



Proverbs and Wisdom

The word of God came to the people of Israel in different ways. We have already dealt with the origin of the *prophetic* and *historical* books: they arose from the prophets' preaching and from the reflection of religious circles on the history of Israel.

However, other believers preferred to meditate on human behavior, the vicissitudes of life, the different fortunes of those who are irresponsible and those who control their desires. In particular, they wanted to understand God's justice in this world.

The wisdom of people of all times has developed around these themes. We hear about Chinese wisdom, Hindu wisdom... Yet, the wisdom of the Middle East may have come first. There had been an abundance of wisdom writings for almost thirty centuries before Christ both in Egypt and Mesopotamia (as we know, Palestine is between the borders of these two countries).

Having come to culture later, the Israelites took part in this "sapiential" literature at the time of king Solomon who had gathered the first "sages." Their first works (such as Chaps. 10–31 of Proverbs) owed a great deal to their Egyptian predecessors although for the most part, they merely used the "proverbs" or the "maxims" of popular wisdom. In turn, by their writings, they were to help every effort in developing the instruction and moral sense of future generations. There must have been a temple school where young people received their education by learning, meditating and developing the sages' proverbs and instructions.

The Jewish people were profoundly marked by this wisdom which shines through almost all the parables and "sayings" of Jesus.

This literature, what the religious community has preserved and accepted, is no less the word of God than the prophetic books. Even if, at times, this wisdom seems a bit pedestrian and utilitarian, it does attest to many convictions of the Jewish and the Christian faiths, namely, as human beings, we are responsible for our actions; experience is a teacher of truth and it is the touchstone of what sages have declared; God created the world and he reveals himself in his creation. Finally, our wisdom has its limits and beyond that, we can only put our trust in the justice and the providence of God.

The greater part of the *Book of Proverbs* is very old (Chaps. 10–31). The first section (Chaps. 1–9), however, is much more recent, around the second century before Christ. There we find a meditation on the *Wisdom of God*, from which all human wisdom proceeds. The height of this contemplation on divine Wisdom is found in the famous eighth chapter.

1

- ¹These are proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel:
 - ²for you to obtain wisdom and instruction,
 - to penetrate words of significance,
 - ³to acquire well-ordered knowledge,
 - and become just, with discernment and integrity.
 - ⁴Simple people will become clever
 - and the young will acquire understanding and foresight.
 - ⁵Let the wise man listen: he will add to his learning,
 - and the man of sound judgment will acquire skill,
 - ⁶to understand the proverbs and sayings,
 - the words of the wise and their riddles.
 - ⁷The beginning of knowledge is the fear of Yahweh,
 - only fools have contempt for wisdom and discipline.

Ps
111:10;
Job
28:28

Avoid the company of evildoers

^{6:20} ⁸Listen, my son, to the teaching of your father, do not ignore your mother's instruction: ⁹for they will be your graceful crown, a precious chain around your neck.

Sir 6:24;
6:29

¹⁰My son, if sinners try to tempt you, do not give in.

¹¹They will invite you, "Come with us, let us spill blood; let us ambush the innocent without a second thought. ¹²We will engulf them, as does the netherworld, and snatch them suddenly, as does death. ¹³We will help ourselves to many riches and fill our houses with booty. ¹⁴Join forces with us; one purse will be shared between us!"

¹⁵My son, do not go with them, do not set foot along their way. ¹⁶See how they speed on to evil! How they hasten to spill blood!

¹⁷What bird would fall into a trap if you set it up in its sight? ¹⁸But these people stalk themselves and set a trap for their own lives.

¹⁹Such is the lot of all who live by plunder: plunder will rob them of their own lives.

Listen to me today

- ²⁰Wisdom shouts aloud in the streets, she raises her voice in the marketplace; ²¹at street corners she cries; she delivers her speeches at the city gates:

8:1-10;
9:3;
Jn 7:37

²²"You ignorant people, how long will you continue to cling to your foolishness? How long will mockers revel in their mockery, and fools have contempt for knowledge?"

²³Listen to my warning. I will now pour my spirit upon you and make you know my words.

²⁴Indeed if I cry out and you refuse to listen, if I offer my hand and no one cares, ²⁵if you ignore my advice and reject my warning, ²⁶I, in turn, will laugh at your disaster, I will sneer when terror grips you; ²⁷when terror comes down on you like a hurricane, and distress and anxiety befall you.

Is 65:2;
65:12;
66:4;
Jer 7:13

• **1.1** From the beginning, people are divided into two groups. On one hand, the wise which includes the intelligent, clever and responsible; on the other hand, the foolish, including also those who are stupid, lying and evil.

The beginning of knowledge is the fear of Yahweh (v. 7). This word "fear" does not have for us the meaning it had in the Scriptures. It is not, in fact, a matter of being afraid of God, but to be conscious of acting in his presence and of being responsible to him. Those who "fear Yahweh" make fidelity and obedience to his word the basis of their decisions.

• **20.** An invitation to be converted today. Tomorrow will be too late. Jesus will say the same: Matthew 7:21 and 25:1.

Wisdom shouts aloud in the streets. Who will be able to say that no one awakened him and showed him the way? Subhuman conditions of life make a people irresponsible, but irresponsible people also make a subhuman world. All are invited, however, to come out of their passivity.

They did not choose the fear of Yahweh (v. 29). It is easy to excuse oneself: "There is no malice on my part; it is a question of negligence."

Jer
11:11;
Jn 7:34

²⁸Then people will cry to me but I will not respond. They will seek me but will not find me, ²⁹because they despised knowledge and did not choose the fear of Yahweh; ³⁰they would not listen to any advice and they rejected all my warnings.

³¹They will harvest the fruit of their evil ways and have their fill of their own designs. ³²For the error of the ignorant leads to death, the idleness of fools brings about their ruin.

³³But whoever listens to me will feel secure and at ease, without fear of evil.”

It is good to acquire wisdom

2 ¹My son, if you heed my words and value my commands, ²with your ear attentive to wisdom and your heart obedient to understanding; ³if you call for perception and raise your voice for insight; ⁴if you seek it as silver and search for it more than any treasure ⁵then you will understand the fear of Yahweh, and you will find the knowledge of God.

Mt 13:
44-46;
Job
28:28

⁶For Yahweh gives wisdom and from his mouth come knowledge and insight. ⁷He reserves his help for the upright and is a shield for those who walk in integrity; ⁸he guards the ways of the just and protects the steps of his faithful.

⁹Then you will understand justice, discernment and integrity—all that leads you to happiness.

¹⁰Wisdom will abide in your heart and knowledge will comfort your inner self. ¹¹Foresight will guide you and understanding will protect you. ¹²It will guard you from evil, from people of misleading speech,

¹³from those who have abandoned the ways of honesty to walk the roads of darkness; ¹⁴they rejoice in evildoing, they revel in perversions; ¹⁵their paths are crooked and their ways devious.

¹⁶Wisdom keeps you from the alien woman, from the stranger with her smooth words, ¹⁷who deserts the partner of her youth and forgets the Covenant of her God.

¹⁸For her house inclines towards death, her paths towards the grave. ¹⁹Those who go to her never return, they do not regain the paths of life.

Is 14:9

²⁰So you will walk along the way of the good, and keep to the paths of the virtuous. ²¹For the honest will inherit the land; the people of integrity will live on it.

Ps 37:9;
37:29

²²The evildoers, instead, will be cut off from the land. The wicked will be rooted out of it.

Mt 5:4

3 ¹My son, do not forget my instruction, my commands; keep them in your heart. ²For they will bring you length of days, years of life and peace.

³Let loyalty and kindness never leave you; tie them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart, ⁴that you may find favor and a good name in the eyes of God and people.

6:21;
7:3;
Dt 6:6-9
Rom 12:
16-17;
Lk 2:52

Put wisdom into practice

• ⁵Trust in Yahweh with all your heart; do not rely on your own insight. ⁶Let his presence pervade all your ways and he will protect your foot from the snare.

⁷Do not consider yourself wise, fear God, and turn away from evil. ⁸This will be a medicine to your body and a relief to your bones.

⁹Honor Yahweh, giving him from what you have, the first fruits of all your produce.

Wisdom rejects these excuses. Negligence is a form of contempt for God.

• **2.1** The wisdom of God protects those who love it against evil influences. They are no longer like straw carried off by the wind, or in our world a number lost in the crowd, submissive to the pressure of media and the attractions of the consumer world. They resist the call of drunkards, of frivolous women and of unscrupulous companions.

• **3.5** The first paragraph deals with the attitudes leading to wisdom: humility, being willing

to sacrifice what God wants, not becoming discouraged when the Lord corrects us, that is to say, when we are tested (see Heb 12:5 and Rev 3:19).

The proverbs insist on the value of advice, discipline, correction: to live as one pleases, according to one’s fantasies causes all sorts of misfortune: this is a saying of Proverbs (see 5:12).

Then the years of your life will be multiplied (4:10). The teachings of wisdom assure you of life and well-being. It is even healthy for the body (3:8 and 4:22).

¹⁰Then your barns will be filled to overflowing, your vats will brim over with wine.

Heb 12: 5-6 ¹¹My son, do not scorn the discipline of Yahweh; do not ignore his correction.

Rev 3:19; Dt 8:5 ¹²For Yahweh corrects those he loves, as a father does his beloved son.

¹³Happy the one who finds wisdom and gains insight. ¹⁴For she is of more value than silver and more useful than gold. ¹⁵She is more precious than pearls; nothing you could wish for would compare with her. ¹⁶With her right hand she offers you length of days, with her left, riches and glory. ¹⁷She leads you through delightful ways; all her roads are peace.

Gen 2:9; 3:22; Jn 6:35 ¹⁸She is a tree of life for those who clasp her; those who possess her are happy.

8:22-31 ¹⁹It is by his wisdom that Yahweh founded the earth; by his understanding that he made firm the heavens. ²⁰By his knowledge the depths were scooped out, and the clouds rained down dew.

²¹My son, hold on to sound judgment and discretion and do not let them out of your sight. ²²They will give life to your inner self, and adorn your neck.

²³Then you can go your way safely and your foot will not stumble. ²⁴You will have no fear when you lie down and your sleep will be peaceful. ²⁵You will not fear sudden terror or the attack of evildoers. ²⁶For Yahweh is at your side and he guards your steps from the snare.

²⁷Do not hold back from those who ask your help, when it is in your power to do it. ²⁸Do not say to your neighbor, "Go away! Come another time; tomorrow I will give it to you!" when you can help him now.

Jer 12:6 ²⁹Do not plot evil against your neighbor who lives trustingly beside you, ³⁰nor fight a man without cause when he has done you no wrong. ³¹Do

not envy the man of violence or follow his example.

³²For Yahweh hates the wicked but guides the honest. ³³He curses the house of the evildoer but blesses the home of the upright. ³⁴If there are mockers, he mocks them in turn but he shows his favor to the humble. ³⁵The wise will possess his glory while the foolish will inherit disgrace.

Jas 4:6;
1P 5:5;
Sir 3:
18, 20

Keep to the right path

4 ¹Listen, my sons, to a father's instruction and pay attention so that you may gain insight. ²For I have given you good principles; do not discard my teaching!

³For when I, too, was a young boy, and my mother fondly looked on me as special, ⁴my father taught me and said to me: Treasure my words in your heart; listen to my directions and you will live.

7:2;
8:35

⁵Acquire wisdom and insight and do not forget or reject the words of my mouth. ⁶Do not abandon wisdom for she will protect you. Love her and she will be your salvation.

⁷The beginning of wisdom is to work to acquire it. At the cost of all you possess, strive to gain insight. ⁸Hold her close, for she will exalt you and bring you honor if you embrace her. ⁹She will crown you with grace and put a diadem of splendor on your head.

¹⁰Listen, my son, and take my words to heart; then the years of your life will be multiplied.

¹¹Because I have taught you the way of wisdom and have guided you along honest ways, ¹²you will walk with ease and run without falling. ¹³Hold firm to discipline; never let her go. Guard her well for she is your salvation.

¹⁴Do not follow the way of the wicked nor walk with evildoers. ¹⁵Avoid them, turn your back on them and pass on. ¹⁶For they do not sleep unless they have done evil; they cannot rest unless they have caused someone's downfall. ¹⁷Wickedness is their bread and violence their wine.

¹⁸The way of the upright is like the dawn that becomes brighter until the fullness of day. ¹⁹The way of the wicked is total darkness and they do not notice that which will make them fall.

²⁰My son, be attentive and listen carefully to my words. ²¹Never let them out of your sight but guard them in the bottom of your heart. ²²For they are life to those who cling to them and healing for the inner spirit.

- ²³Above all else, guard your heart, for therein is the source of life. ²⁴Keep your mouth from lies and let not deceit come from your lips.

²⁵Keep your sight on what is ahead and your eyes directed straight in front of you. ²⁶Test the ground under your feet and all your ways will be secure. ²⁷Turn neither to left nor to right and keep your path from evil.

Beware of the adulteress

5 ¹My son, pay heed to my wisdom and listen to my insights; ²remember my counsel and let your lips not depart from this knowledge.

³Know that the lips of the adulteress are sweet as honey and her words smoother than oil, ⁴but the outcome is bitter as herbs. It is as sharp as a double-edged sword.

⁵Her feet go down to the grave and her steps lead to death. ⁶She pays no attention to the path of life and strays without knowing it.

⁷Now then, my son, listen to me and do not forget my words: ⁸Stay away from her and never approach the door of her house, ⁹lest you surrender your honor to strangers and your best years to cruel men, ¹⁰lest others benefit from your goods, and your earnings go to an alien house.

¹¹You will complain in the end, when your body and flesh are already devoured and ¹²you will say, "Why did I reject instruction and turn my back on sound advice?"

• **4.23** *Above all else, guard your heart, for therein is the source of life.* Let us not forget that in the Scriptures "heart" signifies all that is interior in humans: their conscience, deepest desires, own criteria. It is a call not to allow oneself to be carried away by activism, nor to shut our eyes to a particular aspect of our conduct, to search among our motives where it is very easy for a good intention to be accompanied by others that are less noble. All are to be put under the light of faith.

• **5.15** *Drink, then, from the water of your own cistern.* Let people be responsible first in their married life. This chapter deals with the consequences of licentiousness. It invites a man

¹³Why did I not listen to the voice of my teachers and follow their counsel? ¹⁴For I have come to the depths of disgrace in the midst of the whole community."

- ¹⁵Drink, then, from the water of your own cistern, from that which flows in your own well. ¹⁶Do not let your fountains be wasted elsewhere nor in the public streets. ¹⁷They are for you alone and not for strangers.

¹⁸May your fountainhead be blessed and may you find joy in the wife of your youth, ¹⁹your beautiful hind and graceful gazelle! May her breasts be your delight at all times: be always in love with her.

²⁰My son, why be infatuated with an adulteress and embrace a strange woman? ²¹For Yahweh watches the ways of men and he observes all their paths.

²²The wicked will be caught in his own evil and remain entangled in the nets of his own sin. ²³He will die for want of discipline and will drown in the rising tide of his own evil.

6 • ¹My son, if you have stood bail for your neighbor or guaranteed the word of a stranger; ²if you have committed yourself with your own lips, know that you have trapped yourself with your own words. ³Then do this, my son: release yourself. If you have fallen into the hands of your neighbor, go speedily, kneel down and plead with him; ⁴do not give sleep to your eyes or rest to your eyelids. ⁵Break

to value the intimacy of his marriage and after many years to be able to continue being the lover of his wife: be always in love with her.

It is strange that today it is necessary to be reminded of such things in a society of abundance where infidelity is extolled as if it multiplied the possibilities of enjoyment and of finding oneself. The contempt for fidelity and the family is the first cause of death in a country: children become rare and selfishness is the law. Scripture knows that people only reach maturity by respecting a law and that sexual liberty only brings decline to a disenchanting heart.

- **6.1** Here we have all kinds of advice. Verses 1-5. A person who is responsible, how-

Ecl 9:9

27:13; Sir 8:13

free, like a gazelle from the trap or a bird from the hand.

The idlers and the fools

⁶You idler, go to the ant, watch her ways and be wise. ⁷She has no master, no steward or overseer. ⁸She secures food in summer and stores up provisions during harvest time.

⁹How long, you idler, are you going to lie around? When do you intend to rise from sleep? ¹⁰A little sleep, a little drowsiness and your laziness creeps upon you and then, like a tramp, ¹¹poverty comes, bringing misery like a vagabond.

¹²The villain, the unjust man, goes about with a sneer on his lips, ¹³winking his eye, shuffling his feet and beckoning with his finger. ¹⁴His heart is deceitful; he is forever plotting evil and causing arguments. ¹⁵Therefore, disaster will suddenly and irrevocably overtake him.

¹⁶There are six things Yahweh hates; seven his inner being detests: ¹⁷the proud look, the lying tongue, hands which spill innocent blood, ¹⁸the depraved heart, feet which speed towards evil, ¹⁹a false and lying witness and the one who sows discord among people.

²⁰My son, respect your father's instruction and do not reject your mother's teaching. ²¹Hold them forever in your heart and hang them around your neck. ²²These will guard your footsteps, protect you when you sleep and speak to you on waking.

²³For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light; correction teaches you the way of life.

²⁴It will protect you from the evil woman, the smooth talking of the stranger. ²⁵Do not covet her beauty in your heart or let her captivate you with her looks. ²⁶For the price of a prostitute may be scarcely a piece of bread, but a married woman is a trap for your precious life.

²⁷Can a man carry fire inside his shirt without his garments not be burned or ²⁸walk on hot coals without burning your feet? ²⁹So it is for the man who approaches his neighbor's wife: all who touch her will be punished.

³⁰One does not condemn the hungry

thief who steals to fill his stomach; ³¹nevertheless, if he is caught, he must pay sevenfold and give all the goods in his house. ³²How senseless is the adulterer! Whoever commits adultery destroys himself. ³³He will reap blows and contempt and his disgrace will not be erased.

³⁴Jealousy inflames the husband's heart and when he can take revenge he will have no mercy. ³⁵He will accept nothing, neither reparation nor lavish gifts.

7 ¹My son, keep my words and remain faithful to my commands. ²Hold fast to my instruction and you will have life; treasure my teachings as the apple of your eye. ³Bind them on your fingers, write them on the tablets of your heart. ⁴Let wisdom be your sister and knowledge your friend, ⁵so that you will be saved from the adulterous woman, from the stranger with her enticing words.

⁶From my window I was looking out through the lattice and ⁷I saw among the young men, an inexperienced youth ⁸who walked along the road near her corner, towards the path to her house. ⁹It was dusk, daylight was fading—the time of darkness and shadow. ¹⁰And look! Out comes this woman to meet him, dressed like a prostitute, covered with a veil.

¹¹She is brazen and shameless, unable to remain in the house. ¹²Now at the corner, now in the square, she is on the lookout. ¹³She throws herself at him, kisses him and confidently says, ¹⁴"I have to offer sacrifices and terminate my vows; because of this ¹⁵I came out to meet you. I sought and found you. ¹⁶I have spread on my bed quilts and fine Egyptian sheets and ¹⁷sprinkled it with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon. ¹⁸Come, let us abandon ourselves to pleasure and drink our fill of love all night, ¹⁹for my husband is not at home but away on a long journey. ²⁰He has taken his moneybags and will not return before the full moon."

²¹She led him astray with such smooth and seductive words.

²²At once he followed her, as an ox led to slaughter or a deer caught in a snare ²³until its liver is pierced by an arrow; as a

ever generous and obliging he may be, always thinks before committing himself.

Verses 9-11. Being lazy about getting up: see also 26:14.

Following this passage, there is a long discourse on the consequences of adultery which is accompanied by a life of lies and slavery.

24:33-34; Ecl 4:5

1:8

3:3

4:4; 8:35

2:16

Ecl 7:26

bird springs at the snare unaware that its life is at stake.

²⁴Now then, my sons, listen and pay attention to my words. ²⁵Do not be led

astray or lose yourself on her paths. ²⁶For she has brought many to their death and the strongest were all her victims. ²⁷Her house leads to Sheol and death.

Wisdom calls

8

• ¹Who calls? Is it not Wisdom?
Who lifts up her voice?

²Is it not Knowledge?

She shouts from the hilltops
and waits by the crossroads;

³in the vicinity of the city gates she speaks,

⁴“To you, people, I call,
for my message is directed to all that live,
⁵so that the ignorant may learn
and the thoughtless come to their senses.

⁶Listen to me for I speak of vital things
and everything I say is true.

⁷Truthful words come from my mouth
and my lips do not lend themselves to evil.

⁸All my words are right,
none are twisted or deceitful.

⁹The intelligent will verify their truth,
the wise perceive their sincerity.

¹⁰Prefer my teaching to silver
and seek wisdom rather than gold,

¹¹because wisdom has more value than any jewel
and all that you may desire cannot equal it.

¹²I, Wisdom, dwell with discretion
and count prudence among my friends.

¹³The fear of Yahweh is rejection of evil.

I hate all pride, arrogance, wicked ways and lies,

¹⁴but I love counsel, discretion, prudence and strength.

¹⁵Kings reign by my power,
their ministers issue just laws;

¹⁶by me princes govern,
and the great and noble of the earth as well.

1:20-33

Is 11:2

Wis 9:12

• **8.1** Wisdom speaks again in this poem. We understand that this Wisdom is the wisdom found in the books of the Scriptures. Biblical words are the words of God and because of that even when they seem naive, or “old hat” at times, they are always bearers of life (Jesus will say that the word of God is a seed).

All the benefits that will be reaped by the frequent reading of the Scriptures are listed: to begin with, the fear of God, that is to say, appreciating God above all things. Then culture

that enables us to be leaders and to undertake responsible tasks. Finally success in life.

Many youths and adults who are not well educated think they will always be inferior: they do not believe they are capable of performing well either in ministry or in community development. They must realize that the regular study of the Scriptures will not only strengthen their faith, but be a starting point for human wisdom and enabling them to guide others.

¹⁷I love those who love me
and go to meet those who seek me.
¹⁸Riches and honor are with me,
true well-being and upright living.
¹⁹More precious than silver and gold
are my fruit and my yield.
²⁰I proceed on the path of righteousness
and make use of the ways of justice,
²¹giving riches to those who love me,
and filling their cellars.

Yahweh formed me at the beginning

• ²²Yahweh created me first,
at the beginning of his works.
²³He formed me from of old,
from eternity, even before the earth.
²⁴The abyss did not exist when I was born,
the springs of the sea had not gushed forth,
²⁵the mountains were still not set in their place
nor the hills, when I was born
²⁶before he made the earth or countryside,
or the first grains of the world's dust.
²⁷I was there when he made the skies
and drew the earth's compass on the abyss,
²⁸when he formed the clouds above
and when the springs of the ocean emerged;
²⁹when he made the sea with its limits,
that it might not overflow.

When he laid the foundations of the earth,
³⁰I was close beside him,
the designer of his works,
and I was his daily delight,
forever playing in his presence,

Sir 1:
4, 9;
24:9;
Gen
1:1

Jn 1:1

Job 38:8

• 22. *Yahweh created me first, at the beginning of his works.* Note the poetic way of presenting wisdom as if it were someone, as if it were a daughter of God: *I was his daily delight, forever playing in his presence; playing throughout the world* (vv. 30-31). Such figures of speech contain a religious discovery of the last centuries before Christ.

For a very long time Scripture insisted on the fact that there is only one God and that he has nothing to do with the countless gods of the pagans. Now believers sense that there is something missing in their knowledge of Yahweh. How can God be a source of life and love if he is locked up in his solitude? Thanks to the

Scriptures, believers know that besides being the Almighty and Holy God, the Lord becomes present to his people, in the temple and the Cloud, and that he reveals himself to the prophets to whom he sends his Spirit.

Thus, in the last books of the Old Testament, the authors speak of the *Spirit*, the *Wisdom*, the *Power*, the *Providence* of God as if they were both something of God and something different from him, like characters sharing God's mysterious life and through whom he is involved in human affairs.

This is a way of preparing for the great revelation which will happen with the coming of Jesus. God is one in three persons and from the

Bar
3:37;
Jn 1:14

³¹ playing throughout the world
and delighting to be with humans.
³² Now then, my sons, listen to me:
happy are those who follow my ways.
³³ Listen to my teaching and gain wisdom;
do not ignore it.
³⁴ Happy are those who listen to me
and wait at my gates every day,
watching, close to my threshold.
³⁵ Those who find me find life:
theirs is Yahweh's blessing.
³⁶ Those who offend me will undergo affliction;
they hate me for they love death.

Wisdom invites to her table

Mt 22:
1-4

9

- ¹ Wisdom has built her house
set upon seven pillars;
² she has slaughtered her beasts,
prepared her wine and laid her table.
³ Next, she sent her servants to call
from the central square of the city,
⁴ "Pass by here, you who are fools."
To the senseless she says,
⁵ "Come, eat and drink
of the bread and wine I have prepared.
⁶ Give up your foolishness and you will live;
take the straight path of discernment."

Is 55:
1-3;
Jn 6:35

beginning his eternal Son "through whom all things were made" and who came to live among us was with the Father (see Jn 1:1-4; Col 1:15 and Heb 1:2-3).

Thus Wisdom is a figure of Christ. Christians came to see it as an image of their mother, Mary. In fact, more than any other creature, she was present in God's plans from the beginning and deserves to be called "Throne of Wisdom" since she was so intimately united with the Son, the Wisdom of God.

Happy are those who listen to me (v. 34). Thus the Wisdom of God speaks to the beginner taking his first steps in search of wisdom.

Who is this beginner? Perhaps the one who enrolled in a reading course because she wanted to better her situation; or one who dedicates his days off to taking a course in unions in order to serve better his fellow workers; or the one who studies at night after work; or the one who does not go to bed without having read a biblical passage with his wife, etc. The wisdom you will gain comes from God himself, the source of all

truth, who calls men and women to share in his wisdom.

This student may not reach a highly-prized knowledge, nor will he graduate with honors in this world! It does not matter. Because he decided to live more responsibly and to develop his human potential, God will see him as one of his children and one day, will give him the true wisdom which is in God.

- **9.1** We will easily discover the image of Christ in these few verses. Wisdom is the image of the Son of God.

We find the invitation to the banquet in Matthew 22:4. Rich and poor, sensible and foolish people, all are called to change their lives.

The bread and the wine which Wisdom gives will one day be the body and blood of Christ (see Jn 6).

God is always present in our lives; he gives himself and nourishes us. We are invited to open our hands to take what he offers. Each day, he gives us what we need to solve the problems of humanity now.

⁷He who corrects a mocker gains insults; and he who reprimands an evildoer receives abuse. ⁸Do not rebuke the mocker lest he hate you, but counsel the wise who will be grateful. ⁹Give to the wise man and he will become wiser each day; teach an upright man and he will increase his wisdom.

¹⁰Fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom and to know the Holy One brings discernment. ¹¹Then I will multiply your days and increase your years of life. ¹²If you are wise your wisdom will work to your

advantage, but if you mock you alone will be harmed.

¹³Lady Foolishness is impetuous, a simpleton who knows nothing. ¹⁴She sits at the door of her house, on a throne in the central square of the city, ¹⁵to invite all passersby, "Come here, whoever is ignorant." ¹⁶To the foolish she says, ¹⁷"Stolen waters are sweet and pilfered bread is the tastiest."

¹⁸But he does not see the Shadow world lying there; nor realize that its guests are heading towards the abyss of death.

SECOND PART: THE PROVERBS OF SOLOMON

15:20;
17:25;
19:13

10 • ¹A wise son is his father's joy, a foolish one his mother's heartbreak.

²Treasures wrongfully acquired are of no value but upright living saves from death.

³Yahweh does not let the righteous go hungry but he denies satisfaction to the evildoers.

⁴The lazy hand brings poverty; the diligent hand brings wealth.

⁵The prudent man reaps in summer; the one who sleeps at harvest time deserves scorn.

⁶Blessings on the head of the upright man! Violence silences the cry of the wicked.

⁷The righteous will be remembered with blessings, the name of the wicked will rot away.

⁸The wise of heart is open to instruction, the chattering fool speeds towards ruin.

⁹Whoever behaves honorably will walk safely, but the follower of crooked ways will be punished.

¹⁰The wink of an eye brings trouble; but a rebuke wins peace.

¹¹The mouth of the righteous is a source of life, but violence is concealed in the mouths of evildoers.

¹²Hatred kindles disputes, love covers over all offenses.

¹³Wisdom is to be found on the lips of the discerning man; the stick is for the fool's back.

¹⁴The wise store up learning but the mouth of the fool makes way for ruin.

¹⁵The rich man's fortune is his fortress, the poverty of the poor is their undoing.

¹⁶The virtuous man's toil brings him life, while the sins of the evil man destroy him.

¹⁷Respect for discipline is the path of life; he who ignores correction is doomed.

¹⁸Hypocritical is he who tolerates hatred; he who slanders is a fool.

¹⁹Sin will not be lacking where too many words are spoken; the prudent man controls his tongue.

²⁰The upright man's tongue is pure silver, but the hearts of evildoers have little value.

²¹The lips of one righteous feed many people while fools die for lack of sense.

1Cor
13:7;
1P 4:8

Jas 3:8;
3:2;
1:19

• **10.1** Here is the oldest part of the Book of Proverbs. It is a collection of proverbs and sayings attributed to king Solomon (Chaps. 11–22). Then will follow proverbs from other sources. See 22:17; 24:23; 25:1; 30:1 and 31:1.

Here, more than elsewhere, it is fitting to recall that the words of the Scriptures are at one and the same time the word of God and human words. As word of God, they contain a teaching that always has value. There are also human words, words of wisdom gathered by an ancient people through experience in a culture different from our own. We cannot expect Christian intu-

ition that comes much later in the plan of God. He is a good educator and it has taken him centuries to give his people wisdom.

These proverbs point to qualities suitable for responsible persons:

- farsighted, self-assured, capable of persevering in their behavior and not lazy;
- being prudent and not trusting anyone (see 12:23; 14:6; 14:15; 25:17);
- being just and able to forgive (28:2; 31:8; 21:26; 25:21);
- being in control of one's tongue (13:3);
- being able to correct one's children (13:1).

Ps127:1 ²²The blessing of Yahweh brings riches, no effort can replace it.

²³The fool delights in doing evil and the wise man in acquiring wisdom.

²⁴The evildoer will encounter the evil he dreaded whereas the upright man will receive what he looked forward to.

²⁵After the storm the wicked man is seen no more, but the upright man remains forever.

²⁶The lazy man is like vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes of his master.

²⁷Fear of Yahweh lengthens one's life, but the years of the wicked will be cut short.

²⁸The hope of the upright ends in happiness but the expectations of the wicked come to nothing.

²⁹The ways of Yahweh are a fortress for the upright but for evildoers only ruin.

³⁰The righteous will never be disturbed but evildoers will not survive on the land.

Ps37:30 ³¹Wisdom springs forth from the mouth of the virtuous but the corrupt tongue will be torn out. ³²Goodness dwells on the lips of the upright, corruption in the mouth of the wicked.

11 ¹Yahweh detests a false scale but a just weight pleases him.

²Disgrace always accompanies pride; wisdom resides with the humble.

³Honesty illumines the path of the upright; but the corrupt are confounded by their own evil.

⁴On the day of vengeance riches will prove useless but honest living will save from death.

⁵The virtuous man's integrity smooths his way, while the wicked man falls by his own evil.

⁶Upright living saves the virtuous while evildoers are caught in their own greed.

⁷The hope of the wicked is buried with them and their trust in riches is of no avail.

⁸The upright will escape from distress; a wicked man will take his place.

⁹The godless man uses his mouth to destroy his neighbor but the virtuous use their wisdom to save themselves.

¹⁰The city rejoices in the good fortune of the upright and delights in the ruin of the wicked.

¹¹A city is raised on the blessing of the upright and destroyed by the mouth of the wicked.

¹²Whoever mocks his neighbor is a fool; an intelligent person chooses silence.

¹³The gossip reveals secrets, but the trustworthy man keeps a secret.

¹⁴Lack of guidance leads to a nation's decline whereas numerous counselors bring success.

¹⁵He who stands bail for a stranger harms himself; he who avoids going bail will be safe.

¹⁶A gracious woman wins renown, and bold men acquire riches.

¹⁷The generous man does himself a favor while a cruel man wounds his own flesh.

¹⁸The pay of the wicked is an illusion; while the upright man reaps a sure reward.

¹⁹Upright living leads to life but the way of evil leads to death.

²⁰Yahweh detests the corrupt of heart but loves those whose life is upright.

²¹Be assured that the wicked will not go unpunished, but those who are righteous will be saved.

²²The pretty woman without discretion is like a gold ring in the snout of a pig.

²³The upright desire nothing but good; the desires of the wicked are in vain.

²⁴Those who are generous increase their riches; others are misers and impoverish themselves.

²⁵The warmhearted soul will prosper; he who waters will himself be watered.

²⁶He who hoards wheat is cursed by the people; blessed is he who sells his seeds. Gen 41:56

²⁷Yahweh rewards the one who seeks good; but he who pursues evil will be caught by it.

²⁸He who trusts in riches will stumble; while the upright will flourish like leaves.

²⁹Whoever mismanages his house will inherit only wind; the fool will end up a slave of the wise.

³⁰The fruit of the upright is a tree of life while the wicked are uprooted before their time.

³¹If here on earth the upright get their due, how much more the wicked and the sinner!

12 ¹He who loves discipline, loves knowledge; foolish is he who rejects correction.

²The good man wins the favor of Yahweh who condemns the one of evil schemes.

³No man is made secure by evil but nothing undermines the roots of the upright.

⁴A good wife is her husband's crown while the shameless woman is like a cancer in his bones.

⁵The plans of the upright are honest and the plottings of the wicked deceitful.

⁶The words of the wicked are mortal snares but the virtuous refute and elude them.

⁷The evildoers are thrown down and are no more; but the house of the virtuous will never crumble.

⁸Everyone is praised in proportion to his prudence; while the corrupt of heart will be met with contempt.

⁹Better to be a common man and have a servant than to feel oneself great and run short of bread.

¹⁰The upright man looks after his animals but the wicked are heartless.

¹¹He who cultivates the earth will have his fill of bread, while the fool chases after illusions.

¹²The desires of the wicked produce evil, but the roots of the virtuous produce fruit.

¹³The wicked man is entangled in his own lies, but the virtuous man will be saved from misfortune.

¹⁴Those who meditate on wisdom will attain all that is good; each one is rewarded according to the works of his hands.

¹⁵The fool considers his way right while the wise man listens to advice.

¹⁶The fool shows his annoyance immediately, but the discreet man overlooks an insult.

¹⁷The trustworthy witness leads to the truth, and the liar to confusion.

¹⁸The one who speaks thoughtlessly pierces like a sword; but the words of the wise bring healing.

¹⁹Truthful words endure forever but lies, for only a moment.

²⁰Deceit dwells in the heart of the schemer, happiness in those who pursue peace.

²¹No misfortune will befall the virtuous but the wicked will have their fill of troubles.

²²Yahweh hates the lips of liars and loves those who speak the truth.

²³The discreet man conceals his wisdom while fools make public their nonsense.

²⁴The hardworking hand will rule; and the lazy will have to obey.

²⁵Intense grief depresses the heart while a friendly word makes it glad.

²⁶The just man guides his neighbor while the way of the wicked leads them astray.

²⁷The lazy hand will have no game to cook: being industrious is the secret of wealth.

²⁸Life is to be found on the path of virtue, the way of the wicked leads to death. Mt 7:13; Jn 14:6

13 ¹An intelligent child listens to his father's advice, but a mocker listens to no correction.

²A man can taste goodness from the fruit of his own mouth, but the treacherous feed on violence.

³He who guards his mouth preserves his life, the constant talker is lost.

⁴The lazy man hopes but his desires are in vain, whereas hard workers have their desires fulfilled.

⁵The righteous person hates lying words but the evildoer slanders and defames.

⁶Virtue protects those of honest life; while sin brings ruin to the wicked.

⁷One pretends to be rich but has nothing, another, of great wealth, feigns poverty.

⁸A man's wealth lets him ransom his life but the poor man has nothing with which to do so. Ecl 5:11

⁹The light of the virtuous is bright, the lamp of the godless is extinguished.

¹⁰Arrogance only brings trouble; wisdom is found in those who take advice.

¹¹Sudden riches will decrease, he who gathers little by little will be enriched.

¹²Delayed hope makes the heart languish, but desire fulfilled is a tree of life.

¹³The one who scorns teaching will be Dt 4:40

in want, those who respect the commandment will be rewarded.

14:27;
Sir
21:13

¹⁴The wise man's teaching is a life-giving fountain for escaping the snares of death.

¹⁵Prudent intelligence wins favor, the way of liars leads nowhere.

¹⁶Every prudent man acts with reflection, the fool parades his stupidity.

¹⁷A wicked messenger falls on misfortune, the reliable one brings healing.

¹⁸Poverty and shame to the one who rejects correction; honor to him who accepts rebuke.

¹⁹Desire fulfilled is sweet to the soul; but fools spurn rejection of evil.

²⁰Walk with the wise and you will gain wisdom; those who befriend fools become wicked.

²¹Misfortune hounds the sinner, while the upright abound in good fortune.

²²A good man's inheritance is for his children's children, a sinner's wealth will be kept for the virtuous.

²³The tillage of the poor supplies food, while others perish because of their lack of righteousness.

²⁴Unloved is the child whom the father hates to punish; the loving father frequently corrects.

²⁵The upright man eats his fill, while the stomach of the wicked goes hungry.

14 ¹Wisdom builds her house, foolishness destroys it with her own hands.

²Upright living is fear of Yahweh, but he who is devious in his ways scorns him.

³From the fool's mouth comes the rod of his pride, the wise man's lips protect him.

⁴Where there's no oxen, there's no wheat, in the oxen's strength there's abundant harvest.

⁵The truthful witness does not lie; the false witness breathes deceit.

⁶The mocker searches for wisdom in vain; knowledge comes easily to the discreet man.

⁷Keep away from the fool for you will find no wisdom in his words.

⁸The wisdom of the discreet man lies in guarding his conduct, but the foolishness of fools is full of deceit.

⁹Fools never make amends, while goodwill dwells among the upright.

¹⁰The heart understands its own grief; no stranger can share in its joy.

¹¹The house of the wicked will be destroyed, but the tent of the upright will stand firm.

¹²To one, his way appears correct, but in the end it leads to death.

¹³The heart feels pain in the midst of laughter, and joy ends in sorrow.

¹⁴The reckless man reaps the fruit of his ways; the good man will earn reward.

¹⁵The simpleton believes all he's told, the prudent man watches his step.

¹⁶The wise man fears and avoids evil, the fool goes near and feels safe.

¹⁷The angry man does foolish things, the crafty man makes himself hated.

¹⁸Foolishness is the inheritance of fools, the prudent choose wisdom as their crown.

¹⁹The wicked shall kneel before the good, and the godless, before the gates of the virtuous.

²⁰The poor man is detestable even to his neighbor while the rich man has many friends.

²¹A sinner is he who looks down on his neighbor, happy is he who shows pity to the poor.

²²Does evil plotting not lead to ruin? Do goodness and sincerity not belong to those devoted to good?

²³Hard work yields a profit but the idler brings misfortune.

²⁴Wealth is the wise man's crown, foolishness the diadem of fools.

²⁵A truthful witness saves lives; he who lies will be lost.

²⁶There is great security in the fear of Yahweh, his sons find refuge in him.

²⁷The fear of Yahweh is a life-giving fountain for escaping the snares of death.

²⁸Numerous people are a king's glory; lack of subjects ruin a prince.

²⁹The discerning man is slow to anger, the impatient one displays stupidity.

³⁰A peaceful heart is the body's life but the passions are a cancer in the bones.

³¹Oppression of the weak insults their creator, he is honored by those who have compassion on the needy.

³²The evildoer is overthrown by his own evil, the upright man feels safe up to death.

³³Wisdom resides in the heart of the discerning; who ever sees her among fools?

³⁴Virtue makes a nation great; the sinner disgraces a people.

³⁵The clever servant enjoys the king's favor but the fool has to suffer his anger.

15 ¹A kind answer soothes anger; while a cutting word increases wrath.

²The tongue of the wise speaks knowledge, but the mouth of fools spreads stupidity.

³The eyes of Yahweh are everywhere, watching the good and the evil.

⁴The pacifying tongue is a tree of life, while the viper's tongue destroys the heart.

⁵Paternal correction is scorned by the fool, but the one who listens shows discretion.

⁶Abundance resides in the house of the virtuous, but disgrace descends on the profits of the wicked.

⁷The lips of the wise sow knowledge whereas the fool's thoughts are not safe.

⁸Yahweh detests the sacrifice of the wicked, but listens to the prayer of the honest man.

⁹Yahweh abhors the conduct of the wicked but loves him who seeks virtue.

¹⁰Correct severely him who strays from the way; whoever hates being rebuked will die.

¹¹Yahweh sees into Sheol and the abyss; how much more into the human heart!

¹²The mocker does not like being reprimanded; he does not go to the wise.

¹³A glad heart brightens the face, a sad one weighs down the spirit.

¹⁴A discerning heart seeks knowledge, but the mouth of fools feeds on stupidity.

¹⁵Every day is evil to the afflicted one; while the happy heart is always feasting.

¹⁶Better to have little but fear Yahweh than to have a fortune accompanied by anxiety.

¹⁷Better to have vegetables where there is love than to have a fattened ox with nothing but hatred.

¹⁸The hotheaded man provokes dis-

putes, while the one slow to anger reconciles differences.

¹⁹The way of the lazy is strewn with thorns, but the path of hard workers is a spacious road.

²⁰The wise child is his father's joy, but the foolish despises his mother.

²¹Foolishness appeals to the man with no sense but the discerning man goes on his way.

²²Plans fall through for lack of deliberation; a multitude of counselors ensures success.

²³Happy is he who knows how to answer. Welcome indeed is the apt word!

²⁴To the discerning man, the way of life leads upward; he will be saved from the place of darkness below.

²⁵Yahweh tears down the house of the proud, but he strengthens the widow's boundaries. ^{Dt 19:14}

²⁶Yahweh detests corrupt designs but words of goodness are pleasing to him.

²⁷He who craves dishonest gain brings trouble on his house; he who accepts no tempting bribes will live. ^{Am 2:6; Is 1:23}

²⁸The man of upright heart thinks before he speaks, the mouth of the wicked pours out evil.

²⁹Yahweh stays far away from the wicked but hears the prayer of the virtuous.

³⁰A kind look delights the heart, good news revives one's strength.

³¹The ear which listens to helpful correction is found among the wise.

³²He who ignores correction despises himself, he who heeds the reprimand acquires discernment.

³³The fear of Yahweh is a school of wisdom; humility precedes praise.

16 ¹Man's heart makes plans but it is Yahweh who answers.

²Although people are satisfied with all of their deeds Yahweh considers the motives.

³Entrust all you do to Yahweh and your plans will be realized.

⁴Yahweh made everything for a purpose, even the evildoer for the day of punishment.

⁵Yahweh hates the arrogant heart; you can be sure it will not go unpunished.

⁶With goodness and faithfulness you atone for your sin; with fear of Yahweh you may turn away from evil.

⁷When Yahweh is pleased with a man's conduct, he reconciles even his enemies with him.

⁸Better to have little, but be just, than to have a great income without honesty.

⁹Man's heart seeks the right way but it is Yahweh who makes his footsteps sure.

¹⁰The lips of the king utter oracles; he will not be mistaken when he judges.

¹¹Yahweh demands a just balance and scales; the weights are the work of his hands.

¹²Kings who do evil are an abomination; it is justice that supports the kingship.

¹³He who judges according to justice wins the king's favor, honest men are pleasing to him.

¹⁴The king's anger is a messenger of death but the wise man knows how to appease him.

¹⁵The king's serene countenance means life, his favor is like the spring rain.

¹⁶Better to have acquired wisdom rather than gold, discernment rather than silver.

¹⁷The way of the honest man is to turn away from evil; he who watches his steps keeps his life safe.

¹⁸Pride goes before destruction, an arrogant spirit before a fall.

¹⁹Better to be humble among the lowly than to share loot with the proud.

²⁰He who listens to the word will find happiness; blessed is he who trusts in Yahweh.

²¹He whose heart is wise will be proclaimed discerning; moderate speech brings knowledge.

²²Good sense is a life-giving fountain to those who possess it, foolishness is the punishment of fools.

²³The wise man's heart keeps guard over his mouth, making his words more effective.

²⁴Kind words are like a honeycomb: sweet to the spirit and healthy to the body.

²⁵To one, his way seems honest, but ultimately it leads to death.

²⁶The worker's appetite works to his benefit; the need to eat spurs him on.

²⁷The troublemaker prepares disgrace, Jas 3:6 a scorching fire is on his lips.

²⁸The scoundrel stirs up trouble; his critical comments split up friends.

²⁹A violent man deceives his neighbor and leads him along a path that is not good.

³⁰He who closes his eyes and purses his lips to plot deceit already commits evil.

³¹White hairs are a magnificent crown Sir 25: 4-6; Wis 4:9 for the one who has followed the path of virtue.

³²The patient man is to be preferred to the hero; better the man who masters himself than the conqueror of cities.

³³Into the bag the lot is cast, but the decision comes from Yahweh.

17 ¹Better a crust of dry bread in peace than the discord of a house full of feasting.

²A shrewd servant will replace the foolish son of the master and will share the inheritance as one of the brothers.

³A crucible for silver and a furnace for gold but Yahweh is the tester of hearts.

⁴The evil plotter listens to the lips of liars; and the liar gives an ear to the corrupt tongue.

⁵He who mocks the poor insults their Creator, he who laughs at the deprived will not go unpunished.

⁶The crown of the aged is their children's children, the children's glory is their father.

⁷Noble language does not suit the fool and even less do lies suit a prince.

⁸The giver of gifts possesses a treasure, wherever he goes he will succeed.

⁹Whoever covers over a fault promotes friendships, but he who reveals a word divides friends.

¹⁰A discerning man is more impressed by a reprimand than a fool is by a hundred lashes.

¹¹The wicked man seeks nothing but rebellion; a cruel messenger will be sent against him.

¹²It is better to meet with a bear deprived of her cubs than with a fool in his foolishness.

¹³He who repays good with evil will not rid his house of evil.

¹⁴To begin legal proceedings is like

opening a dam; withdraw before the dispute erupts.

¹⁵To excuse the guilty and condemn the just: both are detestable to Yahweh.

¹⁶What good is money in a fool's hand? How can he buy wisdom? He has no sense.

¹⁷A friend will love you at all times, a brother has been born to you for times of adversity.

¹⁸He who is full of promises and goes bail for his neighbor has no sense.

¹⁹The sinner loves disputes, the man of arrogant words hastens his own ruin.

²⁰The man of double-dealing does not find happiness, the sly tongue falls into disgrace.

²¹He who fathers a fool has acquired misery, there is no joy for a fool's father.

²²A joyful heart gives health to the body, while a sad spirit dries up the bones.

²³The corrupt man takes bribes to pervert the course of justice.

²⁴The discerning man keeps wisdom before his eyes; the fool's eyes are on every corner of the world.

²⁵The foolish son is a worry to his father and distress to her who gave him birth.

²⁶It is not right to fine the upright; the noble ought not to be beaten.

²⁷The prudent of speech are wise; he who keeps his temper is an educated man.

²⁸Then the fool, if silent, can pass as wise; the clever man keeps his lips sealed.

18 ¹He who holds himself aloof follows his own whims and is annoyed at others' advice.

²The fool does not relish reflection but only the airing of his own views.

³When the wicked come, scorn also comes, and offense brings shame.

⁴Man's words are like deep waters; an overflowing torrent is the fountain of wisdom.

⁵It is not good to give consideration to the wicked or to harm the virtuous when giving judgment.

⁶The fool's lips cause disputes and his mouth attracts blows.

⁷The fool's mouth is his undoing; his lips will ensnare his life.

⁸The gossip's words are tasty mouthfuls which go right to the bottom of the stomach.

⁹He who dawdles at work is a brother of the destroyer.

¹⁰Yahweh's name is a strong tower, the virtuous rely on it and are safe.

¹¹The rich man's wealth is his fortress; he relies on it as on a high wall.

¹²Before its downfall, the heart is wrapped in pride; while humility goes before honor.

¹³To argue before listening to the facts shows stupidity which leads to disgrace.

¹⁴The spirit of man sustains him when ill but who will lift the one of broken spirit?

¹⁵The discerning heart obtains wisdom, the ear of the wise searches out knowledge.

¹⁶A present opens all doors to you and brings you into the company of the powerful.

¹⁷The first to plead his case seems to be right, but his opponent appears and there is matter for trial.

¹⁸Casting lots terminates disputes and decides between the powerful.

¹⁹A brother who is helped is more steadfast than a fortress but quarrels are like the bars of a castle.

²⁰A man is filled with what comes from his mouth and is nourished by what his lips provide.

²¹The tongue has power over life and death, those who like speaking will eat its fruit.

²²He who finds a wife finds happiness, he has won Yahweh's favor.

²³The poor man pleads, while the rich man responds harshly.

²⁴Some friends only bring ruin, others are closer than a brother.

19 ¹Better the poor man who lives honestly than the fool who lies.

²It is bad for men not to reflect, and acting too quickly can lead one astray.

³A man spoils his chances through his own stupidity but it is against Yahweh that his heart rages.

⁴Wealth multiplies friends, but the poor man is deprived of his only friend.

⁵The false witness will not go unpunished, the liar will not escape.

⁶Many are the flatterers of the noble man, the whole world is a friend to the rich man.

⁷A poor man is hated by all his brothers, and even more so do his friends desert him. He searches for someone to talk to but finds no one.

⁸He who acquires wisdom loves himself, he who respects knowledge will be happy.

⁹The false witness will not go unpunished, the liar will perish.

Ecd 10:
6-7

¹⁰It is not good that a fool live luxuriously, still less that a slave command princes.

¹¹A clever man is slow to anger; his glory lies in forgetting offenses.

¹²The angry king is like a roaring lion but his favor is like the dew on the grass.

¹³The foolish son is the ruination of his father; the nagging wife is like a dripping gutter.

Sir
25:16

¹⁴House and wealth are inherited from a father but a sensible wife is a gift from Yahweh.

¹⁵Laziness makes a man fall asleep, the idler will go hungry.

¹⁶He who keeps the commandment keeps his life; he who despises it dies.

Mt 25:40

¹⁷He who shows compassion to the poor lends to Yahweh, who will repay his good deed.

¹⁸Correct your son as long as there is hope, lest you be responsible for his death.

¹⁹The violent man leaves himself open to a fine; if you spare him he will continue.

²⁰Listen to counsel and accept correction, and you will be wise in the end.

²¹Plans abound in the human heart but only Yahweh's purpose will be realized.

²²Goodness is attractive in a person; better a poor man than a liar.

²³Love of Yahweh leads you to life; you will have your fill and live without fear.

²⁴The lazy man dips his hand in the dish but he cannot even lift it to his mouth.

²⁵Punish the mocker and the ignorant will be more careful; rebuke a discerning man and he will listen to reason.

²⁶He who dispossesses his father and evicts his mother is a shameful and degenerate son.

²⁷My son, listen to instruction and stop straying from the words of wisdom.

²⁸An unworthy witness makes a mockery of justice; the mouth of the wicked feeds on evil.

²⁹Punishments were made for mockers and blows, for the backs of fools.

20 ¹Wine leads to vulgarity and strong drink, to bravado; he who strays in it will never be wise.

²The angry king is like a roaring lion; whoever provokes him risks his life.

³It is good for man to avoid quarrels; it is the fool who does not master himself.

⁴Autumn is over, yet the fool does no work; come the harvest, he searches and finds nothing.

⁵Counsel is like deep water in the heart, the discerning man has only to draw it out.

⁶Many are called good but where can the trustworthy man be found?

⁷The upright man who works honestly will make his sons happy after him.

⁸The king who sits in judgment discovers evil at a single glance.

⁹Who can say, "I have purified my heart, Job 4:17 I am cleansed from sin?"

¹⁰The crooked measure and scales—these are the things that Yahweh detests.

¹¹The child reveals himself in his deeds: whether his actions are honest and upright.

¹²The ear that hears, the eye that sees, 4:11 Yahweh has made them both.

¹³Do not love sleep lest you become poor; keep your eyes open and you will have your fill of bread.

¹⁴"No good, no good," says the buyer but off he goes congratulating himself.

¹⁵Although you have gold and abundance of pearls, the most valuable adornment is lips which speak wisely.

¹⁶Take a man's garment when he has given security for a stranger, and when he gives surety for strangers, hold him in pledge.

¹⁷Stolen bread tastes good but later on your mouth is full of sand.

¹⁸Plans take shape, thanks to advice; do battle, then, with wise strategies.

¹⁹The gossip reveals secrets; have nothing to do with chatterers.

²⁰Whoever curses his father and mother will see his lamp extinguished in the midst of darkness.

²¹Advantage hastily gained in the beginning will not be blessed in the long run.

²²Never say, "I will take revenge." Trust in Yahweh; he will save you.

²³Yahweh detests false weights; it does no good to have false scales.

²⁴Yahweh directs a man's steps, who can know where his way leads?

²⁵It is dangerous to make hasty promises to Yahweh and only then reflect on them. Dt 23:22

²⁶A king throws evildoers to the wind and runs the thresher over them.

²⁷Man's spirit is Yahweh's lamp which searches the hidden places of the heart. Job 32:8; Mt 6:22; 1Cor 2:11

²⁸Goodness and loyalty keep guard over Is 16:5

the king; his throne stands due to goodness.

²⁹Energy is the adornment of youth, white hair the dignity of age.

³⁰Bleeding wounds purify evil, blows bring healing to the inner self.

21 ¹In the hands of Yahweh, the heart of the king is like running water; he directs it wherever he wishes.

²To the eyes of man all his ways are honest but it is Yahweh who weighs the heart.

³To do what is upright and just pleases Yahweh more than sacrifice.

⁴Haughty looks, proud heart, the light of the wicked is sin.

⁵The plans of a hardworking man result in earnings; poverty is for those who act too hastily.

⁶To make a fortune by means of deceit is like running after the wind; the end is death.

⁷The violence of the wicked carries them away because they refuse to practice justice.

⁸The way of the criminal is devious; but honest are the ways of the innocent man.

⁹Better the corner of a barn to live in than a house shared with a quarrelsome woman.

¹⁰The soul of the wicked desires nothing but evil; not even his friend is treated with compassion.

¹¹When the mocker is punished the ignorant man grows wise; when the wise man is instructed he grows in knowledge.

¹²The Just One watches the house of the evildoer and hurls the wicked into misfortune.

¹³He who is deaf to the poor man's cry will not be heard when he himself calls out.

¹⁴A discreet gift pacifies anger, a bribe diverts violent rage.

¹⁵Upright men are glad when justice reigns but evildoers tremble.

¹⁶He who departs from the ways of prudence will sleep in the assembly of the shadows.

¹⁷Pleasure-lovers remain poor, he who loves wine and perfume will never grow rich.

¹⁸The wicked man will pay for the virtuous and the treacherous man, for the honest.

¹⁹Better to live in a deserted place than with a raging and abusive woman.

²⁰There is oil and precious treasure in the wise man's house, things which the fool squanders.

²¹He who seeks justice and mercy will gain life, prosperity and honor.

²²The wise man conquers a city of warriors and tears down the walls they trust in. Ecl 9: 13-15

²³He who keeps guard over his mouth and tongue saves himself from anguish.

²⁴"Mocker" is the name of the arrogant and haughty, he in whom pride abounds.

²⁵The idler's desires lead him to death because his hands refuse to work. ²⁶He covets all day long while the upright man gives without stinting.

²⁷Yahweh detests the sacrifice of the wicked, above all when they offer it for an unjust cause.

²⁸The lying witness will perish but he who listens wisely will be given time to speak.

²⁹The wicked man tries to appear firm and stable while the honest man confirms his way.

³⁰No wisdom, prudence or advice can withstand the look of Yahweh.

³¹The horse is equipped for the day of battle but it is Yahweh who gives the victory. Ps 20:8

22 ¹A good name is better than great wealth; good grace is preferable to silver or gold.

²Rich and poor have something in common, Yahweh has made them all. Wis 6:7

³The discreet man foresees disgrace and hides, the ignorant keep going at their own expense.

⁴The reward of humility is fear of Yahweh, wealth, honor and life.

⁵The path of the wicked is paved with thorns and traps, he who loves his life will keep his distance.

⁶Teach a child the way he should go, he will not stray from it while he lives. Sir 6:18

⁷The rich man lords it over the poor, the borrower is the moneylender's slave.

⁸Whoever sows injustice reaps disaster; the power of the wicked will be broken.

⁹The warmhearted man will be blessed since he shares his bread with the poor.

¹⁰Throw out the mocker and the dispute will cease, fighting and insults will end.

¹¹He who loves purity of heart and Mt 5:8

speaks sensibly will find a friend in the king.

¹²Yahweh's look protects the wise man and discredits the words of the liar.

¹³The lazy man says, "There is a lion outside, he will kill me in the street."

¹⁴The adulterous woman's mouth is a deep pit, he whom Yahweh wishes to punish will fall into it.

¹⁵The heart of the child is naturally foolish, the beating of instruction will cure it.

¹⁶When you oppress the poor, you make them grow; when you give to the rich, you waste everything.

The proverbs of the wise

¹⁷Give ear, listen to the words of the wise and apply yourself to understanding them, ¹⁸because it will be your delight to keep them deep within you, to have them always ready on your lips.

¹⁹I wish now to teach you, so that you will place your trust in Yahweh. ²⁰Have I not written for you thirty sayings of advice and knowledge ²¹so that you may recognize the truth and be able to answer rightly him who sent you?

²²Do not take from the poor man, just because he is poor, or condemn the one in misfortune, ²³because Yahweh will intercede for them and will carry off the life of their oppressors.

²⁴Do not befriend the angry man or be a companion to the one of rage; ²⁵for fear, you adopt their ways and lose your life in their midst.

²⁶Do not be one of those who undertake a commitment and act as guarantor of debts; ²⁷if you cannot pay, they will take from you the very bed in which you sleep.

^{15:25} ²⁸Do not move the ancient boundaries established by your ancestors.

²⁹You see a clever man at work? He will enter the service of kings; he will not stay in the service of people of no renown.

23 ¹If you sit at a table with a great man, beware of what is in front of you; ²if your appetite is too great, put a knife to your throat. ³Do not greedily desire his fine food for it is deceptive nourishment.

⁴Do not wear yourself out trying to be rich, do not dwell on it. ⁵Set your eyes on wealth and it no longer exists; it sprouts wings and flies into the sky like an eagle.

⁶Do not eat with the wicked man or be greedy for his choice food. ⁷All is appearance, for he plots in his heart. "Eat and drink," he says, but he is not to be trusted. ⁸You will spit it out as soon as it is tasted and your words of praise will be wasted.

⁹Do not speak with a fool; he will not be able to appreciate your remarks.

¹⁰Do not move the ancient boundaries or take possession of the orphan's land because their redeemer is powerful; ¹¹he will take sides against you.

¹²Apply your heart to instruction and your ears to words of wisdom.

¹³Do not hold back from correcting a youth; the rod will not kill him. ¹⁴With several strokes, you save him from death.

¹⁵My son, if your heart is wise, then my own heart is glad, ¹⁶and my whole being will rejoice when you speak the truth.

¹⁷Do not envy sinners but, each day, fear Yahweh; then you will have a future and ¹⁸your hope will not be in vain.

¹⁹Listen, my son, and you will be wise and you will make your heart go straight on its way.

²⁰Do not be one of those who get drunk with wine or who stuff themselves with meat, ²¹since the drunkard and the glutton impoverish themselves and the sleepy-head is clothed in rags.

²²Listen to your father who begot you; do not despise your mother in her old age.

²³Acquire truth and never sell it; gain wisdom, discipline and discernment.

²⁴Happy the father of a virtuous man! How he will rejoice, ²⁵he who fathers a wise man! May your father and mother rejoice and may she who bore you be glad.

²⁶My son, give me your heart, that your eyes may delight in my ways. ²⁷You should know that the prostitute is a deep abyss and the unknown woman a narrow well. ²⁸Like a thief she lies in wait and she increases the sinners among men.

²⁹For whom are the cries and laments? For whom, the complaints and sighs? For whom, the blows without reason? For whom, the eyes which see double?

³⁰.....for those who abandon themselves to wine and go in search of the well-blended wine. ³¹Do not consider the wine: how red it is and how sparkling the glass! How smoothly it flows!

³²In the end, it bites like a snake and stings like a viper. ³³Your eyes will see

strange things and you will end up speaking nonsense. ³⁴You will be like a man asleep on the high seas or at the rudder: "They hit me but I am not hurt. ³⁵They beat me but I feel nothing. When will I wake up? I will go in search of more."

24 ¹Do not envy the wicked or desire their company, ²for their hearts dream only of violence and their lips speak nothing but evil.

³With wisdom a house is built. ⁴It is strengthened by prudence. Its granaries are filled by knowledge with all that is good, precious and desirable.

⁵The wise man is powerful; the one of knowledge adds to his strength. ⁶Because of this, he goes into battle with wise plans, since success depends on many advisers.

⁷Wisdom is beyond the reach of the fool; let him not open his mouth in the assembly.

⁸The plotter of evil is called an unscrupulous mastermind.

⁹The fool dreams only of sin, the mocker deserves only contempt.

¹⁰If you lose heart when misfortune comes, miserable is your strength.

¹¹Rescue those who are being carried away to die; save those who are being dragged away to torture. ¹²Afterward you will say, "We did not know." But he who weighs the heart, does he not understand? He who watches over the soul is aware and he will give to each one according to his deeds.

¹³Eat honey, my son, because it is good; the honeycomb is sweet to the taste. ¹⁴So also will wisdom be to your soul. If you find it, you have a future and your hope will not be in vain.

¹⁵Evildoer, do not spy on the house of the virtuous man, do not disturb his home. ¹⁶Because even though the virtuous man falls seven times, he gets up again, while the wicked sink in their adversity.

¹⁷Do not rejoice if your enemy falls or let your heart be glad if he stumbles, ¹⁸lest Yahweh see and be displeased and his anger be turned on you.

¹⁹Do not be incensed by the wicked or envious of the ungodly, ²⁰since there is no future in evil and the lamp of the wicked will be extinguished.

²¹Fear Yahweh and the king, my son; make no deals with agitators, ²²for disaster

will befall them without warning and who knows when their ruin will come?

Other proverbs of the wise

²³It is not good for judges to show partiality. People curse and nations hate him ²⁴who says to the wicked man, "You are just." ²⁵But those who punish the evildoer can boast; blessing and happiness will be theirs.

²⁶An honest answer is like a kiss on the lips.

²⁷Finish your work out-of-doors and plan your work in the fields; afterward, you can think of building your house.

²⁸Do not lightly bear witness against your neighbor lest you lie.

²⁹Do not say, "I will do to him what he did to me; I will repay him for his deeds."

³⁰I passed by the lazy man's field, near the vineyard of the senseless man. ³¹Everywhere it was full of weeds; thistles covered the ground and the stone wall was fallen apart. ³²Seeing all this, I reflected and drew this lesson from what I saw. ³³A little sleep, a little drowsiness and ³⁴your laziness creeps upon you; and then, like a tramp, poverty comes, bringing misery like a vagabond.

Solomon's proverbs

25 ¹These are also Proverbs of Solomon, recorded in the time of Hezekiah, king of Judah.

²The glory of God is in hiding secrets and the glory of the king, in revealing them. ³As high as the skies, as deep as the earth, such is the heart of kings.

⁴Remove the impurity from silver and it will become a vessel in the hands of the silversmith. ⁵Remove the wicked from the king's presence and he will affirm his power through justice.

⁶Do not boast before the king or put yourself among the great. ⁷It would be better to be invited, "Come up here," than to be humiliated after having seen the prince.

⁸Do not be too hasty in accusing your neighbor, for what would happen to you should he confound you?

⁹Defend your case against your neighbor but do not reveal the secret of another, ¹⁰lest he overhear it and despise you and your reputation be lost.

¹¹An opportune word is like golden apples encased in silver. ¹²A gold ring or

Dn 13;
Jer
17:10

Dt 32:35

Lk 14:
7-14

an ornament of fine gold, such is the wise man's rebuke to a responsive person.

¹³The trustworthy messenger is like the coolness of snow at harvest time, to him who sends him: he revives the soul of his master.

¹⁴Clouds and wind but no rain, such is the one who promises but does not fulfill.

¹⁵With a little patience you will persuade the judge; a soft tongue can break bones.

¹⁶If you find honey, eat enough but not too much, lest you bring it up again.

¹⁷Go rarely to your neighbor's house lest he tire of you and grow to hate you.

¹⁸A mace, a sword, a keen arrow: such is the one who lies about his neighbor.

¹⁹A decaying tooth, a lame foot, such is the trust put in the ungodly on the day of trouble.

²⁰Singing songs to a grieving person is like taking off your cloak in frosty weather or pouring vinegar into a wound.

²¹If your enemy is hungry give him something to eat, if thirsty, something to drink; ²²thus you pile up red-hot coals on his head and Yahweh will reward you.

²³As the north wind brings the rain, so the gossiping tongue leaves angry faces.

²⁴Better the corner of a barn to live in than a house shared with a quarrelsome woman.

²⁵Good news from a distant country is like cool water to a dry throat.

²⁶A churning river or a polluted spring is like the virtuous man who trembles before the evildoer.

²⁷It is not good to eat too much honey and even less good to be greedy for honors.

²⁸The man who cannot contain his

anger is like an open city, without defenses.

26 ¹Honors do not suit the fool any more than snow in summer and rain at harvest.

²The sparrow escapes, the swallow flies off, so the motiveless curse will have no effect.

³A whip for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, a stick for the backs of fools.

⁴Do not answer the stupidity of fools lest you become like them.

⁵Answer the stupidity of the fool lest he consider himself intelligent.

⁶He who sends messages by a fool is cutting his own feet.

⁷Like the unsteady legs of a lame man, such is a proverb in the mouth of fools.

⁸Honoring a fool is like tying a stone in a sling.

⁹Like a thorn branch in a drunkard's hands, such is a proverb in the mouth of fools.

¹⁰Like an archer wounding all passers-by, so is he who employs a fool.

¹¹The fool reverts to his stupidity just as ^{2P 2:22} a dog returns to his vomit.

¹²See that man who thinks himself wise? There is more hope for a fool!

¹³"There's a lion in the street," the lazy man says, "a lion in the square."

¹⁴The door turns on its hinges and the lazy man, on his bed. ¹⁵The idler dips his hand in the dish but is too tired to lift it to his mouth. ¹⁶The idler considers himself wiser than many people who answer tactfully.

¹⁷Interfering in the disputes of others is like grabbing a passing dog by the tail.

¹⁸As a madman hurls flaming, deadly arrows, ¹⁹so does the one who lies to his friend and then says, "It was just a joke."

²⁰For lack of wood, the fire goes out; for want of a gossip, the quarrel dies down.

²¹Charcoal on hot coals, wood on a fire, and a quarrelsome man for stirring up disputes.

²²The words of the gossip are delicious mouthfuls which go right down to the bottom of the stomach. ²³Like silver on earthenware, so are smooth lips with a corrupt heart.

²⁴The one who hates, disguises his words and keeps his treachery inside; ²⁵do not trust his sweet language for seven evils

fill his heart. ²⁶But although he conceals his hatred like a hypocrite, his evil will be revealed in the assembly.

²⁷He who digs a pit falls in it and the rock he rolls away falls back on him.

²⁸The liar hates his victims, the flattering mouth brings destruction.

Jas 4:13

27 ¹Do not feel confident about tomorrow since you do not know how today will end.

²Let another praise you but not your own mouth; a stranger, but not your own lips.

³Heavy the stone and weighty the sand but the fool's anger outweighs both.

⁴Wrath is cruel and anger, impulsive but who can withstand jealousy?

⁵Better an honest rebuke than false affection.

⁶Worthy of trust is the friend who speaks honestly; the enemy is he who multiplies caresses.

⁷The full mouth looks down on honey, the hungry one finds any bitter thing sweet.

⁸Like a bird far from its nest, so is the one who wanders from his own place.

⁹Oil and perfume gladden the heart; so too does the sweetness of friendship comfort the soul.

¹⁰Never desert your friend or your father's friend; do not hasten to your brother's house when troubles strike: better a friend nearby than a brother far away.

¹¹Learn to be wise, my son, and make me happy so that I can reply to those who insult me.

¹²The discerning man foresees danger and takes cover, but fools keep going, to their own loss.

¹³Take a man's garment when he has given security for a stranger, and when he gives surety for strangers, hold him in pledge.

¹⁴If he, at dawn, blesses his neighbor in a loud voice, it shall be interpreted as a curse.

¹⁵The constant dripping of a gutter on a rainy day and a nagging woman have something in common. ¹⁶Stopping her is like stopping the wind and grasping oil in one's hand.

¹⁷Iron is sharpened with iron, contact with a neighbor sharpens a man's wit.

¹⁸He who tends the fig tree eats its fruit,

he who looks after his master will be honored.

¹⁹As the face is reflected in water, so man finds himself in his own heart.

²⁰Death and Sheol are never satisfied; so, also, the eyes of men.

²¹A crucible for silver, a furnace for gold; you will know a man by his reputation.

²²Even though you grind the fool in a mortar, you will not rid him of his stupidity.

²³Know well the state of your herd and tend to your flock ²⁴because wealth does not last forever and riches are not handed down from generation to generation.

²⁵Once the pasture is mowed and the after-growth appears and the hay is gathered in from the hills, ²⁶you should have lambs to clothe you and goats to pay for your fields, ²⁷sufficient goats' milk to feed you, to sustain your household and provide for your serving girls.

28 ¹The wicked man runs away even when no one is after him but the virtuous man feels as safe as a lion.

²A country, for its sins, has many rulers; but with one wise ruler there is stability.

³The evildoer oppressing the poor is like destructive floods which leave no food.

⁴Those who forsake the law applaud evil; those faithful to the law fight evil.

⁵The wicked have no understanding of justice but those who seek Yahweh understand all. Wis 3:9

⁶Better the poor but honest life than devious living, with riches.

⁷A clever man keeps the law, while he who associates with scoundrels brings shame to his father.

⁸He who adds to his wealth by usury and greed amasses it for another who has compassion on the poor.

⁹If anyone turns a deaf ear to the law, even his prayer is contaminated by sin.

¹⁰He who leads the virtuous astray will fall into his own trap. The upright will inherit happiness.

¹¹The rich man thinks himself wise while the poor but sensible man knows how to show him up.

¹²When the virtuous triumph, there is great feasting, but when the wicked dominate, everybody hides.

¹³Whoever conceals his faults will not prosper, but he who confesses and renounces them will be shown mercy. 1Jn 1:9

¹⁴Happy the one who always lives in the fear of God; he who hardens his heart will fall on disaster.

¹⁵A roaring lion, a hungry bear, such is the bad leader of a poor people.

¹⁶The ruler lacking intelligence multiplies oppression; but he who abhors greed will endure.

¹⁷The man wanted for murder will be on the run until death. Let him go!

¹⁸He who goes his way honestly will be saved, he who vacillates between two ways will fall in one of them.

¹⁹He who tends his land will have an abundance of bread, while he who chases illusions will have his fill of misery.

²⁰The trustworthy man will be heaped with blessings, but he who is preoccupied with getting rich will not be guiltless.

²¹It is not good to show partiality but a man will do wrong for a mouthful of bread.

²²The greedy-eyed man is on the lookout for wealth not knowing that misfortune will befall him.

²³He who reproves another will eventually enjoy more favor than the flatterer.

²⁴He who steals from his father and mother saying, "It's not a sin," is just like a criminal.

²⁵The greedy man brings about trouble; but he who trusts in Yahweh will be filled with good things.

²⁶He who trusts in himself is just like a fool; while he who walks wisely will be saved.

²⁷He who gives to the poor will not be in need; but he who turns a blind eye to them will have his fill of disgrace.

²⁸When the wicked triumph, everybody hides; but when they perish, the virtuous multiply.

29 ¹He who resists correction will be broken suddenly and without remedy.

²When the virtuous rule, the people are happy, but they groan when the wicked are in power.

³He who loves wisdom makes his father happy, but whoever maintains prostitutes will lose his wealth.

⁴Through justice a king makes his country prosper; but the extortioner brings it to ruin.

⁵The one who flatters his neighbor lays a snare at his feet.

⁶In the wicked man's sins lies a snare for himself, while the upright man runs on rejoicing.

⁷The virtuous man is concerned about the problems of the poor; the evildoer, however, understands nothing.

⁸Mockers create disturbances in the city but the wise turn troubles away.

⁹When the wise man argues with the fool, whether he is annoyed or joking, he will get nowhere.

¹⁰The violent hate the blameless man but the virtuous seek out his presence.

¹¹The fool gives free rein to his rage; while the wise man restrains it.

¹²When a ruler listens to false reports, all his ministers will be scoundrels.

¹³The poor man and usurer have something in common: both receive the light of day from God.

¹⁴The king who judges the poor with justice will affirm his throne forever.

¹⁵Both the stick and rebuke bring wisdom, while the spoilt child brings shame to his mother.

¹⁶When the wicked rule, sin abounds, but the virtuous shall witness their downfall.

¹⁷Correct your son and he will bring you rest; you will be happy in him.

¹⁸Where prophets are lacking, the people get out of hand; happy is he who obeys the law.

¹⁹A slave is not corrected by words; even if he understands he will take no notice.

²⁰You see a man dying to speak? There is more hope for a fool.

²¹If you spoil your slave from childhood, he will end up a rebel.

²²The hot-tempered man provokes disputes, his anger multiplies his sins.

²³A man's pride results in his humiliation, but he who humbles himself will achieve honors.

²⁴He who shares with the thief harms himself; even you who kept silent when you should have denounced him.

²⁵To be afraid of people is a trap; but whoever trusts in Yahweh will be safe.

²⁶Many seek a ruler's favor but each one's fate comes from God.

²⁷The upright man detests the wicked and the evildoer hates the honest man.

Mt23:12

Sir 9:6;
Lk 15:13

Sayings of Agur

30 ¹The sayings of Agur, Son of Jakeh, of Massa.

²He says, "My God, my God, I am worn-out and weary. Too stupid to be human, I am devoid of intelligence; ³I have not acquired wisdom or grasped the knowledge of the Holy One."

⁴Who has ascended the heavens and descended? Who has gathered the wind in his hands? Who has encircled the waters with his cloak? Who has established the limits of the earth? What is his name or the name of his son?

Do you know?

⁵Every word of God is true, he is a shield in whom man can find refuge. ⁶Add nothing to his words lest he rebuke you and take you for a liar.

⁷O God, two things I beg of you, do not deny me them before I die. ⁸Keep lying and falsehood far away from me, give me neither poverty nor riches. Give me just as much food as I need lest, ⁹satisfied, I deny you and say, "Who is Yahweh?" Or else, out of necessity, I steal and profane the name of my God.

¹⁰Do not accuse a slave to his master's face lest he curse you and you have to pay.

¹¹What a people are those who curse their father and do not bless their mother, ¹²who consider themselves pure but their sins have not been cleansed! ¹³They have a haughty look and disdainful eye; ¹⁴their teeth are like daggers and their fangs, like blades, to devour the weak of the land and the poor of the people.

¹⁵The leech has two daughters, "Give me!" and "Give me!"

¹⁶There are three insatiable things and four which never say, "Enough": the grave, the sterile womb, the earth longing for water and the fire which never cries, "Enough."

¹⁷The eye which challenges a father and despises his aging mother, will be gouged out by the ravens of the valley and devoured by the eagles.

¹⁸There are three things which I cannot comprehend and four which I do not understand: ¹⁹the way of the eagle through the sky, the way of the snake on the rock, the way of the ship on high seas and the way of the human being within the mother.

²⁰What can I say of the adulterous woman? She eats, and having wiped her mouth, she says, "I have done nothing wrong."

²¹Three things make the earth tremble; there are four which it cannot withstand: ²²the slave who becomes king, the fool stuffed with bread, ²³the unbearable woman who marries and the maid who inherits from her mistress.

²⁴There are four tiny creatures on the earth that are among the wisest of the wise: ²⁵the ants that are without strength, but in summer make sure of their supplies; ²⁶the rock-rabbits that are without vigor, but make their home in the rocks; ²⁷the locusts that have no king, but move forward in organized groups; ²⁸the lizard which can be caught by hand, but lives in the palaces of kings.

²⁹Three things have a stately step and four have a noble bearing: ³⁰the lion, the bravest of animals, that retreats before nothing; ³¹the cock that struts proudly among the hens; the he-goat that leads his flock, and the king at the head of his army.

³²If you have been foolish enough to get angry and afterward regret it, cover your mouth with your hand. ³³Since by churning the milk butter is produced, by squeezing the nose blood flows, and by stirring up anger arguments arise.

The sayings of Lemuel

31 ¹The sayings of Lemuel, king of Massa, taught him by his mother.

²No, my son! Son of my womb, no!

No, my most beloved son!

³Do not waste your strength on women, or your life on those who destroy kings.

⁴It is not for kings, O Lemuel, not for kings to drink wine or for rulers to love strong drink. ⁵Lest in drinking they forget what they have decreed and override the cause of the helpless.

⁶Give strong drink to the one about to die and wine to the heart full of bitterness: ⁷so that he may drink and forget his misfortune and remember his pain no more. ⁸Speak on behalf of the dumb and defend the cause of all who are destitute.

⁹Open your mouth, pronounce just sentences, defend the needy and the poor.

The perfect wife

Sir 26

• ¹⁰ The woman of character, where is she to be found? She is more precious than any jewel.

¹¹ Her husband has complete confidence in her; she will be of great benefit to him.

¹² She brings him only good and not evil, all the days of her life.

¹³ She has obtained wool and flax, and works them with skillful hands.

¹⁴ She is like the merchant ships which bring provisions from afar.

¹⁵ She gets up while it is still dark, feeds her household and allots tasks to the servants.

¹⁶ If she sets her heart on a field, she buys it and plants a vineyard with her own hands.

¹⁷ She is full of energy and her arms show her strength.

¹⁸ She knows her work is successful and, at night, her light remains unextinguished.

¹⁹ She puts her hand to the distaff and her fingers hold the spindle.

²⁰ She reaches out her hand to the helpless and gives to the poor.

²¹ When snow comes, she has no fears for her household, since they are all doubly clothed.

²² She makes her own quilts and her clothes are purple and fine linen.

²³ Her husband is well-respected; he sits in council with the elders of the people.

²⁴ She weaves linen cloth and sells it; she supplies the merchants with sashes.

²⁵ She is strong and dignified and looks with confidence to the future.

²⁶ She speaks wisely and her words are kind.

²⁷ She keeps an eye on the conduct of her household and is never idle.

²⁸ Her sons rise up and call her blessed, her husband sings her praises:

²⁹ "Many women have done wonders but you surpass them all."

³⁰ Charm is deceptive and beauty useless; the woman who is wise is the one to praise.

³¹ May she enjoy the fruits of her labor and may all praise her for her works.

• **31.10** Mother's Day was established recently to celebrate the women who spend their lives in the hidden tasks of the home, and who, through their sacrifices and love, build the best of our world. This poem concluding the Book of Proverbs expresses a similar viewpoint.

It is not by chance that this poem concludes the Book of Proverbs. Wisdom in Israel was not intellectual reflection far removed from real life with slight interest in discovering reasons for living. Wisdom, first of all was knowing how to organize one's life, just as Solomon said. And, actually women often have a predominant role

in all that makes for a happy home and allows persons who believe in life, to be formed and capable of serving the world.

The author lists the numerous activities of women: happiness on earth depends on very little: care is needed, and fidelity to tasks, also something not often insisted upon.

In Israel, men dominated. Women worked more than men. While the men would talk "at the gate" of their village, women looked after the house and the orchard and raised the children. This poem urges all husbands to praise their wives and be grateful to them.