a man’s self: and also to the voice of his precepts, his ordinances; so as to yield a cheerful obedience to them, from a principle of love, with a view to his glory, and without trusting to and depending upon it. Such

*shall dwell safely*; as they must indeed, since they dwell in God; in his heart, “the secret place of the most High”; and in his everlasting and unchangeable love, wherefore they are not consumed; and in the covenant of his grace, which is firm, and sure, and immovable; and in his power, by and in which they are kept, as in a garrison, fortress, or strong hold: and they dwell in Christ the Rock of ages, against which the gates of hell cannot prevail, and on which their souls are built; and so remain safe amidst the floods, storms, and tempests, that beat upon them; the refuge to which they flee, the strong hold to which they turn, and whither they run and are safe; the ark in which they ride safely, amidst all the waves and billows of affliction and tribulation; their place of defence, where they are safe from Satan; and are in his hands out of which none can pluck them, the Lord their righteousness, by whom Judah is saved, and under whom Israel dwells safely; being by his righteousness secure from divine justice,

from the curse of the law, and from wrath to come: besides, such have the Spirit dwelling in them, who is greater than he that is in the world; who when he, the enemy, comes in upon them as a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifts up a standard against him; angels are their guardians, encamp about them; and they are the inhabitants of a strong city, which has salvation for walls and bulwarks; and especially they will dwell safely in the other world, in those mansions and everlasting habitations in Christ's Father's house he is preparing for them; which are sure dwellings, as well as quiet resting places, as follows;

*and shall be quiet from fear of evil*; as they may be in the present life, under a comfortable sense of the blood, righteousness, and sacrifice of Christ: which, when applied and laid hold on by faith, speak peace to the conscience, and yield quietness of mind; so that such have no reason to be afraid of the evil one, Satan, who cannot devour and destroy them; nor of the evil of sin; for, though they may and should be afraid to commit it, yet not of being conquered by it, and coming under the dominion of it, nor of being brought by it into a state of condemnation; nor of the evil of judgments upon a wicked world; nor of death and a future judgment; nor of hell, and everlasting damnation: and hereafter such will enter into peace, and be free from all evils, natural, moral, or spiritual; and from the fear of them, being out of the reach of them all. The safety and protection of those that hearken to Christ, and believe in him, here promised, had a remarkable accomplishment in the believing Jews; who, a little before the destruction of Jerusalem, were warned to go out from thence to a place called Pella, beyond Jordan<sup>f35</sup> as they did, and where they were safe.