

Portions of the
Book of Proverbs

Bro. Frank Shallieu

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The following notes on the Book of Proverbs were compiled from a Bible study led by Bro. Frank Shallieu. They should be utilized with the following understanding:

1. Only Chapters 1–10, 30, and 31 were studied, and they are transcribed in the order in which they were considered, that is, out of sequence.
2. The original study did not follow a prepared text but was extemporaneous in nature.
3. Although the transcriber tried to faithfully, with the Lord's help, set forth the thoughts that were presented in the study, the notes are not a verbatim rendering and, therefore, should be considered in that context.
4. Finally, Bro. Frank has not reviewed the notes for possible errors that may have inadvertently entered the text.

With this disclaimer, may the notes be a blessing as a useful study guide.

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

(Study led by Bro. Frank Shallieu beginning June 1994)

General comments: The Book of Proverbs repeats the words “wisdom,” “understanding,” and “knowledge” very frequently. To get the most out of the book, one should look up these words every time they appear. For example, Proverbs 1:2–4 reads, “To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; To give subtlety to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion.” The book is filled with these words, and different aspects of each word are presented from different perspectives.

Q: In what context were these proverbs done—orally? written?

A: Solomon wrote 3,000 proverbs late in life (1 Kings 4:32). The book warns against the very dangers Solomon tasted: lust for women, desire for riches, etc. He had 1,000 wives, he loved horses, and he was probably the richest man in the world. He had wisdom but not along the lines that he discussed in the Book of Proverbs. Later he saw that all is vanity, that the acquisition of material things is meaningless if not predicated upon the fear (reverence) of the Lord and *obedience* to the knowledge acquired. God ultimately blessed Solomon in that when Solomon came to his senses, the advice he could give was a form of repentance. The same principle applies to Elihu, who wrote the Book of Job based on his contrition for his lack of wisdom in rebuking Job. In both cases the Lord blessed the writing by including it as part of Holy Writ. Hence Solomon gives *sound* advice in the Book of Proverbs. Some of the advice is along literal lines, and some advice is spiritual. However, most of the knowledge and understanding are pragmatic (practical).

The proverbs recorded in the Bible are probably only one third of what Solomon actually wrote. He learned as a result of going through experiences. And even though he learned some lessons fairly quickly, the proverbs were no doubt written toward the end of his life.

Proverbs 8

Proverbs 8 came after Solomon had written about the *lack* of wisdom (or *unsound* wisdom) and the seductive power of a woman, which he put forth as one case: a harlot attracts a young man who does not see that the danger in being seduced is that it will result in Second Death (Proverbs 7). Proverbs 8 is like an antonym, an opposite, for here Solomon writes about *true* wisdom. Here Solomon’s comments on wisdom are very concentrated, whereas in the rest of the book they are helter-skelter—an isolated statement here and there abruptly interjected. Proverbs 8 has a flow or continuity attached to it that is special, and perhaps there are only four places in Proverbs with such a flow. Everything else is like popcorn statements, but very important ones that take a lifetime to sum up. Therefore, although Proverbs 8 treats the subject of wisdom, the rest of the book must be read to grasp certain facets that are mentioned here. In Proverbs 8 the statements are tied together in a sequel or study.

Prov. 8:1 Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice?

Wisdom is personified as a woman in these early verses; the subject is not Christ because of the female gender. As the chapter progresses, however, an example of wisdom is given in the life, actions, and statements of Jesus. He is the ultimate personification of wisdom that man can appreciate more. Of course God has *all* the wisdom, but as humans, we can see it better as it is reflected in Jesus' life.

How does wisdom cry? The word "cry" is strong, meaning it should attract attention. In the old days, town criers shouted out news as they lit and extinguished the gas lamps each evening.

Comment: One way wisdom cries out is when it pricks the conscience.

Wisdom cries in several ways: (1) *Nature* declares there is a God. "There is a God; all nature speaks" goes the hymn. Nature speaks to those who have an ear to hear. Such see the majesty of the heavens as proof of the existence of an intelligent, wise, powerful Creator—One who could form all the heavenly bodies (Psalm 19—"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork"). They may appreciate God's existence by observing the intricate patterns in the flowers, the different fragrances, the symmetry of snowflakes, etc. And man himself is proof of a Creator. Man is "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psa. 139:14—"I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well"). A magazine article entitled "Man, the Wonder Machine" told that if the Empire State Building were filled with computers, it would not be comparable to the potential of the human brain of *one person*. All of these things speak of the existence of an intelligent Creator. (2) *Conscience*. The Pastor said that when God made man in His own image, He implanted a conscience in us, an inherent sensitivity to right and wrong. Therefore, wisdom *does cry*. Wisdom cries all around us.

"... and understanding put forth her voice." Figuratively, wisdom cries, but man is not listening. It is as if wisdom is pleading for attention.

Q: Generally, we think of wisdom as the application of knowledge, so couldn't we also say that past experience is a way of gaining wisdom?

A: Yes. If you step in front of a speeding train, you know you will die based on what you have learned or witnessed previously. Common sense would tell you certain things.

Prov. 8:2 **She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths.**

In other words, if you wanted to dispense information to others, to get the largest audience, you would speak from a "high place," such as a mountain, down to the public below. You would select a convenient prominent place, and what more convenient place is there than the heavens? Just lift up your head and see the sun, moon, and stars. Wisdom is crying. The Lord has provided an *abundance* of information testifying to His existence, to the existence of a benevolent Creator. For example, the benevolence is shown in the variety of fragrance in flowers. Some are pungent to camouflage or cure unpleasant odors or disease, and some have a very pleasing, aesthetic value.

Why does Proverbs 8 personify wisdom as crying out and disseminating knowledge to demand attention?

Comment: To show the *responsibility* of *every individual* to listen. This is the same reasoning the Apostle Paul used in the early chapters of Romans.

Comment: Wisdom can be obtained if one truly desires it.

Reply: God is providing all these evidences so that in the future man is inexcusable. The information has been there all along. One will not be able to justify his ignorance in the Kingdom by saying, “Why didn’t you tell me? Oh, if I had only known.” If one utters these words, he will be reminded of all the evidences of an intelligent Creator that he shut his eyes and ears to. It vindicates and exonerates God, for He did supply information, but it was not discerned by the public because of an improper heart condition. That is the point Solomon is trying to make, for he is saying, in effect, that that was his own problem earlier in life.

“She [wisdom] standeth ... in the places of the paths.”

Comment: This would be the place where the path divides. Wisdom is standing there. When you come to a point where you need to make a decision as to which way to go, which path to take, wisdom is there to help you make the right decision.

Reply: That is a good illustration. Speaking of the people in the future Kingdom, Isaiah (30:21) says, “And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.” Although at present the guidance is given in a mute fashion, it would be discernible by those who are alert.

Some translations say “at the crossroads,” which shows a choice of four directions rather than two when a path divides. When we come to a crossroads, we look for directional signs because we know that if we make a mistake, we can go way off course. Thus a signpost at a crossroads is critical, and *wisdom is there* as a signpost to tell which road leads to destruction, which road leads to life, which road leads nowhere—and hence which road is a waste of time requiring retracing, etc. This is universal advice; mankind is being addressed here.

Prov. 8:3 She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors.

Comment: This verse is a reminder of how often the prophets in the Old Testament spoke at the gate or a prominent place in the city. Of course at times they were mechanically moved by God’s Holy Spirit so that it was *His wisdom* being poured out to the people.

Reply: Yes, the prophets went to the gates to speak, and judgment was rendered there in court sessions. An example is Boaz, who went to the gate to settle the issue about the land and Ruth. And Lot was a righteous judge at the gate.

Verse 8 is saying that wisdom cries at *all* strategic places.

In one place this is likened to a call. If a person *sincerely hungers and thirsts for wisdom*, he *will get it* depending on each step that is taken. Blindness can be overcome based on *heart* condition. If one inclines his heart seriously, studiously, and sincerely, *he will get*

information. It is a *carte blanche* statement. “Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear” is an instruction for one who wants to come nearer to the Lord (Psa. 45:10).

Comment: Proverbs 2:1–6 reads, “My son, if thou wilt *receive* my words, and *hide* my commandments with thee; So that thou *incline thine ear* unto wisdom, and *apply thine heart* to understanding; Yea, if thou *criest* after knowledge, and *lifest up thy voice* for understanding; If thou *seekest* her as silver, and *searchest* for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.” The receiving of wisdom is a *guarantee* if one sincerely hungers.

Comment: Matthew 7:7 reads, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”

Reply: Progress and growth are predicated upon humility, hunger, honesty, and other factors.

Comment: Proverbs 1:20–23 applies here: “Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets: She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, saying, How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.”

Reply: Yes, that is similar to the verses under discussion in Proverbs 8.

Prov. 8:4 Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man.

The message is addressed to “men,” ie, to mankind, to the children of Adam, to “the sons of [the] man [Adam].”

Comment: Proverbs 1:24 reads: “Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded.”

Comment: Addressing this to mankind is an interesting perspective because almost all of the Scriptures are written to God’s people (natural or spiritual Israel).

Comment: That is the tendency of Solomon’s writings including Ecclesiastes.

Reply: Some Christians do not accept the Books of Ecclesiastes and Proverbs as part of Holy Writ because they consider them to be too worldly. Even the Pastor, in one case, thought the advice was worldly, but these books are in the Bible.

Comment: Reprint 2388 states: “However well or illy Solomon followed his own teachings, it is conceded by all that those teachings were sound wisdom—as true today as when uttered. While Solomon’s writings may not be ranked exactly with the inspired prophecies of the Scriptures, the fact that we are told that the Lord heard his prayer for wisdom and granted the request, together with the fact that his writings were accepted as a part of the sacred canon in our Lord’s day, and not objected to by New Testament writers,

but on the contrary quoted from, is sufficient guarantee to us that the wisdom of these Proverbs is of a kind that cometh from above."

Q: Does the nominal system put Song of Solomon in the same category as Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, and tend to throw all three out because they were written by Solomon?

A: Yes.

Wisdom also crieth out in the sense that the book with the widest circulation throughout history is the Bible. The title "The Bible," "The Word," is like saying, "This is *God's* statement," and it has been published in all languages (not in all dialects but in a great many of them). If you perceive in nature that there is a God, it would be wisdom to then say there must be some revelation, some word, from this benevolent, wise, and powerful God to reveal who He is and what His intentions are. Here, in front of everyone, in all nations, in all languages, a sign exists—just as a sign exists when one looks up at the heavens, at vegetation, etc. Here are written words that state "*The Word*—this is the information you are looking for." The Bible is a powerful witness, but it is given very little credence, especially today. Instead it is often relegated to a very demeaning role and is made the object of humor and jokes.

Prov. 8:5 O ye simple, understand wisdom: and, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart.

Wisdom is trying to reach this class; it is figuratively pleading for the simple to look higher. "The simple" are all who have not yet inclined their hearts to get wisdom. The majority of mankind are "simple" in this sense because they do not search for the understanding of that which is above.

Depending on context, the word "simple" can be either derogatory (as here) or favorable (meaning sincere and childlike). Paul said, "Look among yourselves. How many are wise? How many are rich? How many are noble? God has called the *poor* of this world to be heirs of salvation" (1 Cor. 1:26 paraphrase). When an ear is inclined to wisdom, being "simple" can be a benefit in that an individual will not have too many things to *unlearn*. Unlearning what one has learned in a structured environment can be very difficult.

Prov. 8:6 Hear; for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips shall be right things.

In other words, the wisdom from the Lord's lips, the instruction from above, *as recorded in the written Word*, is holy, pure, true, perfect, etc. The "excellent things" are exceedingly precious; they pertain to divinity and to God's character.

The pronoun "I" still refers to figurative wisdom. However, Jesus is "made unto us wisdom," justification, sanctification, and ultimately glorification (1 Cor. 1:30). He is the One God sent in human form to come down to our level and speak, through his life, ministry, and example, of the more excellent way of obeying God and acquiring true wisdom (1 Cor. 12:31).

Q: If the pronoun "I" still refers to figurative wisdom here, does the meaning switch to Jesus later on?

A: Yes. Without using God's name, this proverb is trying to get the individual to realize that if he wants wisdom and understanding, his heart must yearn for it. In the *First Volume*, the Pastor took time and used human reasoning to discuss the existence of an intelligent Creator. Earlier in his life he had searched for understanding and wisdom when he was disappointed with the teachings of nominalism. He began to study Eastern religions but soon found out they knew less than he did. He decided to go back to the Bible and study it from the standpoint of an unprejudiced mind. To his surprise, the Bible began to make sense. As a result, *The Divine Plan of the Ages* was written. Going direct to the Bible was a blessing, and he has encouraged others to do the same.

Prov. 8:7 For my mouth shall speak truth; and wickedness is an abomination to my lips.

We speak of "the truth." That is a broad statement. "What is truth?" asked Pilate. The truth is God's Word—whether it comes from Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, or just simple history of the Jewish nation as recorded in Chronicles and Kings. These portions of Holy Writ may not stand out as spiritual, but they are a part of the Word. It is important to know which kings God approved of and which ones He disapproved of, and *why*. We are furnished chronology, an orderly framework, for knowing where we are on the stream of time.

The Book of Proverbs states that to come closer to God, one must *first* have the fear (reverence) of God (Prov. 1:7). In studying the Word, one finds that God has a plan. In the fullness of time God sent forth His Son (Gal. 4:4)—this shows He has a plan with various stages of development.

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

"Froward" means crooked, deceptive, twisted in the literal Hebrew.

Comment: The KJV margin says "wreathed," but strands are *twisted* to make a wreath.

Reply: Twisted implies bent in every direction.

Prov. 8:9 They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge.

How do you "find knowledge"? Set your heart to know it, and search for it as for hidden treasure. Pray for it.

Comment: This is really qualified. It is saying that if you do not set your heart in that direction, the wisdom will go right over your head. You will not recognize it as such.

Reply: And the finding of knowledge is the finding of the *source* of knowledge: God and His Word are the basis of truth.

When Solomon wrote about 1000 BC, he was writing for the Jewish Age, but his advice applies henceforth for the sons of men.

Comment: Just in these nine verse so far, there are multiple reminders of things Paul said in the New Testament. This shows how well he understood the principles here. And in regard to the qualification that you will not recognize wisdom unless you set your heart to find and know it, Paul said that the natural man receiveth not the wisdom of God, for these things are “spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14).

Reply: Many of the principles here in Proverbs can be seen in 1 Corinthians.

Comment: No wonder the Bereans could search the Scriptures daily to see if Paul was speaking “the things that were so.”

We rejoice when we read or hear something right and good from the Bible, and when we see His righteous judgment on matters. We say, “Amen!”

Prov. 8:10 Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold.

Earlier in life Solomon sought treasures: gold, silver, and rubies. He entered an alliance with Hiram of Lebanon to obtain gold from the land of Ophir (1 Kings 9:26–28). Solomon also sought many, many horses. He later saw that all these treasures were vanity.

Comment: Solomon’s stables were extensive. And Solomon had copper mines at Timnah near the Red Sea.

Prov. 8:11 For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it.

What did the Apostle Peter say?

Comment: “That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 1:7).

Reply: He drew this lesson from the Old Testament. And he was a humble fisherman, as were John, Andrew, and James. Yet some of the knowledge they acquired and their reasoning were profound. The Lord grants grace to the humble (1 Pet. 5:5) and gives the spirit of a sound mind (2 Tim. 1:7), but our minds will not be completely sound this side of the veil no matter how well born we are. The Holy Spirit enhances whatever we had prior to consecration.

Q: Are rubies the most precious stone?

A: They can be. To get a *perfect* ruby is more difficult than to get a perfect diamond. But *generally speaking*, diamonds are more valuable than rubies. A star ruby is exceedingly precious because it is so scarce.

Q: Is the ruby equivalent to the sard as far as representing the heart?

A: Yes. Semiprecious stones had to be used for the breastplate in the Old Testament so that they would be soft enough for carving. For example, a form of white quartz was in the breastplate. But if the quartz is solidified into a diamond, some beautiful lessons

become apparent. Therefore, the ruby is the sard in the highest sense of the word, but the sard was used because it was more adaptable for carving. "And he [God] that sat [upon the throne] was to look upon like a jasper [diamond] and a sardine [ruby] stone" (Rev. 4:3). Almost all of the semiprecious stones in the breastplate are forms of quartz, but the higher level is various forms of the corundum family (an emerald, a diamond, etc.).

Prov. 8:12 I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions.

Review: The first nine chapters of Proverbs have a *continuity of thought*. Generally speaking, from Chapter 10 on, the proverbs are random and *miscellaneous statements*. In both Chapter 7 and this chapter, a woman is personified. In Chapter 7 the woman is folly; in Chapter 8 the woman is wisdom. Thus folly and wisdom are contrasted as two women. In Chapter 7 the woman is seductive; she entraps the young, the unwary, and entices them with rewards and pleasures to commit a cardinal sin. In Chapter 8 the woman is one of purity who desires to bless others not with pleasures but with responsibilities, which most people do not want. As the hymn goes, "Happy the man who learns to trace the leadings of Jehovah's grace; By wisdom coming from above, he reads and learns that God is love," so there is happiness in finding true wisdom. As Chapter 8 progresses, it will change from the personification of wisdom as a woman to Christ as an example of one who *lived* by that wisdom. Yet in back of all this is *God's* wisdom. Christ is made unto us wisdom, but he first had to learn the wisdom from his Father. The fear of *Jehovah* is the beginning of wisdom, but as time went on, the Father put forth His Son as an example of One in whom He was well pleased.

What is "prudence"?

Q: Would prudence mean "caution"?

A: "Caution" is a good word. For instance, hearing a new thought should require some thinking and consideration. Ask, "Where will this lead?" That is being cautious. Sometimes you would not know one way or another, but when new thoughts are presented, it is proper to have a measure of reserve. When the Apostle Paul went to Berea, he expounded the truth. The Bereans loved the Scriptures and searched them daily, and they did this *before* the New Testament was written and codified. Even when they heard Paul, an *apostle*, explain the Scriptures, they searched to see whether his words squared with Scripture and were true. Paul commended them for listening to him and then *testing his words against the Old Testament*. In other words, they had a measure of reserve or caution. They received the truth with all readiness of mind (with humility and a willingness to receive instruction), but with prudence (caution).

Caution is an attitude. It is a counterbalance. One should have readiness of mind to hear but should not wholeheartedly accept what is said until it is thought out and tested against the Word.

Comment: A practical example of prudence or caution in the New Testament would be the advice to "lay hands suddenly on no man" (1 Tim. 5:22).

Reply: Yes. Suppose one is being sent to the European brethren to teach what the brethren in the United States believe. To "lay hands" on such a traveling brother would mean to make him your representative. Hands were laid on Paul and Barnabas when they went

out, but later Paul was irritated with what some considered that to mean. Paul and Barnabas hadn't asked for the laying on of hands, and Paul tried to rebut the thought that they were the representatives of the *brethren*. No, Paul was sent by *Jesus* as an ambassador, as an apostle. The laying on of hands was a custom back there, but it was not to be done suddenly and without considerable thought. To just bear a letter or a message of love and greetings is relatively superficial, but the teaching capacity is different.

"I wisdom dwell with prudence." The way this verse is stated with the more direct pronoun "I," it is sort of a clutch that will prepare us for changes in later verses. Earlier verses were statements about what wisdom does.

"Witty inventions" would be devices (Masoretic). What is the next step with caution? If you listen to a thought with an open mind but have a measure of reserve until you find out if it is based on Scripture, what is the next step?

Comment: You are able to make an evaluation. Enough facts come to the fore that you can act or speak properly on the matter.

Reply: Before acting or speaking, you should ask a question. First, you exercise caution. Then you weigh matters further by asking, "What will this lead to?" "Does it agree with the Lord's Word?"

Q: Would "devices" be a more negative thought? The first part of the verse, "I wisdom dwell with prudence," means to be discerning in a more positive sense. Then to "find out knowledge of witty inventions [devices]" means to be discerning in a more negative sense. Strong's defines "inventions" as a plan with usually evil machinations, sometimes good. Wisdom can discern both the positive and the negative.

A: That is correct. (1) You are cautious. (2) You listen to more details to see where this is leading. (3) You hate anything that might be evil. Continuity is shown in this chapter even though deep, pithy statements are made. (After Chapter 9, the continuity will stop.) Since the "fear of the Lord is to hate evil" (verse 13), you do not want to be led astray from the Lord's Word. Hence caution or discretion is a safeguard.

Wisdom dwells with caution or reserve until it has opportunity to examine and evaluate. Anything evil should repel us ("The fear of the Lord is to hate evil"). A negative line of reasoning is being pursued here.

Q: How do we harmonize verse 12 with "love thinketh no evil"? Would that apply until we see clearly that the devices are wicked?

A: Yes. One can have reserve and still obey the statement "love thinketh no evil." One is consecrated to the *Lord*, and not to any individual or group. We should be open to instruction, but the information should be received with caution, prudence, and discretion.

Prov. 8:13 The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.

The colon is important. The fear of the Lord is to hate four kinds of evil: (1) pride, (2) arrogancy, (3) the evil way, and (4) the froward mouth. What is the difference between pride and arrogancy?

Comment: Pride can be self-contained, whereas arrogancy is more of an outward show.

Reply: Yes, although pride can become visible and external. An example of outward pride would be the Pope sitting on a chair and being carried around. Arrogancy suggests action: words spoken or deeds.

The NIV has “evil behavior and perverse speech” for the end of verse 13. “Froward” gives the thought of perverted or twisted speech. Indians have said, “White man speaks with forked tongue.”

An “evil way” would be a lifestyle of evil methods.

Pride is abnormal self-esteem. A person should have some self-esteem, especially he is trying to do God’s will, but self-esteem can easily develop into inordinate self-esteem.

“The fear of the Lord is the *beginning* of wisdom,” but in some Scriptures the fear of the Lord is near the *end* of wisdom. We must have reverence in the beginning. When we consecrate, we see that God is good, that He has a marvelous plan, that He is merciful, etc. This *beginning* reverence should get deeper and deeper as time goes on and we study His Word and His thinking. Later on, the Book of Proverbs will show that wisdom is one of the last things because it leads to something else ... just as patient endurance is the step beyond love in developing the fruits of the Spirit.

Q: In the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins, the wise have the proper fear and it motivates them, but the foolish do not have the proper fear. Does this apply?

A: Yes, and it even uses the word “wise.” The wise virgins have foresight looking into the future.

Consider Proverbs 9:1, “Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her *seven pillars*.” The house is already built—it is a *finished* product. But what are the “seven pillars” of wisdom? Isaiah 11:2,3 provides the answer: “And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of [1] wisdom and [2] understanding, the spirit of [3] counsel and [4] might, the spirit of [5] knowledge and of the [6] fear of the LORD; And shall make him of [7] quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears.” The context is speaking about Jesus; he will be beneficial and successful in carrying out God’s plan because he has these characteristics. Notice, that “*quick understanding* in the fear of the LORD” is contrasted with “the fear of the LORD.”

Q: How can “wisdom” be one of the seven pillars of the house built by “wisdom”?

Comment: According to the old Isaiah study, the “wisdom” of Isaiah 11:2 is wisdom gained by *experience*. That is just one facet of wisdom, not an all-encompassing expression, so it would fit as one of the seven pillars. Young’s *Analytical Concordance* defines this “wisdom” as “skill.”

Reply: Yes. There are several Hebrew words for wisdom.

In Isaiah 11:2,3 seven distinct qualities of character are mentioned. The last, “*quick understanding* in the fear of the LORD,” is the most enthralling one and the climax of the seven classifications. Some matters are so complex, so intertwined, that it is almost impossible to give a definitive answer to explain them distinctly and succinctly. “Quick understanding” is a quality of character approaching intuition. Intuition on the highest level is omniscience—all-seeing in a most comprehensive manner. Omniscience includes knowledge of events of the future. Originally, only God had complete and perfect intuition. We all possess intuition but in very limited amounts. Isaiah 11 speaks of how wonderful Jesus is; he was chosen to be High Priest to the world in the Kingdom because he possesses all of these traits, including “quick understanding.” One who is of quick understanding cannot give succinct, distinct reasons in given situations but knows a matter smells bad. He has the intuition, the ability, of knowing something is evil *before* it gets out of hand.

Comment: That is exactly what the KJV margin has for “quick understanding.” The Hebrew meaning is scent or smell.

Reply: Isaiah 11 tells why Jesus will be the Prophet, Priest, and King of the next age. Originally only God had perfect intuition. Jesus has since developed this sense of comprehension.

The “seven pillars” are also presented in the Book of Proverbs in two different ways. One is Proverbs 1:2,3. “To know [1] wisdom and [2] instruction; to perceive the words of [3] understanding; To receive [4] the instruction of wisdom, [5] justice, and [6] judgment, and [7] equity.” All of these are either possessed or received. By having these facets of wisdom, one is enabled to give “subtilty to the simple, [instruction to others], [and] to the young man knowledge and discretion.” (The seven are also shown in verses 2–6 as follows: To [1] know, [2] perceive, [3] receive, [4] give, [5] hear, [6] understand, and [7] interpret. However, that is not our discussion here.) The point is there are seven *cardinal* pillars in the house of wisdom. Similarly God has four *cardinal* attributes. God has more than four attributes, and wisdom has more than seven facets, but the *cardinal* ones are four and seven, respectively.

Prov. 8:14 Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength.

Wisdom continues to be personified by a woman. In verse 22 a change will occur. There Jesus will be presented as the best exemplar of wisdom that humanity can appreciate since we cannot see God. Wisdom can be grasped by a study of Jesus’ life and ministry.

“Counsel” is advice, whereas “sound wisdom” is practical wisdom, usually gained through experience. Experience, patience, etc., give us different facets of wisdom. There is a very close alliance between the Holy Spirit and wisdom.

“I am understanding; I have strength” (KJV). “I have insight; I have strength” (RSV). “... power is mine” (Masoretic). “Insight” is the best word; it suggests a higher concept of understanding. It is one thing to be able to give counsel or to have practical experience,

but “insight,” another facet of wisdom, pertains to problems at hand. One who has insight can look at the exigency involved and understand how it should be handled.

One who attentively considers God’s Word will be assisted greatly in acquiring wisdom. In the final analysis, “counsel” is related to victory. Having power or strength suggests that when counsel with insight into the problem at hand is presented, the one listening is enabled to do things not possible otherwise. When many first consecrate, they notice that they can do things not possible with the will of the flesh; that is, no matter how determined they were on certain matters, the Bible grants little victories along the way as encouragements for them to see that divine counsel brings them to a higher level than their own judgment and thinking and reasoning. And these victories help them to appreciate the power of God’s Word.

Prov. 8:15 By me kings reign, and princes decree justice.

This verse is peculiarly worded, for not many kings or princes reign in the good sense. In explaining the Bible, Pastor Russell mentioned that as the Bible traveled westward, those countries in which the Bible had the greatest distribution and reception were lifted to a higher level. For example, much credit for liberty coming to the United States can be attributed to the Bible. Many of the early colonists fled to this country to escape religious persecution. Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, John Adams, and others were influenced by the Bible and were very remarkable in some of the things they did. The power of the Holy Scriptures brings enlightenment. Darkness continued in those countries that did not have the Bible.

Comment: The Pastor said that the Bible was the torch of liberty and civilization.

A king who rules justly and with equity must have a standard: the Bible. That is the problem today—many filling the office of president, prime minister, dictator, etc., lack such a standard. Verse 15 seems to be prophetic because it is not a true statement today, nor has it been in the past, generally speaking.

In earlier years Bro. Frank had difficulty studying this verse because he thought perhaps Jesus was speaking (“By me [Jesus] kings reign ...”). But it isn’t until verse 22 that Proverbs 8 talks about him. The spirit of God’s wisdom will rest on the Church in glory, who will rule in the future.

Comment: Would Daniel 2:21 apply here? “And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding.”

Reply: Verse 21 indicates that if God feels a change in rulership is necessary in order to fulfill prophecy or to curtail the detrimental effect of the Adversary’s influence, He can remove a king at any time—and has done so in past ages in certain instances—or raise one up, but not necessarily with wisdom. For instance, Pharaoh was raised up and he had a negative effect.

Comment: Romans 13:1 supports the Daniel 2:21 reasoning: “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained

of God." It is not that the kings have wisdom but that God's wisdom has set up these kings to reign.

Reply: God does have the capability to exercise divine providence and either stop or enhance a condition to further His purpose. However, Bro. Frank is inclined to think of verse 15 as prophetic because of the way it is worded. Kings reigning "by" God and princes decreeing justice will be the prevailing situation in the Kingdom Age. He has been selecting these kings during the Gospel Age.

Comment: The next verse continues the prophetic aspect. Verse 16 is too strong to apply to current rulers because it implies a *good* result from these rulers: "By me princes rule, and nobles, even *all* the judges of the earth." This seems to be a *future* condition. A Scripture that comes to mind about "kings" in the Kingdom is Jesus' being "King of kings [the Little Flock]" and "Lord of lords."

Reply: Especially if we get away from the limited application to Israel. Do not forget that the Book of Proverbs is in an Old Testament time slot circa 1000 BC. The only nation God recognized at that time was Israel, meaning that the other nations were in darkness. The Law of God did benefit Israel and raise the standard. The other nations did not have God's Law, so how could their princes and kings rule with equity?

Prov. 8:16 By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth.

The word "all" indicates that verses 15 and 16 are prophetic. Isaiah 11:2–5 shows the qualifications of Jesus to be King—that is why he will be the blessed King of the next age. He has listened to the voice of wisdom, he has listened to the counsel of God, he has learned the methods of His Father, etc. "And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins." The point is that *wisdom was not inherently his*. It was the Father's wisdom that educated and prepared Jesus for his earthly ministry, and the earthly ministry was the schooling of discipline for him. We cannot imagine the Logos having hard circumstances. That is why the holy angels could have thought at one time that God showed favoritism to Jesus in his elevated role as an archangel. But seeing Jesus' earthly ministry and what he went through, the angels knew that he was worthy—"Worthy is the Lamb to receive honor!" This was a lesson the angels needed. Otherwise, they would have continued to see Jesus' role as favoritism—even though God has the right to show favoritism. As Emperor of the universe, He can make a vessel the way He wants. Jesus' earthly ministry manifested that he has *personal merit and worth*.

"By me [God's wisdom pictured as a woman giving counsel] princes rule ..." Similarly in verse 7, but from a negative standpoint, a sinful woman gives wrong counsel that demeans even unto Second Death. In Proverbs 8 *God's* wisdom personified as a woman *elevates*, raising one higher and higher unto *life*. Thus there are the two contrasts and then the picture changes to Jesus later.

Comment: Isaiah 1:26 talks about restoring judges in the Kingdom: “And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counselors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city.”

Comment: Then verses 15 and 16 have been considering future rulership from the standpoint of the Church class and the Ancient Worthies and on down the hierarchy to the assistants of the Ancient Worthies.

Reply: That is right. There are gradations of office: kings, rulers (other translations), princes, nobles. “All the judges of the earth” would be the Ancient Worthies. The “kings” will be the Church, with Jesus as the head.

Prov. 8:17 I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me.

“I love them that love me.” God loves those who are attracted to the true wisdom—to His wisdom, which is personified here as a woman. This reminds us of the Scripture “Hearken, O daughter, and ... incline thine ear; ... So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty ...” (Psa. 45:10,11). The willingness to be guided by Scripture brings its reward. Wisdom abides with those who embrace it.

“Those that seek me early shall find me.” “Early” means earnestly (Masoretic), diligently (RSV). “Early” is good in the sense of not procrastinating in giving one’s life to the Lord. The earlier one gives his life to the Lord, the better—although sometimes those who do so early in life are not benefited because it is not accompanied with a sufficiency of zeal, earnestness, and diligence. Therefore, the thought of *earnestly* or *diligently* may be more correct. “Those that seek me earnestly shall find me” shows that the heart condition is conducive to receiving proportionate wisdom. We will be rewarded in proportion to our zeal and desire.

In a country not favorable to Christianity, one might have a Bible. In this circumstance, if one diligently applied himself to know the Lord as intimately as possible, he could be a saint—without all the details of present Harvest truth. Environment does have a tremendous effect, but if one earnestly wants to do God’s will, he *will be rewarded and sustained*. During the Dark Ages Christians made their calling and election sure with little truth; isolated individuals today can do the same. Therefore, it is wrong to say that one must know present truth (the Lord’s secret presence, Pastor Russell is “that servant,” etc.) in order to be of the Little Flock. However, in this country it is essential to know present truth. Surroundings and circumstances are taken into consideration in determining the degree of understanding required for an individual. “For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required” (Luke 12:48) is a principle that would apply.

“For whosoever hath [faithfully used], to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance” (Matt. 13:12). A Christian is required to use his talents, but one should properly assess those talents and not imagine a talent that does not exist.

“Those that seek me earnestly shall find me” is a happifying, very consoling statement to one who is in dark surroundings.

Prov. 8:18 Riches and honour are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness.

This is certainly true of wisdom for the Little Flock in the future. If this verse is considered in the present life, it would be in the embryonic sense. Those to whom the Lord has revealed His Word and truth are indeed richer than the wealthy of the world who abound in temporal goods. By *faith* we even have more honor now, for God has honored us by showing the way to repentance and consecration. In the next life, however, the riches and the honor will be superlative for the Little Flock.

Comment: Matthew 6:33 reads, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

Comment: This is jumping ahead, but the word “inherit” in verse 21 indicates a future aspect for verses 18–21.

Prov. 8:19 My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver.

Imagine living in the mansion Jesus has prepared for those who love him. “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2). That place will be very beautiful and luxurious just from a “natural spiritualized” standpoint.

The fruit of wisdom is better than fine gold and choice silver. Riches, honor, etc., are the end benefit of those who receive the counsel of wisdom earnestly, diligently, and consistently unto death. The end compensation is better than anything this earth has to offer.

“... and my produce [is better] than choice silver” (Masoretic). “... what I yield surpasses choice silver” (NIV). A rich earthly inheritance contains many temporal goods, but plenty can bring much sorrow. Under ideal situations, however, the rich are able to do almost anything they want: get the best lawyer, go to the best college, travel extensively, etc. But with fallen man, riches do not bring the happiness, joy, and good, righteous benefits that true wisdom does. “Fruit” and “produce” suggest many, many benefits. Consider travel. God, in His station with the divine nature, can see everything and be, as it were, everywhere. This shows that the higher up one goes in the spiritual realm, the greater the benefits, and the divine nature is incomprehensible to us now. What we have now are trinkets and toys by comparison.

Prov. 8:20 I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment:

Wisdom is right doing, righteousness.

Wisdom leads “in the midst of the paths [plural] of judgment.”

Prov. 8:21 That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures.

“Substance” is real riches, something really solid, *enduring*. “... we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:18).

Comment: “Substance” fits in with “*durable riches*” in verse 18.

“... and I will fill their treasures.”

Comment: “And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel’s, But he shall receive an hundredfold *now in this time*, ... with persecutions; and *in the world to come eternal life*” (Mark 10:29,30).

Reply: Mark 10:29 refers to the present life, which is nothing compared with the future life.

Comment: It is helpful that the newer versions (NIV and RSV) have a paragraph break before verse 22, indicating a new subject.

Comment: Scofield says in the KJV that Proverbs 8: 22–36 can refer to nothing less than the eternal Son of God.

Prov. 8:22 The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old.

Basically speaking, the subject matter of this chapter is wisdom, and the chapter starts with wisdom personified as a woman. We know that wisdom was only personified in previous verses and that Jesus was not being referred to because of the pronouns “her” and “she.” Incidentally, it is interesting that some women’s rights groups have recently started to use this chapter in the Septuagint with the Greek word for wisdom, *sophia*, and they think of God as possibly being female. They base this on the personification of wisdom as a woman. Certainly this is about the wisdom *of God*, but God Himself is not being personified.

“The LORD [Jehovah] possessed me [the Logos] in the beginning of his way, before his works of old.” Why would it be incongruous to say that Jehovah possessed wisdom in the *beginning* of His way? Because God is “*from everlasting to everlasting*.” He never had a beginning—there was never a beginning of His way. “Blessed be the LORD God of Israel *from everlasting, and to everlasting*. Amen, and Amen” (Psa. 41:13). “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even *from everlasting to everlasting*, thou art God” (Psa. 90:2). “Blessed be the LORD God of Israel *from everlasting to everlasting*: and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the LORD” (Psa. 106:48).

Verse 22 refers to Jesus, and not to the attribute of wisdom. With this verse, the attribute is changed to a person—*here wisdom is personalized in Jesus*. “Christ Jesus ... is made unto us *wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption*” (1 Cor. 1:30). It is important to see that Jesus, in his person, exemplifies most accurately his Father, who is the source of all wisdom. Thus in Proverbs 8 there is a change with verse 22. Of late, however, many do not want to admit Jesus is personalized here because of the Trinity. Protestants 150 years ago thought differently, but now many see that if verse 22 refers to Jesus, there is a problem with the Trinity. Therefore, Evangelicals today are reluctant to admit verse 22 refers to Jesus, whereas Evangelicals in the past did have this view.

Comment: Scofield, who wrote about 100 years ago and was a staunch Trinitarian, emphatically stated that verse 22 is not just the personification of an attribute of God or the will of God expressed for man, but that it is a distinct reference to Christ.

Today Evangelicals are modifying their thinking on this verse because the Trinity is the one precious doctrine that they consider to be their touchstone—they regard the Trinity the way we regard the doctrine of the Ransom. More and more they are rallying around that doctrine as a litmus test to distinguish between a cult and a recognized Christian.

Comment: The NIV and the RSV are good for verse 22. “The Lord brought me forth as the first of his works, before his deeds of old” (NIV). “The LORD created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his works of old” (RSV).

Reply: That is right, for in the Hebrew the word “possessed” means “brought forth,” which is the same as “created” or “birth.”

Comment: If God is from everlasting to everlasting, then obviously His personal attributes would also be from everlasting to everlasting and would not have a beginning or be created or come into being later.

Comment: The thought of bringing the Logos forth would harmonize with the New Testament statement that he was the first or “only begotten Son” of God. “No man hath seen God at any time; the *only begotten Son*, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him” (John 1:18).

Reply: Yes, he was “the beginning of the creation of God,” the first created intelligent sentient being. “And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the *beginning of the creation of God*” (Rev. 3:14).

“In the beginning of his way.” What “beginning”?

Comment: The beginning of His creative works, but not necessarily the beginning of all “physical” creation in the heavenly realm.

Notice Genesis 1:1, “In the [*a*] beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”

Comment: The Earth was there, but it had not been prepared for human habitation. It was empty, without form, and covered with water.

At the time Genesis opens up the scene, the Earth was there, but it was not anything like the Earth today. “The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep” (Gen. 1:2). There were no mountains and no soil, and the Earth was completely covered with water.

Q: Would “In the beginning of his way, before his works of old” be saying the same thing twice, or do these expressions refer to two separate things?

A: Yes and no. First, we need a starting point. When we look at the universe, we see celestial planets and suns, and the Earth is a part of the Milky Way, etc. This is a physical

creation, but God has an abode that is not composed of physical things. His abode is all spiritual or ethereal, but very real—in fact, more real than the terrestrial. In heaven there are *spiritual counterparts* for our trees, gardens, rivers, birds, beings, etc. God does not live in a vacuum. The “beginning” here in verse 22 would not pertain to God’s heaven because that existed contemporaneous with God Himself. He occupied some place from everlasting to everlasting. Jesus was a subsequent creation—he had a beginning. Therefore, we must lower our sights down to the physical, and with the physical we see other worlds. For several reasons we know that at present Earth is the only planet habitable for man. One reason is that the angels sang for joy when they beheld the creation of the first tiny human being down here (Job 38:7). And Earth is the only place Jesus will ever come to die. Isn’t it logical that Jesus would come to the first habitable planet in God’s entire physical universe?—and not just in this universe but in all universes. The fact Jesus came *here* indicates that events on Earth are the practical beginning of His plan. Jesus thus becomes the example to us and to all the inhabitable realms God has in mind for the future. (*All stars and solar systems have a name. To us the number is infinite, but to God it is finite.*)

“In the beginning of his way” would pertain to planet Earth only, for at present the other planets are neither inhabited nor habitable.

Comment: Verse 23 makes that plain: “from the beginning, or *ever the earth was.*”

Reply: Yes. The focus in verse 22 is not on the entire physical realm but on *Earth and the plans God has for it.*

The Book of Proverbs was written about 1000 BC, but the setting of Genesis 1:1 is at least 48,000 years ago. There are seven Creative Days, each being 7,000 years long, and we are in the end of the seventh. Therefore, in Genesis 1:1, when the scene opens, it is not telling how long planet Earth existed. Rather, the Earth had already been in existence for “X” number of years at the time of Genesis 1:1. The Earth was void, but it was there. The opening of the scene is the beginning of the seven Creative Days. In summary, verse 22 is like Genesis 1:1.

Q: So “the beginning of his way” would be the beginning of the ordering of Earth’s surface, whereas before this, Earth was a void. Nevertheless, God made that “void” out of chaos; He made something out of chaos. That “beginning,” that work, is referred to in verse 22.

Prov. 8:23 I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.

“Everlasting” (Hebrew *olam*) means *age-lasting*. It could not literally be “everlasting” because God was alone at one time. The Logos “was set up from age-lasting.”

Comment: The RSV reads, “*Ages ago* I was set up.”

Reply: Yes, Jesus had a beginning a long time ago, but he was not from eternity as God is.

Through a *long process* the Earth was made habitable. Genesis 1 tells us about the ordering of the surface of the Earth, and not about the actual creation of the planet itself.

“Or ever the earth was,” that is, before the process of ordering Earth’s surface began. The Earth was covered with water for a long unknown period of time before the process began. “Or ever the earth[’s surface] was [formed]” is the thought.

Jesus is the “Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8). “Foundation” needs to be explained, for there are several kinds. First, the Earth had to be made habitable (that is a foundation). Before man was created, it was made habitable for amoebas, fish, birds, animals, etc. And even earlier, God had to use His generating power on the surface of the Earth to prepare plants, seeds, vegetation, etc. All of this was a process.

Comment: God “hath chosen us [the Church] in him [Jesus] before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4).

Reply: Yes, the Church was purposed or predestined as a class. The idea of The Christ dates from the foundation of the world, Jesus being first and then the body members.

Q: Wasn’t Jesus with God for a long unspecified period of time prior to the ordering of Earth’s surface?

A: We are only trying to pinpoint the *minimum* amount of time that Jesus existed. When did matter start? We can go back and back and back. Just when the Logos was inserted into this arrangement, there is no way of knowing. He was “slain” before the foundation of the world, before the process began for the ordering of Earth’s surface. This statement about the Lamb also proves that God had a well-thought-out plan before it ever went into operation.

Comment: John 1:1–3 reads, “In the [a] beginning was the Word, and the Word was with [the] God, and the Word was [a] God. The same was in the [a] beginning with [the] God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.”

Reply: John 1:1 is definitely a reference to Genesis 1:1. The same type of language is used.

Comment: In other words, John 1:1 pertains to the ordering of Earth’s surface, and not to everything in the entire universe.

Reply: Yes. God had a universe of His own beforehand. Subsequently a physical universe was created billions and billions of years ago. With telescopes we see things that happened in the distant past as if they are happening today. Hence the preparation of the universe took place a very long time ago. The angels were a creation. Jesus was the first of the spirit beings to be created, and the creation of other spirit beings ensued, before the creation of a human being, Adam. Man has been on Earth for only 6,000+ years (less than one Creative Day), and now the Earth is close to being filled. What about the angels? They had a beginning, and they could have been created in a relatively short period of time. Therefore, just as we would reason that since God has not created the Earth in vain but to be inhabited, so the other planets throughout God’s universe were not created in vain either, but to be inhabited. We are only in the very beginning of seeing physical beings on different planets. How many angels there are we do not know, but there is a definite number. If human beings are close to filling the Earth in less than 7,000 years, then it is possible that the angelic beings were developed in a relatively short period of time. But that does not mean that other angels cannot be created in the future. It does not mean that

down here other human beings will not be born in the Kingdom. It will take eternity to fill all of God's universe with a planet in each solar system. Therefore, God's work does not cease with the creation of physical beings down here. We would reason that the angels, who have a definite number now, may be increased to a larger number in the future. As the universe enlarges, the population of human and spirit beings can increase. We are just in the *beginning* of God's plan, which is here on planet Earth. All the stars and universes have been named by him in advance, indicating He has a specific well-thought-out plan that will extend way into the future. Uninhabitable planets will be made hospitable for man. Why was Earth called "Earth"? Because the first physical being ever created was Adam, whose name means "red clay," ie, "earth." This planet is called "Earth" because human beings were first created here.

Comment: When God was alone, He hurled the planets into their orbits. He worked prior to the creation of Jesus. "For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; *God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else*" (Isa. 45:18).

Reply: "Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and [now] I work" (John 5:17). Elsewhere in Scripture God says, "I alone...." This suggests there was a time when God was alone, and He was doing things.

Comment: Job 28:23–27 reads, "God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof. For he looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven; To make the weight for the winds; and he weigheth the waters by measure. When he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder: Then did he see it, and declare it; he prepared it, yea, and searched it out."

Reply: In regard to the "searching," when we consider man himself—all the component parts of a human being—the thought is that God searched out the function of each part, the protection of each. In the genetic makeup, He provided for contingencies and emergencies, one example being how the human mechanism would fight disease. Mechanisms are implanted in the human being that God has thoroughly thought out.

In Proverbs 8:22 the Logos is brought in to show wisdom in a practical sense. If you were to make the personification of wisdom into the reality of a perfect being, the result would be Jesus, because he was the closest to the Father. At the time of his creation he represented all the qualities that the Father has (except immortality, which he obtained at his ascension).

Prov. 8:24 **When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water.**

When we read about the Creative Days, using the Vailian theory or Pastor Russell's comments, we find that when the Earth was void, without form, and covered with water, the mountains were formed from materials deposited underneath that water. Those underwater materials rose up and became mountains. As the mantle, the undersurface of Earth buckled, the mountains began to appear. They protruded from the water surface. When they protruded, another thing happened. The mountains not only came up, but the water above them shot down into receptacles—huge oceans, each having boundaries beyond which they could not go.

Some mountains are still growing, and some are sinking, as in the islands in the sea.

Later on in this chapter, there will be some good verses to shatter the Trinity idea. Trinitarians weigh how a certain word is translated here: *amen, amon, aman*, etc. The word has about ten different meanings depending on the vowels. The consonants are the same, but the way it is pronounced and the vowels determine the meaning.

Prov. 8:25 Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth:

“Before the mountains were settled [shaped] ...” It is not important for us to know what date the Logos was created, for time outside of Earth’s framework is meaningless to us. Planet Earth is spinning over a thousand miles an hour, and we are oblivious to the speed; we do not even see a blade of grass move. Times; motions; the rocking back and forth of the undulation of Earth’s axis, which goes through the North and South Poles; Earth’s traveling through space in an orbit at the same time it is moving around another celestial pole, Pleiades—all of these factors render God’s timetable and dates of creation in outer space meaningless to us except as recorded in Scripture pertaining to Earth’s Creative Days.

Verse 25 is saying that Jesus, as the Logos, had a preexistence before coming to Earth.

Comment: The creation of the Logos occurred in Genesis 1:2 before the last sentence: “And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. [The Logos was created.] And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.”

When Jesus is referred to as “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,” it doesn’t mean he was actually slain at that time. He first had to be created as a spirit being, made into a human being, grow up into manhood, die on the Cross, be buried, come forth from the grave, and then go up to heaven and apply the merit of his sacrifice. But *in God’s mind* it had already happened. We sometimes get a little fuzzy as to what was in God’s mind versus the finished product. God is telling us He had the Logos in His mind beforehand, and then He created Jesus afterwards.

Prov. 8:26 While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world.

RSV: “Before he had made the earth with its fields, or the first of the dust of the world.”

Q: In Genesis 1:1, do we change “the” to “a” because there was more than one beginning?

A: Yes. There is no article in the Hebrew, so we have the liberty to use “a.” Based on context and the comparison of Scripture with Scripture, the translators (or we) can supply either “the” or “a.”

Comment: So much lies ahead for us to learn if we are faithful. “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known” (1 Cor. 13:12).

Reply: It is awesome. To qualify to be one of the Little Flock requires much development and zeal. Few will make it, relatively speaking, but we must have the hope.

Comment: Even to be of the Great Company, we must make great progress and be *overcomers*.

Reply: When one dies and is given a new body, that means he or she cannot sin anymore. Have we, even if we should attain to just the Great Company, developed a character that would, if put in a perfect body, not sin? God knows. To get eternal life beyond the grave is a wonderful treasure because one will then live forever. Mankind will come forth from the tomb, but they must pass a test at the end of the Millennium to get life. Until they go through the Little Season, they will not get life as the holy angels and never die. The point for us now is that we must RUN. We are living in the Laodicean period when the luxuries, lifestyles, and conveniences are very dangerous for us as New Creatures. The tests are so subtle at this time that those who get the crown now, without being burned at the stake or put into dungeons, will be accredited that they would be faithful under those circumstances. The very end of the age will see persecuting experiences, however.

Jesus said, "A rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. How hardly shall they that be rich enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 19:23,24). Comparatively speaking, we are rich today in every way. This superabundance is very trying to us. How joyous and uninhibited will be the fellowship of those who make the Little Flock! To KNOW that you have been faithful will be joy superlative. And then as each one dies and comes forth, what a joyous fellowship! The cup will be drunk with the wine of JOY!

Prov. 8:27 When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth:

"I" refers to the Logos. What "heavens" did God prepare? The heavens in Earth's atmosphere. Here the focus of attention is on Earth and its heavens. There are different spheres: the ionosphere, the troposphere, etc.

Comment: Solomon, in his prayer, spoke of the "heaven of heavens" where God dwells (1 Kings 8:27). And Deuteronomy 10:14 reads, "Behold, the heaven and the *heaven of heavens* is the LORD'S thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is."

From Earth's perspective, there are different heavens, but the average person thinks of the "heavens" as being just the other solar systems, of which he can see only a fragment. We are in the Milky Way galaxy. We are in a particular universe in which the sun is a controlling element, for the planets revolve around it.

Comment: Genesis 1:6-8 explains how God "prepared the heavens." "And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day."

“He set a compass upon the face of the depth.” This is a reference to Genesis 1:1,2. “In the [a] beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” The Seven Days of Creation tell about the ordering of the face of the globe to make it habitable for man. Notice that Genesis 1:1 does not say *when* God created the planet itself—the mass of material that comprises the Earth: water, minerals, etc. The Seven Creative Days started when God began to change the face of the planet as it had existed for unknown ages—from being void, without form, and covered entirely with water.

The Creative Days start with Genesis 1:3. “And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.” The light existed prior to the Creative Days; there was a sun previously, but it could not penetrate the mass of mineralized water to shine on the surface of the Earth. According to the Vailian theory, the rings containing the heavy minerals collapsed first.

Since we know the seventh day is 7,000 years long, reason would tell us each of the six preceding Creative Days was also 7,000 years long. Therefore, the process took 7,000 years in the Second Creative Day for just the light to come through. As the heavy minerals collapsed on the Earth from the rings, a thinner vapor of water remained, which light penetrated. However, even though there was *sunlight*, the sun could not be discerned as an orb; its transit could not be seen.

“And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day” (Gen. 1:4,5).

(Gen. 1:6) “And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters ...” (Gen. 1:6). The “firmament” or atmosphere was sandwiched between water above and waters covering the surface of the Earth: water, firmament, water. During the Second Creative Day, therefore, the waters were separated. The space in between, composed of air, was called “firmament.” At present three fourths of Earth’s surface is water; hence there is more water than land. Back there the entire surface of the Earth was water.

Q: When Proverbs 8:28 says, “He established the clouds above,” would that refer to the waters above that were separated from the waters on Earth’s surface?

A: Verse 28 is now going into finer detail. Eventually moisture came up from the Earth in cloud formation. But up until Noah’s day a veil of water remained that was not discerned. The Apostle Peter alludes to this when he mentions the “scoffers” of our day and compares them to the scoffers in Noah’s day, who could not see the water and did not believe the Flood would come because it had not rained for the 1,656 years that man had been upon the Earth (Gen. 2:5,6). Peter said, “... there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they *willingly are ignorant of*, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished” (2 Pet. 3:3–6). The vapor ring of water cascaded down at the time of Noah’s Flood. Many aspects of Isaac Vail’s theory are reasonable; it is the best theory for harmonizing science with Scripture. The rings of Saturn and Jupiter are a living example of the Vailian theory. As the outer ring slows down in relationship

to the rotating globe, it cascades—but to the polar regions of the planet beneath. Hence the ring spreads out like a canopy and collapses at the North and South Poles. That is what happened in Noah’s day.

“... when he set a compass upon the face of the depth.” Gravitation pulls toward the center, and it tends to make a globe or sphere. We see this principle in water *droplets* or when we blow soap bubbles. The word “compass” is interesting here in verse 27 because it shows that scientific and mathematical calculations were used. A compass involves trigonometry, and there is a relationship between the center of a compass and a circle. $2r$ or D is the measurement of the outer circumference of a compass, but the compass has a center point. In other words, there is a mathematical relationship between the center and the outer circumference. Spherical trigonometry is three-dimensional, whereas plane geometry is two-dimensional. With both, gravity pulls toward the center.

Comment: The NAS says, “He inscribed a circle on the face of the deep.” It sounds as though there is a shape and then a circle inscribed within the shape.

Reply: When we want to draw a circle, we first have to determine where to put the point of the compass. A lot of consideration would be given to the point, especially when we think in larger terms. Therefore, God first determined the center, and then the sphere coalesced to that center. Jesus was there at that time.

Prov. 8:28 When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep:

The clouds above came subsequently. Up to Noah’s day, the Earth was watered by a mist or dew that came up from the ground—there was no rain. Nevertheless, the moisture coming up created clouds. So these verses all pertain to an early stage of the ordering of Earth’s surface.

Comment: Many brethren take the New Testament Scripture that without Jesus nothing was made that was made. Of course everything hinges on what the words “without” and “nothing” mean. But Proverbs 8 is very clear: When **GOD** prepared the heavens, when **HE** set the compass, when **HE** established the clouds, when **HE** strengthened the fountains of the deep, the Logos was there. This shows that Jesus was really a student of the Father’s handiwork. That is why God is called the CREATOR.

Reply: Yes, and there are other Scriptures to be considered.

A comment made earlier bears repeating here:

Comment: When God was alone, He hurled the planets into their orbits. He worked prior to the creation of Jesus. “For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; *God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else*” (Isa. 45:18).

When we consider the Father’s creative works, we feel very small. Just think! An eternity of time existed up to *just the beginning* of the ordering of Earth’s surface for habitation by man. God has named *every* solar system and its planets. Once a name was given, we know He had a purpose. Earth is the first inhabited planet, so in one sense we are at the very

beginning of God's work. He FIRST made a man HERE. But Earth's ordering was at the start of a previous *eternity of existence*. In fact, God existed alone for an eternity even before the Logos was created.

The last half of verse 28 runs into the next verse: "... when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment." In other words, the seas are confined by shorelines. True, there are high and low tides, but the boundaries are fixed so that the water will go only so far. It took time for the coalescing to fully take place and the boundaries of the oceans to become a fixed law.

Prov. 8:29 When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth:

Q: Job 38:4–6 mentions the "foundations" of the Earth when the Lord questioned Job: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof." Wouldn't these foundations or sockets have been laid prior to the ordering of Earth's surface, prior to the "foundations" we are reading about in Proverbs 8?

Reply: The Great Pyramid is a symbol of a sphere demonstrated in a form that teaches certain lessons. The four corners are the circle; trigonometrically speaking, they are the symbol of a sphere. That is why the top and base of the Pyramid are the relationship of the center of a circle to its base. That would be seen more easily if the apex of the Pyramid were lowered down to its base. The base has a value, which is related to a compass point and the circle. Therefore, the Pyramid is a sphere; it is a picture of planet Earth. The exterior of the Pyramid demonstrates physical mathematical relationships pertaining to the natural planet itself. The number of days in a year are indicated, and this is related to the number of days for the Earth to circle the sun. Thus a circle is involved, but expressed as the number of days in a year or a century depending on the perspective. The Pyramid is really a mathematical expression of a sphere.

Comment: The phrase "the squaring of the circle" is the concept of the relationship of the Pyramid to a circle.

Reply: Yes, that is another way of approaching the relationship.

Q: Are the foundations in Job 38:4 the same as the foundations in Proverbs 8:29, or were the Job foundations done earlier?

A: Job 38:4–6 is based on the Pyramid. Those four corner sockets were set purposely to demonstrate planet Earth and its transit around the sun, and the moon transit in another way. The sockets were set at different levels or heights (depths); there are different mathematical lessons depending on how the schematic is made.

When God "gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment," the boundaries or restrictions were formed by mountains coming to the surface of the water. The land surface underneath the waters buckled, causing the tops of

the buckling to protrude through the water surface to form mountains. Then the water drained down from those mountains into hollows called seabeds. Once the buckling occurred and stabilized, receptacles remained into which the water drained. As the waters in these receptacles stabilized, they were oceans or seas.

Comment: Job 38:10,11 (NIV) describes this more poetically: “When I fixed limits for it and set its doors and bars in place, when I said, ‘This far you may come and no farther; here is where your proud waves halt.’”

Reply: Yes, the hollows are like bowls with the outer perimeter fixed, and therefore, the seashore is the limiting factor.

Comment: The Third Creative Day accomplished the land and sea limits: “And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good.... And the evening and the morning were the third day” (Gen. 1:9,10,13).

Reply: Yes, that is when the mountains came forth.

Prov. 8:30 **Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him;**

NIV: “Then I was the craftsman at his side. I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in his presence.”

RSV: “Then I was beside him like the Master Workman, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always.”

Those versions have to be amended somewhat.

Comment: The term “Master Workman” does not fit. The Companion Bible says it is used on insufficient grounds.

Reply: In Scripture there are only two instances where the Hebrew word is translated “cunning workman.” When that same word is put in a verbal form or other forms, there are so many instances of its use that an index cannot contain them. Hence certain words in the Bible do not appear in a concordance.

“Then I was by him [in His presence].” That is simple enough.

“As one brought up with him.” Notice that “with him” is supplied. Verse 30 should start: “Then I was by him, as one brought up.” To include “with him” would limit the Father’s age. The Father and the Son were not brought up together.

Comment: Even the “as” is supplied. “Then I was by him, one brought up.”

There was a time when the Son had a start as a Son and as a nursling.

Comment: The Companion Bible reads, "'As one brought up with him.' As one constantly with him or under his constant care, Hebrew *amon* from root *aman*. To be constant or steady and denoting (1) the making constant or steady; (2) the being constant, as a river, a house, etc.; (3) stability or faithfulness; (4) the constant and steady care of a nurse; (5) the constant and steady resting of the mind as trusting, relying, or depending upon; (6) of the constant steady hand required in a cunning workman." The RSV, rendering this "Master Workman," does so on insufficient grounds.

Reply: Yes, for several reasons. The word *aman*, with two consonants, can be translated other ways (such as *amon*) depending on the vowels used. Almost invariably the thought is "to be built up," or in the passive voice, "one being built up," or as the KJV says, "one brought up [as a child, being trained, being educated]." A child goes through a growing *process*. There was a time when the Father was *alone* and the Logos hadn't yet been created. Therefore, "*by* him" is good. "*With* him" incorrectly implies the Father and the Son were always together, which is what the nominal Church teaches in the doctrine of the Trinity.

Comment: When you consider Jesus' great responsibilities in the future, wouldn't he be more of a Journeyman? He would have to be a Journeyman, watching the Father and doing whatever the Father was doing, in order to be entrusted with such responsibility in the future?

Reply: The *Father* is the Creator. *He* created the heavens. Jesus had *nothing* to do with the creation of the heavens. The Scriptures tell us that God ALONE did the creating, with *His* own fingers, with *His* span. Jesus would not have that capability.

Comment: It appears as though Jesus' role was more in the *latter part* of God's work. Contextually in Proverbs 8, it is explicit that God did the work and Jesus was there to observe. To say that Jesus was the Master Workman doing everything under God's direction is not contextually harmonious. Jesus was, in fact, very much involved with some creative works, but not with all of them.

Reply: That is correct.

Comment: The NIV says, "Then I was the craftsman at his side." Jesus was an apprentice. While the Father was creating, Jesus was by His side learning and watching. The latter part of the verse which says, "I was daily his delight," gives the thought that as Jesus was learning, he started hands-on creating, toward the end of the ordering of the Earth.

Reply: Jesus was not involved with any of the creation in the context of Proverbs 8. He was by the Father's side as a foster child or Son. *Aman* is used repeatedly as a nursling, which is a baby being brought up. Mordecai "brought up" the child Esther after his brother died—the same Hebrew word is used.

Comment: The Companion Bible says of the phrase "as one brought up" that *God* is the One doing the bringing up. God is doing the craftsman work, not Jesus.

Reply: Yes, "*By myself, by my own fingers, by my own span*" is the thought. Jesus himself said, "The Father worketh hitherto, and [now] I work [while I am down here on Earth]." Before that, the Father worked alone.

Q: John 1:3 is obviously referring to the earthly creation when it says that all things were made by the Logos, and that without the Logos was not any thing made that was made. Would it be referring to the fact that Jesus was not actually creating, but that he was there?

Reply: The *Diaglott* footnote for John 1:1–3 reads: “*Ginomai* occurs upwards of 700 times in the New Testament, but never in the sense of ‘create.’ Yet in most versions it is translated as though the word was ‘*ktizo*.’ The word occurs 53 times and signifies to be, to become, to come, to come to pass, also to be done or transacted. All things in the Christian dispensation were done by Christ, namely, by his authority and according to his direction [as a High Priest, eg] and in the ministry committed to his apostles. Nothing has been done without his warrant.” By observing the Father all through the ordering of Earth’s surface and up to the creation of Adam, Jesus learned to appreciate Him and His power. God rested after the creation of man.

Q: Has Jesus been involved in *any creation*—period?

A: This subject is so large and sublime that it cannot be condensed into a few words. It should be expressed in writing with all Scriptures pertaining to the subject.

Comment: In Proverbs 8, the Logos is young. He is watching His Father work and is very happy with everything he sees. The Father, in turn, gets delight in seeing how much His “little boy” appreciates the work. There is mutual joy. Jesus is happy because of what his Father is doing, and his Father is enthused watching Jesus’ reaction. We see this type of response with our own children.

Prov. 8:31 Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men.

Comment: Regarding “I was daily his delight” in verse 30, the word “his” is supplied. It is as though Jesus was daily delighted to see these new things coming about, and he always rejoiced at every creation. Then verse 31 says, “rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth,” showing that Jesus was there as the Earth became habitable.

Reply: Yes, things progressed and then *climaxed with the creation of man*, at which time the morning stars, that is, Jesus and Lucifer, were joyous. “When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” (Job 38:7). But Lucifer was joyous for only a short time. He quickly thought about what he could do with the wonderful human creation, and shortly thereafter he deflected.

Comment: The verse also says, “And my delights were with the sons of men,” showing the other angels rejoiced as well.

Reply: The angels sang twice: (1) at man’s creation, and (2) when Jesus was born on the human plane.

Comment: When the words *aman* and *amon* were discussed from the standpoint of different vowels with the same consonants making different words, I looked up the words in the back of Young’s. The context of verse 30 uses passive voice for “Then I was by him, as one brought up.” According to Young’s that would be *amon*, but when *aman* is considered—and the translators have the option of supplying either set of vowels—the

passive voice is beautiful too. “Then I was by him, as one *nursed*.” That is a very sweet thought of the Father nurturing the Son.

Reply: Yes, the nursing aspect, used elsewhere in Scripture, carries the thought of being young and being taught. Normally, an apprentice does a little work himself while he is learning. An apprentice has hands-on experience while he is being taught.

Comment: It does seem as if there is some transition here as regards Jesus’ role in creation. Genesis 1:25 says, “God made the beasts of the earth,” showing they were His work; but then in connection with the creation of man, the declaration is made, “Let *us* make man ...” This latter clause seems to imply some action on the part of the Son.

Reply: That plurality is a form of royalty. In ancient times the king did not refer to himself as “I,” but used “we.” It showed a plenitude of power and was rhetorical in a sense.

The following are examples of how *aman* is translated in Scripture (remember, the vowels are supplied arbitrarily by the translators, so what Young’s shows as *amon* can be *aman* and vice versa):

Numbers 11:12 —“nursing father.” “Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a *nursing father* beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers?”

Ruth 4:16—“nurse.” “And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became *nurse* unto it.”

2 Kings 10:5—“bringers up.” “And he that was over the house, and he that was over the city, the elders also, and the *bringers up* of the children, sent to Jehu, saying, We are thy servants, and will do all that thou shalt bid us; we will not make any king: do thou that which is good in thine eyes.”

Esther 2:7—“brought up.” “And he *brought up* Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle’s daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid was fair and beautiful; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter.”

Isaiah 49:23—“nursing fathers.” “And kings shall be thy *nursing fathers*, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.”

In all of these examples, the context necessitates the thought of “nursing,” “nurse,” or “being brought up.” The translation depends on whether active or passive voice is being used. In verse 30 Jesus is the object; he is the one being nursed or taught. The One doing the nursing is the Heavenly Father. *Aman* has the thought of being steadfast, being established, believed, trusted, etc., but “being nourished” is the basic thought.

Comment: The active role in verse 30 is what *God* is doing. *Aman* there shows what *God* did in the role of a nurse to the Logos. Similarly, the previous verses show what *God* did.

The King James scholars were every bit as knowledgeable about the Greek and Hebrew languages as any scholar today. One lexicon, whose author is now deceased, says *aman* means “to prop, to sustain, to stay, to support, to carry a child.” Modern scholars are divided into two schools. One thinks Jesus was the maker of the world; the other thinks Jesus was a Son or foster child. We believe Proverbs 8:30 is speaking about a child who was being nursed or brought up—his early days when he was created.

“Then” in verse 30 means “at that time”; it is not a transitional “next.”

Comment: “Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth.” The Logos was rejoicing to see what the Father had made in the habitable part of the Earth. “And my delights were with the sons of men” would show that he was there when the Father created Adam, but he did not make Adam.

Reply: The primary purpose of Proverbs 8 is to show (1) how wise Jesus is, (2) something about his upbringing, and (3) how close he was to the Father. The New Testament emphasizes Jesus, but in the Gospel of John he repeatedly makes such statements as “As the Father taught me, so I speak.” Jesus spoke the Father’s words, not his own. He expressed what the Father had told him to say. Nevertheless, Jesus is the High Priest of our profession, the captain of our salvation, the Head of the Church, etc. Therefore, by obeying Jesus, we are obeying the Father. Jesus was the image of his Father in characteristics, mannerisms, etc., as well as “physically.”

Q: What is the context of Colossians 1:16?

A: We will take that up the next lesson.

THE FATHER IS THE CREATOR (Supplement to Prov. 8:22–31)

This portion of Proverbs 8 is where Wisdom has changed from being a personification to being a personalized application of wisdom inherent in Jesus based upon his association with the Father during his preexistent state as the “Logos” (meaning the Word, the mouthpiece of God). Many Christians believe that Wisdom is treated in an abstract sense throughout the *entire* chapter. Others feel that the Wisdom here is God Himself. The bulk of Evangelical Christians believe that verses 22 through 31 do refer to Jesus—a thought with which we would agree. However, there are problems in understanding Proverbs 8 because of the confusion the Trinity has caused. The failure to properly distinguish between the Father and the Son prevents many from observing helpful details. The doctrine of the Trinity is so strong in Evangelicals, who believe that this portion of Proverbs 8 refers to Jesus, that they even distort the grammar. Our purpose today is not to view the chapter from different angles, but to show that there is a distinction between the Father and the Son and that THE FATHER IS THE CREATOR, not Jesus. To be convinced of this, we must review certain Scriptures.

(Isa. 40:12) “Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?” This refers to Jehovah, for the context has “LORD” in capital letters. The words “measured,” “meted out,” “span,”

“measure,” “weighed,” “scales,” and “balance” all indicate mathematics. The “hollow of his [God’s] hand” and “span” are very specific. The waters, heaven, the soil of earth, mountains, and hills were all carefully and specifically measured out by God. And this contradicts the explosion or big bang theory so prevalent in science. This description of creation pertains to earth and earth’s atmosphere. The heavens being measured with the span of His hand is viewing the heavens from *our* standpoint. When we view the heavens from down here on earth, we see the signs of the zodiac, but these different constellations are actually at various distances from earth.

In other words, when the stars were put in their place way back in the distant past when they were created, God had “signs” in mind. We know this because Genesis 1:14 tells us the sun, moon, and stars are for *signs*. In order for them to be “signs,” they *had to be placed in the heavens in a certain way*—but from our perspective down here. If we were on another sun in another galaxy and viewed the heavens from that perspective, the signs we see on earth would not be there. And Proverbs 8:22–31 pertains to earth, to our perspective.

(Isa. 40:21,22) “Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in.”

(Isa. 40:26) “Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.” Basically, Isaiah is talking about the stars. Recently, for the *first time*, a planet in another solar system was observed through the Hubbell(?) telescope. When we look up at the heavens, we see stars and they are impressive in number—in fact, infinite in number from our standpoint but finite from God’s standpoint. Notice: “... for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.” Astronomers will tell us that a constellation is condensing to a black hole, another is exploding, another is coming into existence, etc. They report these phenomena from the present standpoint, but the constellations are millions and billions of light-years away. Therefore, what we see today happened way, way in the past. We are looking BACK in time. Isaiah 40:26 indicates that ultimately, in time, a stable condition will result (“not one faileth”). Forty-two thousand years of the Creative Days, the time required for the ordering of the surface of earth, is a mere drop in the bucket.

God is “STRONG IN POWER”; He “created these things.” From a practical viewpoint alone, it is unreasonable to bring Jesus into the creative process, for *only a divine being could create*. The Logos would not have had the power. Jehovah takes credit for the creation of the universes.

Comment: Isaiah 40:25, the verse before, makes the context, referring to God, very clear: “To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.” Then the next verse speaks of His power.

We are only considering sample texts today in the interest of time. There are many, many Scriptures, but these samples should be convincing regarding God’s creative powers.

(Isa. 42:5) “Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath

unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein.” This text again refers to God. From our perspective the heavens, which He created, are like a stretched-out curtain, and when we look up at the stars, they appear to be on one plane or on a curved vault. In other words, we do not have depth perception. Moreover, God takes credit for the “breath” of human beings. Actually, He created only Adam (and Eve), but they became the father (and mother) of mankind. If *God* had not given the breath of life to Adam and instilled in him procreative powers, Adam would not have been the father of a living race. God takes credit because *He* initiated the breath of life with Adam.

(Isa. 45:12) “I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded.” God says, “*I*” and “*even my hands,*” not Jesus’ hands—and the hands are plural. God takes credit not only for the heavens and the earth but also for man.

(Isa. 45:18) “For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else.” This verse is even stronger, very emphatic. “God HIMSELF ... formed the earth,” and He ends up, “I am Jehovah; and there is *none else.*” He is speaking as the CREATOR. This study is intended to help us see not only the distinction between God and Jesus, but how wonderful God is. The nominal Christian world emphasizes how wonderful Jesus is: his love, his mercy. Jesus did die a horrible death on the Cross, but nevertheless, the Father is the GREAT ONE. During his earthly ministry, Jesus always gave credit to the Father. Jesus regarded his Father with great awe.

(Isa. 48:13) “Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens: when I call unto them, they stand up together.”

(Isa. 51:13,15) “And forgettest the LORD thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth ... But I am the LORD thy God, that divided the sea, whose waves roared: The LORD of hosts is his name.” God “divided the sea” in the Third Creative Day when he separated the land from the oceans. Isaiah’s thinking is very noble about the greatness of Jehovah.

Q: Wouldn’t the point be that the division of the land from the sea occurred during the *Third* Creative Day and God was still the active CREATOR at this point?

A: That is exactly the point. We are brought *into* the Creative Days, and God is still taking credit.

(Rev. 4:8–11) “And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.” The worship is directed to the One seated on the throne, that is, God.

(Rev. 10:1,2,6) "And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire: And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth, And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer." The "mighty angel" who came down from heaven was Jesus at the time of the French Revolution. He "sware" by a higher being: Jehovah.

(Col. 1:16) "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him." "For by him [Jesus] were all things created"; we know this clause refers to Jesus because of the previous verse (verse 15): Jesus "is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature." Verse 16 seems to state unequivocally that Jesus created all things, but that is not what this verse means. Verse 16 is mistranslated. The word "by" should be "in." In fact, the mistranslation is a complete violation of the Greek because at least 1,000 times in the New Testament, the word *en* is a preposition that means "in" exactly like our English "in." "*En*" cannot be translated "by" whenever it is in the dative case and "him" *singular* is in the dative form. In that case, the word *en* should be "in," not "by." The *Diaglott* says for verse 16: "Because **in him** were created all things." Verse 19 in the *Diaglott* reads: "Because **in him** it was thought good that the whole fulness should dwell." In other words, the King James Version translates the *same* Greek word *en*, used the *same* way, as "by him" in verse 16 and as "in him" in verse 19. *Both* should be "in him." "For it pleased the Father that *in him* should all fulness dwell" (Col. 1:19 KJV). When *en* pertains to plural things, it is sometimes translated "among," which is basically the same thought.

Q: Colossians 1:17 reads, "And he is before all things, and *by him* all things consist." Should "by him" be "in him" here also?

A: Yes.

Comment: The *Diaglott* rendering of verse 17 is much better: "In him all things have been permanently placed."

Reply: That is correct.

Several Scriptures imply that God's intention, when He created Jesus, was to honor His Son, and He had in mind a pyramidal chain of authority. The Pastor used the Pyramid to say that all the other casing stones had to conform to the lines of the top stone. Inherently in the top stone is the pyramidal structure that God had in mind. All the angels and all other beings *except God Himself* will have to bow to Jesus. God is excepted because He is the Author, the Creator.

Another part of verse 16 needs to be explained: "... all things were created by him." In the phrase "by him," the Greek word translated "by" is not *en* but *di*(?). The thought is "... all things were created *on account of* him." The usual explanation of verse 16 is that "through him" (*through* Jesus) all things were created, but that is a different and wrong thought. God created all things with the thought in mind that He wanted to place honor upon His Son, and Jesus is to be Head under Him. For instance, 1 Corinthians 15:27 says that when

all things are subdued to Christ, he in turn will hand everything over to God so that God will be the Head—"all in all"—over the things in heaven and the things on earth. The "things" on earth are alienated from God because of sin. In heaven the fallen angels are alienated from God because of sin. However, some of both (humanity and angels) will be rescued. Even the holy angels will be subject to the Son. In summary, Jesus will be in authority over *all things* in heaven, *except the Father*. When that work is done, Jesus will hand over the Kingdom to the Father (at the end of that age after all the enemies have been destroyed in the Little Season).

Adam and Eve were created at the end of the Sixth Creative Day. After their creation, God rested, we are told in Genesis. But when Jesus hands the Kingdom over to the Father, the Father will resume His *creative* work. During the Seventh Creative Day, God rested from His *creative* work. However, God has not been inactive during the Seventh Creative Day; He merely rested as far as perfecting the other planets, and when He rested, He vested authority in the Son as His agent or representative. John records Jesus' words: "My Father worketh hitherto [during the six Creative Days], and [now, during the seventh Creative Day] I work" (John 5:17). At the end of the Seventh Creative Day, Jesus will hand over to the Father a perfected and tried Kingdom. The implication is that when Jesus does this, God will begin to create again.

But has God been inactive during the seven Creative Days? No! He has been very active, but not with physical creation.

It is wrong to say that God can meet any contingency that might arise, for with God there is no such thing as a contingency because He is all omniscient as well as all powerful.

God wanted to create a Son so that He would have fellowship and could share things with him. We know this because God had sympathy for Adam when he was alone and did not have fellowship, and thus He created Eve for Adam to have a companion on his level to share things with. God was alone for an infinity, and He is and will be with companions for an infinity in the future: Jesus, the Church, the angels, etc. Further on, Colossians tells that Jesus is the "head of the body"; ie, he is the top stone of the Pyramid. "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence [with the exception of the Father, of course]" (Col. 1:18).

In regard to Jesus' preexistence, he was brought into being before earth's Creative Days began, but we are not told how long before. We can reason, however, that if Jesus was the firstborn of all creation, other beings came into existence subsequently, ie, the angels. But they must have come into being through another process rather than each being separately made by God. How do we know this? Because Jesus is *the first and the only* directly begotten Son of God. Since the other angels are called "sons of God," it means He was responsible for their coming into being, but He could have placed a mechanism in them that would initiate a reproduction process just as He did with Adam. The difference was that with Adam both male and female were needed to produce offspring, but in heaven the angels are all males, which means another kind of process was instituted for the replication of the other spirit beings, those who were not directly and individually created. When Adam was made, the earth, the ground, was the womb. Mother Earth formed Adam. We do not know how the angels were replicated.

Comment: There are illustrations even here on earth where an organism can reproduce itself, having both male and female capabilities.

Reply: Yes, the amoeba, paramecium, cytoplasm, protoplasm, etc., are examples. The paramecium deserves more attention because it is a living animal cell. It is a single-cell elongated organism with a groove through the middle that, in time, separates into two parts. The separated part develops its own groove or line and then separates, etc., etc.—a process of multiplication or twinning that does not require the presence of an outside organism. The replication of angels could be similar or be another process.

Jesus as the Logos could not have made the angels separately, for he was not a divine being. Jesus was first created; probably the other angels followed shortly thereafter. Similarly with Adam, children followed shortly thereafter. It is now 6,000+ years since Adam, and in that relatively short period of time, a human race of 5 1/2 billion people has been produced counting the dead. As to whether or not all the angels were created and finished before the earth was made habitable for man, we do not know. There could have been an overlapping to a certain extent. At any rate, angels came into being before Adam's creation, for Job tells us they rejoiced when they saw man.

In summary, God existed for an infinity before He started to order earth's surface for man's habitation. But from the moment the Creative Days began, time began, and things were done according to the "time clock." Example: in the "fullness of time" Jesus was born. A timetable came into existence with the ordering of the surface of planet earth. Before the timetable started and events happened at the precise planned moment, time was infinity.

Comment: In John 1:3, is "by him" correct, or should it be otherwise? "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:3).

Reply: The Greek word *ginomai* translated "made" does not mean "create." It is the verb "to be," which has many different forms: done, made, be, become, was, shall, etc. "All things were done in him," or "In him were all things done"—just like Colossians. The *Diaglott* helps: "All on account of it ..."; although the Greek word is different, the thought is the same as in Colossians. Colossians has *en* in the dative case, meaning "in"; and this is *de* with the genitive case, meaning "on account of." The *Diaglott* footnote for John 1:3 on page 312 helps: "*Ginomai* occurs upwards of seven hundred times in the New Testament, but never in the sense of *create*, yet in most versions it is translated, as though the word was *ktizo*. 'The word occurs fifty-three times in this Gospel, and signifies to be, to come, to become, to come to pass; also, to be done or transacted. All things in the Christian dispensation were done by Christ, i.e. by his authority and according to his direction; and in the ministry committed to his apostles, nothing has been done without his warrant. See John 15:4,5, "Without me ye can do nothing." Compare ver. 7,10,16; John 17:8; Col. 1:16,17.' *Cappe's Diss.*"

Comment: The *Diaglott* interlinear on Colossians is good: "The things all on account of him [Jesus] and for him have been created."

Reply: In other words, Jesus was not the creator, but things were created for his benefit.

Comment: The explanation of Revelation 1:8 in *The Keys of Revelation* says: “However, Jehovah’s work of creation did have a beginning. Jesus, ‘the faithful and true witness ... the creation of God’ did not create himself but was begotten of his Father (Rev. 3:14). Since Jesus was the first (beginning) and *only* (ending or last) direct creation of God, all other sentient beings—human and angelic—were subsequently created ‘of’ the Father but ‘by’ or ‘through’ the Son (John 1:3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Rev. 1:17; 2:8). ‘Let *us* make man in our image’ (Gen. 1:26). ‘For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible’ (Col. 1:16).” This gives the thought that Jesus had a part in creation.

Reply: The title “Alpha and Omega” refers to Jesus in the Book of Revelation, but in the Old Testament it refers only to Jehovah. When the book on Revelation was written, certain subjects were a problem because I wanted to write a little book, and the result is as small as I could make it. Therefore, those subjects were avoided because they would cause more consternation than help. Also, I don’t know just when I wrote on that particular portion of Revelation. The writing on Revelation was started back in 1946 and 1948. I translated the Book of Revelation approximately 50 years ago. (Similarly, I studied and understood about Ezekiel’s Temple almost 50 years ago.) Some of the writing on Revelation came from old papers that were on hand, such as this particular distinction between the Father and the Son. And there is another place in Revelation on another subject that I had to leave alone. In other words, 50 years ago, I did not have the thinking that was presented today. I still have on the shelf Scriptures that pertain to certain subjects we never hear discussed, and they will remain on the shelf until they clarify. Back in the 1970’s when I gave an impromptu discourse to two sisters, notes were taken, and they were revised in the mid-1980’s. But even that revision needs a revision because some minuscule points in the reasoning have clarified subsequently. In growing in understanding, we develop and progress. This was true of the Pastor as well. There is progression: we either progress or regress in understanding. In other words, life is a stream, and if we don’t do anything, we go downstream, backwards.

Q: Will you comment on Hebrews 1:2? “Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.”

A: “Worlds” here would be *aion* (ages, dispensations), not the planet. In the *Diaglott*, Hebrews 1:2 reads: “In the last of these days spoke to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, on account of whom also he constituted the ages.” We could go into every Scripture, but we are taking only a handful. That handful should be convincing. God said *He* did the creating. We have said in the past that numerous Scriptures are misunderstood, and we are examining some of them today. Others were considered last week. This is a new subject that hasn’t been considered.

Comment: If all people on earth have to be tested to see whether they are worthy of living forever, wouldn’t the angels need testing too?

Reply: Yes, there was a test at the time of the Flood, and those angels who passed the test will never die.

Comment: All along I have thought of God as the Creator. He did the directing, but Jesus as the mouthpiece, the Logos, followed directions.

Reply: That is the general thought, but God did the creating Himself without an intermediary. The New Testament says that God did the creating *on account of* Jesus. The Old Testament does not bring in Jesus until we read Proverbs 8, which pictures him as a little child.

Comment: God created Adam, but Adam is not called the “only begotten.” And there is still some confusion about the angels—whether the multiplication mechanism was a direct creation of God or whether the multiplication was via Jesus.

Reply: I do not know, but it is difficult to see how Jesus as the Logos, who was not a divine being, could make another being like himself. I am not dogmatic, however. Some duplication took place in which the Father did not directly, with hands on, create the angels. Adam and Eve were called one because Eve was taken out of the side of Adam as a separate entity—and that was a new process. All of their children have been produced through a heterosexual relationship, but Eve was taken out of Adam, and Adam was taken out of Mother Earth. What we are trying to say is that there are other processes beyond our understanding. We can do some guesswork and possibly come pretty close, but we cannot be dogmatic. But we can be dogmatic as to the Father being the Creator.

Q: Could the angels have been a hands-on direct creation the same as Adam?

Comment: The Logos was the only *spiritual* direct creation of God. God created Adam with His own hands from the earth. But the Scriptures state plainly that the Logos was the only direct hands-on creation in the *angelic* realm. As to what Jesus’ role was with the angels, that is not certain.

Reply: Yes. It was some kind of replication process.

Comment: In other words, a number of Scriptures say that God created Adam. A Scripture says that Jesus was the only direct creation of God in the terms of spiritual sentient being. Jesus possibly had some role in the angelic creation.

Reply: Possibly only, because God could have implanted a process in Jesus where things were done without a direct thought process but in a mechanical process like the paramecium. With the paramecium a mechanism was set in operation whereby cellular division takes place without conscious thought. But the first paramecium had to be created before the mechanical process could go into operation. Protoplasmic substance had to be created.

Comment: If a starfish loses a leg or gets injured in a serious way, a separate starfish grows from each piece; ie, more starfish result from a segmented starfish.

Reply: We see on earth *in vitro* creations where an embryo can be started in a dish and then implanted into a womb. I do not know how the angels were brought forth, but I am inclined to think it was some kind of self-inherent reproduction. That is a guess, however.

Comment: Jesus is honored in the picture of the top stone. That apex, the head of the corner, is like the center of the earth, isn’t it?

Reply: Yes, if you drop a perpendicular base from the apex, theoretically it is the center of the base.

Comment: Jesus is the foundation of the earth. Everything was done because of or on account of him. Earth was planned about him.

Reply: The Father had to test the Son to the utmost to show to others that he is worthy. Otherwise, it would look like favoritism. Actually, however, God can have favoritism—He can do what He wants, but He condescends to our level in showing why Jesus is worthy. God devised a plan that would test Jesus to the utmost and would show to others His love in sacrificing His Son, and in that plan the Son came to earth and died on the Cross of his own volition. Then there is the aspect of the permission of evil in God's plan. The mind of God is mind-boggling to us. "For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?" (Rom. 11:34).

In Proverbs 8, the focus is primarily on God's relationship with regard to the creation of the earth, the heavens, etc. The Old Testament clearly accredits God as the sole Creator at that time. Jesus did not participate in that work, even though he had close fellowship with the Father and was by his side, figuratively speaking, during his preexistent state as the Logos. Many Old Testament Scriptures plainly show that God made the heavens and the earth. Jesus is not mentioned until Proverbs 8:22 onward, in which he figuratively replaces the personification of Wisdom.

God's role as Creator can be seen in another way too. All substance, all matter that exists—whether animal, vegetable, or mineral—is composed of atoms and has a genetic code. We usually think of genetic codes in connection with living organisms, but atomic structures apply to all three categories. Each has a definite arrangement of the atoms, molecular or atomic. In other words, all matter has a mathematical arrangement. God is the Master mathematician, the Master of all matter; it is He who set up the genetic codes. He has control over all matter and can exercise that control in whatever way He wants. He can initiate things that will mathematically progress further. His word alone can bring results by following a pattern of His dictation. Consider human beings. From our minds we can think, for example, "I would like to raise my thumb." As soon as we think this, it is done—the thumb is raised. Therefore, thought can produce results because there is a connection (nerves, electricity, ligaments, blood vessels, etc.). The mind controls. Things we do every day are miraculous, and we should not take them for granted. The Japanese have been trying to develop a computer that is somewhat equivalent to the human mind. For a chess game, computers can play against humans. The human makes a move, the computer mechanically makes a counteracting move, etc. There are also thoughts of making computers that are *voice*-activated—one would speak to the computer, and the computer would obey the instructions without even a key or a button being touched. And so God, the Creator, has this capability. Everything is mathematically oriented so that if He just speaks a word, it is done. That is how Genesis reads; for example, "God *said*, Let there be light: and there was light." It took 7,000 years before that command was consummated, and each of the seven Creative Days was designed to be 7,000 years long. Each "day" is a time period of 7,000 years—that is mathematical. When God makes a certain statement, *it is done*. He does not have to handle every little task. God gives *voice* commands, and the task is done.

Hydrogen fusion is the illimitable bank of energy of the future. At present it can be done on only a very limited scale, but in the future it will be widely utilized. The Creator can do these things. How will He know billions of people in the resurrection? He has some type of “mechanism” for recording identities, appearances, etc., so that no matter how an individual died, he can be reconstituted in the resurrection. The same is true of Christians. We hope that when we die, we will be reconstituted into a new sphere of influence (hopefully, the divine nature). God can take that which was human and change it to that which is spiritual or divine—and the result will be the *same personality*, the *same person* with the *same memory*, etc.

Jesus said, “My Father worketh hitherto [during the six Creative Days], and [now] I work” (John 5:17). Genesis tells us that God rested on the Seventh Day. That means He was active during the Six Days with *physical* creation and then rested. During the Seventh Day, Jesus has taken the active role along other lines. When the Seventh Day ends, God will again be active with *physical* creation. However, the thought is not that God does nothing during the Seventh Day, for He has been active with the *new* creation, a *spiritual* creation (from human to spirit). It is God who calls the Church as individuals. True, they must go to Jesus, but God calls them. God makes the new creatures, but Jesus is sharing in this work because we can do nothing without Christ. In the Seventh Day, a lot is being done through Jesus, but decision making rests in the hands of God. We know that God determines who will be called because Jesus said, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him ...” (John 6:44).

In the Old Testament it is very easy to prove that God is the only Creator. The New Testament is the problem, for several Scriptures, through mistranslation, sound as if Jesus is the Creator. One problem is that *kosmos* and *aion* are sometimes translated as “world.” Also, the Greek word translated “made” does not mean “create.”

Comment: Not only does God do the calling, but He is responsible for cutting one off in Second Death.

Comment: We have a modern-day example in regard to God’s spoken word or commands, the mathematics of creation, and God’s creative power. The example is in computer fractiles, which are graphical depictions of mathematical ordering for the creation of organic life forms: trees, plants, people, and animals. The computer fractiles are so complex that an alteration of a millionth part in a fractile image can change the outcome from being a blade of grass to a tree, a rose, etc. The slightest imperceptible change in the mathematical formula can completely or radically alter the outcome of the final product.

GOD ALONE possesses the creative power. That is one thing that makes Him unique. He is THE CREATOR. Scientists are trying to create matter, but they create matter out of matter and fail to see the distinction. That particular glory or capability God will give to none other. (Of course those who attain to the divine nature will come close.)

Returning to verse 30: “Then I [Jesus] was by him [God], as one brought up [as a nursling—see Leeser’s and the Masoretic] with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.” The KJV “as one brought up” is a good translation. (The thought of a “master workman” in some translations is not accurate.) The word “daily” means “day by day.” Day to day Jesus was the Father’s delight. A Jew who does not believe in Jesus uses

“nursling” and “foster child.” He translates part of verse 30 as “I was daily all delight.” “Wisdom was Delight personified while watching the *progressive stages* of the world’s formation.” “Progressive stages” would be “day by day,” meaning the Creative Days. Jesus was delighted with what he witnessed during each Creative Day. Before God said, “Let there be light,” the earth was in complete darkness. The sun was blocked out, so there was no light except an *aurora borealis*, an electrical influence, of which Genesis 1:2 says, “And the Spirit of God moved upon [*hovered over*] the face of the waters.” This text describes one way God spoke and controlled the electrical influence with His mouth.

At the beginning of the First Creative Day, there was complete darkness. The Logos was delighted to see “light” when the 7,000th year came. He saw the *results*, the consummation of what the Father had said. At the end of the First Creative Day, the sun was not visible as an orb; only diffused light could be seen because of the thickness of the waters around the earth. Therefore, as each Creative Day ended, as each progressive day came to a conclusion, the Logos rejoiced to see the finished result of what the Father had commanded.

And returning to verse 31: “Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men.” The word “men” should be singular: “the sons of man [ie, Adam].” The Logos delighted in all of the Father’s creation. Adam and Eve were both created before the close of the Sixth Creative Day. The Seventh Creative Day started with the entrance of sin, and in the beginning of that Day, after the permission of evil began, the Logos saw the birth of Adam’s and Eve’s sons, who were born in sin and shapen in iniquity. God pronounced the Sixth Creative Day as “very good,” and then put the Seventh Day in the hands of Jesus.

Prov. 8:32 Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep my ways.

Prov. 8:33 Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not.

Jesus has just told us about his happy experience in witnessing the Father’s creative acts and powers and about his wonderful relationship with the Father. Therefore, he is now telling us in verse 32 that if we want to know about God and how to approach and please Him, we should listen to Jesus. His preexistent knowledge had a tremendous impact on him: “By his [preexistent] knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many” (Isa. 53:11). By his preexistent knowledge he was enabled to be faithful to the death on the Cross. He had to have GREAT FAITH to go through that ordeal voluntarily and wholeheartedly. In other words, it behooves us, as God’s children, to listen to Jesus because of what he can tell us. We have the example not only of his own personal knowledge but of his life as recorded in the Gospels. Jesus gave sermon after sermon about God and His plan and about himself. For example, he told us he was meek and lowly in heart. Then he told us that God is the same way. “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (Isa. 57:15). Jesus was saying, in effect, “I have the same heart attitude (compassionate, approachable) as my heavenly Father, who is the Emperor of the universe.” Then he added, “Please listen to me. If you want to please God, it behooves you to put two and two together about this relationship I have with the Father. If you want to know about the Father, you must come to me and listen to my instruction.”

Prov. 8:34 Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.

Q: Wouldn't this verse, especially the phrases "my gates" and "my doors," indicate that in verses 32 through 36, the context reverts back to the personification of Wisdom?

A: No. Jesus is telling his people that there is wisdom in listening to his advice. We have been purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ. We are his possession. The door of our heart is really *his* door; we should always be ready to open to him for instruction. "Waiting daily at his gates" would show the necessity of daily prayer to the Father through him.

Comment: Verse 35 helps to show Jesus is speaking, for he is telling us how to "obtain favour of the LORD," his Father, by finding him.

Q: But verse 3 says, "She crieth at the *gates*." Wouldn't the "gates" here in verse 34 also be in connection with the personification of Wisdom?

A: No. Verse 3 is a *public* announcement: "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." That was a public pronouncement about Jesus and his role, but verse 34 is addressed to those who already have been purchased. Now the cry is coming to *each individual*. In fact, verse 34 is implying that we have read the previous verses. In verse 3, Wisdom was crying, "Listen to me! Listen to me! If you are looking for the truth, here it is!" But the people didn't listen. Verse 34 is addressed to those who already know about Jesus. He is telling us that hearing and believing in Jesus are only the first step. "Once saved" is being saved only from ignorance, not to personal salvation.

Comment: In verse 3, wisdom "crieth at *the gates*," but in verse 34, the personal application is used: "watching daily at *my gates*." Also, in the comparison of verse 4, "Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man," with verse 31, "... and my delights were with the sons of men," and with verse 34, "Blessed is the man that heareth *me*, watching daily at *my gates*," the application seems to be changing from the personification of Wisdom to Jesus.

Reply: Many have made a consecration, but how much Bible study do they do, especially if one believes that accepting Jesus guarantees salvation? Right away, that belief pulls the rug out from underneath the feet of those who have consecrated, for they believe that they will never die and that their salvation is eternally secured. Bible study then becomes relatively unimportant. Many people would be satisfied with everlasting life; they are not particularly concerned with anything more than that. But to KNOW God and to have honor as part of the Little Flock requires individual effort and study. Jesus is saying that it is necessary to watch daily at his gates, and what happens in the gate? Judgment! In Biblical times, if a person wanted to have a legal, financial, moral, or personal matter explained, he would go to the Lord's representative at the gate outside the city and ask for instruction and counsel.

Comment: The KJV is better in verse 32 than the RSV and the NIV because it says, "O ye children." The RSV and the NIV have "my sons," and we do not think of Jesus as having sons, but we are "children" of God. To get life, the whole human race must listen to Jesus, must come through him to God.

Reply: Yes, the KJV is better.

Prov. 8:35 For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD.

One must come to Jesus to get life and to find favor from Jehovah. Jesus is still speaking.

Prov. 8:36 But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death.

“Hate” can mean to love less in the sense of not loving Jesus supremely. That is the test: do we love the world, or do we really love Jesus? There is a price to pay for not listening. Therefore, it behooves us as God’s children to prayerfully study His Word and to think on its principles.

We have already commented on the first verse of the next chapter (chapter 9): “Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars.” However, we will review it. What are the seven pillars? They are recorded in two places.

1. (Isa. 11:2,3) “And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him [Jesus], the spirit of (1) wisdom and (2) understanding, the spirit of (3) counsel and (4) might, the spirit of (5) knowledge and of the (6) fear of the LORD; And shall make him of (7) quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears.”
2. (Prov. 1:2–6) Here the seven are mentioned from two different perspectives depending on how they are counted. “(1) To know wisdom and (2) instruction; (3) to perceive the words of understanding; (4) To receive the instruction of wisdom, (5) justice, and (6) judgment, and (7) equity; To give subtlety to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels: To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings.” Or verses 2 and 3 can be broken down into broader categories: “To (1) know wisdom and instruction; to (2) perceive the words of understanding; To (3) receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; To (4) give subtlety to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. A wise man will (5) hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels: To (6) understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings. The [7] fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.” The first perspective pertains to personal need, to *receiving* for oneself. The second is a broader scope that includes being a blessing to others, *giving* counsel to others.

The seven pillars are a life study of aspects of growth and experience. The seven pillars of Wisdom are personified in Jesus.

Addendum:

Genesis 1:26 reads, “And God said, Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness ...” “Us,” “our,” and the verb “make” are plural, but the next verse, verse 27, uses the singular: “So God [*Elohim*] created [singular] man in his [singular] own image, in the image of God created [singular] he him; male and female created he [singular] them.”

Another point: *Elohim* can be singular or plural depending on context; the singular verbs render it singular, even though it is preceded by “us.”

And notice verse 1: “In the beginning God [*Elohim*] created the heaven and the earth.” Here *Elohim* is plural, but the verb “created” is singular. In many places the word “*elohim*” is followed by a plural verb because of its application. Thus the verb governs whether it should be considered singular or plural. The English word “sheep” is similar; it can be either singular or plural, and the verb makes clear which is intended.

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

Proverbs 1:1–7

Proverbs 1:1–7 is a separate unit. Translators have misunderstood and inserted a paragraph break before verse 7, but it should appear after verse 7. Verses 1–7 comprise the prologue to the Book of Proverbs.

“The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel; To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; To give subtlety to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels: To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

Most of the Book of Proverbs was written by Solomon, but not all. An introduction similar to verse 1 is mentioned two other times: Proverbs 10:1 and 25:1.

While Solomon is noted in history for his wisdom, David had more wisdom. (The reasons for this conclusion will not be considered at this time.) Although Jesus does mention the wisdom of Solomon, he does not say it is the greatest wisdom. He simply says, “There is one standing among you who is wiser than the reputed King Solomon of Israel.” One who is familiar with the Psalms sees the teachings of David in the Book of Proverbs. In other words, Solomon imbibed the precepts of his father, David. Solomon wrote three thousand proverbs (1 Kings 4:32), but David wrote about the same number. There are 150 Psalms, which average about 20 verses each. If the 150 is multiplied by 20, the result would be 3,000 verses. (Although David did not write every Psalm, the numbers give an approximation.) In the Book of Proverbs, a proverb can be half a verse, a third of a verse, a whole verse, etc. Thus the Book of Proverbs contains about 500 proverbs. In other words, out of the 3,000, only a small portion was selected by Divine Providence for incorporation into the Bible.

Nearly all Bible scholars speak of the proverbs as being natural wisdom, but they are *both natural and spiritual*. The spiritual wisdom is usually overlooked. In fact, the proverbs are so meaty and pithy that the theme is often not discerned. Therefore, in approaching this subject, we must be careful of semantics. For instance, in the first seven verses, “knowledge” is described in various ways: wisdom, instruction, understanding, subtlety, counsel—many of these are synonyms of wisdom. It is helpful to know the distinctions

between these words according to the dictionary and in the Hebrew. The King James Version is a good translation for these verses.

The main theme of the Book of Proverbs is *wisdom*. The Gospels, on the other hand, are about love and mercy. When Jesus came, he brought the gospel of *love*. When Moses was on the scene, he brought statutes, ie, God's *justice*. The *power* of God is shown in the accounts of the Flood, the opening of the Red Sea, and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Judgment was rendered against evildoers in these events.

In reading the New Testament, Christians often say, "God is love." And the Apostle John did say this, for love is the desired plateau of development for the Christian. The Apostle Paul mentioned three progressive steps: faith, hope, and *love*. In 2 Peter 1:5–7 the Apostle Peter listed eight steps or qualities to be added to faith, the last one being *love*. Although the Book of Proverbs cannot be equated with 1 Corinthians 13 or the Sermon on the Mount, it is interesting to note that in the Tabernacle, which illustrates the four attributes in the Most Holy, the Shekinah light, picturing *wisdom*, represents God. And light is *wisdom*, intelligence.

In the Book of Proverbs in a delicate way, Solomon gives us the benefit of his experience. David was the wise one because he repented as the deeds happened, and he reformed and changed. The bent of David's heart was different from Solomon's. In the beginning Solomon was very worthwhile, and God commended him for asking for wisdom to benefit those in the kingdom under his charge. But, sadly, as time went on, Solomon went astray.

Is Proverbs 1:1–7 sequential? in ascending order of importance? in descending order? just seven principal ingredients? It is both sequential and an ascending order of importance. To illustrate: As 2 Peter 1:5–7 mentions each quality that should be added to faith, that quality is retained when the person goes on to acquire the next one. The individual is not to go up steps and leave the previous steps behind, for "the just shall live by *faith*"—he is to live his life fighting the good fight of faith. Nevertheless, there is a sequential order of development. And so it is with Proverbs 1:1–7. There is a sequential order of development for attaining the goal, and each step of wisdom is to be retained as the next one is acquired.

1. "To know wisdom and instruction."

In the beginning of our Christian walk, are we wise? are we instructed? No, for to know wisdom and instruction in a more subtle sense is to know God. Maimonides gives a simple definition of the word "wisdom" as used here: "It is the knowledge of those facts or truths which lead to the knowledge of God." This is a particular kind of wisdom. All other wisdom is worldly or Satanic; one can spend a whole lifetime on such wisdom and not know God.

True, the Book of Proverbs is written with *natural* logic. But consider the experience of many Christians—and of all Christians in present truth *even though they do not know it*. First, in the present life, many do not have the benefit of realizing about God. Hebrews 11:6 says that *without faith* it is *impossible* to please God, but that kind of faith is *natural* faith. Paul continues, "He that cometh to God *must believe that he is*, and that he is a *rewarder* of them that *diligently seek him*. However, to know God is not confined to the

Bible, for all nature speaks of the existence of God. The Psalmist (19:1–4) says, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth [forth] his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language [no Greek, no Hebrew, etc.], ... their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.” In other words, it is an *international sign language* that everyone can understand. No voice or words are heard, and yet “their line” or testimony stretches abroad to the ends of the earth, so that anyone anywhere on earth can look up at the heavens. As one poet has said of the stars, “Forever singing as they shine, they declare the hand that made us is divine.”

Now the second part. “Believe that he [God] is, and [the] ... rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” This is a process. The heavens show forth the power of God—the diversity of His knowledge, power, and wisdom. On earth we see flowers with different fragrances, textures, and shapes. We see different animals—and most of all, man, who David said is “wonderfully made” (Psa. 139:14). An article some years ago in *National Geographic* magazine was entitled “Man, the Wonder Machine.” One part of the article said that the basic theory of mechanics is in the frame of the human being and that if every floor of the Empire State Building were filled with computers, it still would not match the capability of the human brain. David looked at the heavens and studied, contemplated, and absorbed them. He also studied about animals and their behavior, and how God, in wisdom, favors the animals at nighttime and humans in the daytime, for if man-eating animals were out in the daylight, problems would result.

Bro. Frank loves to study these subjects but has never spoken about them as a whole because of the great need for prophecy and to counteract the misunderstanding of prophecy.

How are we “to know wisdom and instruction” of God? The bottom plateau of development is through the study of nature. Nature helps one realize there is a God. Next, one realizes that God is the rewarder of those who *diligently* seek Him. Many have good intentions, but persistence and tenacity are needed as well. In looking at the heavens and seeing all the diversity, one should realize God created them to benefit mankind. The majority of mankind have ignored the heavens in this sense. Others who appreciate the heavens stop at that plateau of wisdom and spend the rest of their lives there. A very small minority go on to the second plateau of *perceiving*.

David gave the clue in Psalm 19 when he said that the heavens declare the glory of God. The heavens made him think about God and about God’s statutes. In the second half of the Psalm, David said the *law* of the Lord is perfect, the *testimony* of the LORD is sure, the *statutes* of the Lord are right, the *commandment* of the LORD is pure, the *fear* of the Lord is clean, and the *judgments* of the LORD are true and righteous altogether—more to be desired than gold. But he noticed that the heavens are in control and keep their spacing, that there is an *order* there. He considered the miracle of the sun—the way it comes up in the morning, moves across the heavens during the day, and goes down at night. The sun is so important that without it there would be no life; strength, warmth, and life come from the sun.

When verse 1 says, “to know wisdom and instruction,” it does not mean that the individual knows all wisdom but that he knows who has it—*God*. Wisdom and instruction can be seen in the heavens, for “the heavens *declare* the glory of God.” As

Christians, we hunger to know and to be instructed, for our thoughts are unclean and disorganized and our goals are deranged. When we consecrate and dedicate our lives to God, He brings order out of disorder. He gives us the *spirit* of a sound mind.

2. "To perceive the words of understanding."

The silent heavens tell us there is a God with wisdom and power, but they do not answer the questions "Why am I here?" "Why was I born?" "Where will I go when I die?" The one who hungers for truth and understanding diligently looks for the answers. Only one book stands head and shoulders above all others and can provide the answers: the Bible. The Bible contains "*words*" and it speaks literally, even though it is written. In the final analysis, Jesus is the epitome of the manifestation of God's wisdom to mankind.

Pastor Russell followed these steps of wisdom in writing *The Divine Plan of the Ages*. Millions of people have read the First Volume. Notice that Study II is "The Existence of a Supreme Intelligent Creator Established." Not only is this statement made, but prologues are used. These mini-captions are very important and deserve consideration. For Study II, the first mini-caption is "*Evidence Aside from the Bible ...*" The entire human race has the testimony of the heavens. The heavens are an open book. In the future no one will be able to say, "God did not tell me," for all have the light of nature. The whole mini-caption is "*Evidence Aside from the Bible, Examined in the Light of Reason,*" but what kind of *reason*? Human reason, human logic, putting two and two together, not sanctified reason. The light of nature is the *beginning* of the path to wisdom. Subsequent mini-captions are "The Character of God Demonstrated" and "Reasonable Deductions." The "reasonable" deduction, the conclusion, is "the existence of a supreme intelligent Creator."

Study III is "The Bible as a Divine Revelation Viewed in the Light of Reason." This is not the Bible viewed from a Christian standpoint but in the light of reason. The conclusion is that God could not do all these things in nature without leaving some clue around, and the Bible is that source of information. The first mini-caption under Study III is "The Claims of the Bible and its Surface Evidence of Credibility." This is not a deep study but a *surface* evidence of credibility. About 16 mini-captions follow to explain the subject matter of the chapter. Very often the prologues contain thoughts that are not in the substance of the chapter, and because these thoughts are mentioned in such a pithy way, not much reason is needed to fathom what is being said. The prologues guide the direction of the reading. The next mini-caption is "Its [the Bible's] Antiquity and Preservation." By far the Holy Scriptures are the oldest writings in the world. Next comes "Its Moral Influence"—the Bible lifts up mankind. And then follow "General Character of the Writings [of the Bible]," "The Law of Moses," "Peculiarities of the Government Instituted by Moses," "It Was Not a System of Priestcraft," etc.—and ending with "The Reasonable Conclusion." The "reasonable conclusion" is that "the Bible is exactly what I am looking for."

The point is that those who come into the truth by reading the First Volume go through a recognition of the heavens even though they never spent considerable time studying them, as David did. Whether one realizes it or not, this first step of wisdom is obtained by reading these early chapters. Bibles of antiquity often began by showing, through the light of reason, that the Bible is the Word of God. Thus most of the brethren have absorbed this information at least subconsciously.

And so we “perceive the *words* of understanding”—we know the Bible is the Word of God. And if we progress, No. 3 is the next step of wisdom.

3. “To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity.”

This third step indicates that if we want to receive the wisdom we are looking for, *we* now must do something, that we are now *responsible*. How did the Pastor end the First Volume? Page 349 states, “Whoever comes in contact with the truth, realizing its character, has thereby a responsibility with reference to it. It must be either received and acted upon, or rejected and despised.” Now the reader is at the point of decision-making.

In other words, common sense tells that if we want to progress, we now must go to the Bible and diligently search to see what it really says.

This instruction embraces justice, judgment, and equity. “Justice” would be the fundamental laws of righteousness, the receiving of the principles of righteousness and truth. “Judgment,” on the other hand, is putting these principles into practice or acting on the principles. Next comes “equity,” which is not a superfluous term. Perfect and tried beings will be expected to know what is right and wrong in principle (justice) and what is right and wrong in action (judgment), but “equity” is fair play. Jesus was tried as a high priest so that he might be a *merciful* high priest. Equity is not expecting of a babe or of a young man what would be expected of a mature person. Equitable judgment is on the level of those to whom it is being applied. We are imperfect human beings, and God, in His mercy, recognizes our wills, covering our deeds by the robe of Christ’s righteousness. God knows that the flesh is weak.

4. “To give subtlety to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion.”

The order thus far in obtaining wisdom is to know, to perceive, to receive, and to give. Wisdom gives (1) subtlety to the simple and (2) knowledge and discretion to the young man. Who are the “simple”? The babes in Christ. And the babes develop into “young men” in the truth, but *still they are immature*.

This fourth step of wisdom applies to those who have already received the truth and made a consecration. To such, God gives subtlety to the simple and knowledge and discretion to the young men.

And so Psalm 19:7 says that the testimony of the Lord *makes wise the simple*. Psalm 119:130 reads, “The entrance of thy words *giveth ... understanding unto the simple*.” Psalm 8:2 states, “Out of the mouth of *babes and sucklings* hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.” And there are others. The point is that in the present truth movement, almost the simplest one is way ahead of those in the nominal Church. Even those who know only the ABC’s of truth are way ahead of the teachers in the nominal system with their doctrines of eternal torment and the Trinity. But still this wisdom is not enough—“The Divine Plan of the Ages” is only the *beginning*. Even in the *Studies in the Scriptures* series, it is only the *first* of six volumes. Progress must be made. Thousands know the divine plan, but there are not thousands of the very elect remaining in the flesh.

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

This fifth step of wisdom proves that the steps are sequential and going in ascending order. The progression is from a babe (the “simple”) to a “young man” to a “wise man.” A mature person would realize that he cannot stand on that maturity alone but must still progress. A Christian who has a *continual drive* to know God more and more will be blessed accordingly. “A wise man ... will *increase* learning; and a man of understanding” will “*attain* unto wise counsels.”

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

As the man of understanding presses on to know God (which would take an eternity to fully know), he is blessed—not just with learning and additional understanding but with beginning to understand proverbs (more difficult subjects in some respects) and “dark [hidden] sayings.”

This sixth step of wisdom is near the climax of progression. The development of wisdom is like a marathon race. Thousands of people start a marathon. In fact, it is almost alarming to see such a mass of people running to win the marathon. In the early stages of development, Christians are together, much like the thousands running the marathon; but as time and endurance start to take their toll, those in the race for the prize of the high calling dwindle down to perhaps just four or five. And of those four or five, only one may actually win a crown. The Apostle Paul said we are to run as though there is only one prize; that kind of dedication is needed. “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize?” (1 Cor. 9:24). So run, that ye may obtain. The last part of the race is the hardest and seemingly the longest in a marathon. People feel as if their lungs will burst and their eyes will come out of their sockets. They have the attitude: “I will muster the strength if it kills me.”

Incidentally, everyone who gets life *must complete the race*, whether one is first, second, the ten thousandth, or whatever. A person may not get the chief prize, but to get life, he must fight unto death. One cannot turn away from his consecration. Finishing the race is the difference between life and death. Perseverance will pay off with rich dividends.

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

“The fear of the LORD is the *principal part*, the chief part, of knowledge” (see KJV margin). Here “knowledge” is a broad, inclusive term, being the climax of the accumulation of the previous six steps of wisdom. The reverence for God *must be supreme*. Even with those who attain the fourth quarter mark, their reverence for God must be deepened and broadened.

The next statement is that “fools despise wisdom and instruction.” “Wisdom and instruction” were mentioned in the beginning of the seven steps of wisdom (verse 2), and now it is said that fools despise running this course and hence do not persevere. If one has been running the race and feels he has attained a measure of maturity, that is not enough. One must fight unto death. In the race one must keep running even if the legs feel like lead, spiritually speaking. In back of all this instruction about the component parts of wisdom and the successive experiences, the bottom line is coming to know God.

Many think they know God, but as to just where each of us stands, that is up to Him. He will determine who comprise the 144,000.

The word “despise” is better translated “disregard.” Many people do not hate wisdom—they do not oppose it—but they *ignore* it. They do not see the need for wisdom. “The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day” (Prov. 4:18).

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

In the Book of Proverbs, two women are very noticeable. (Similarly, the Song of Solomon features two especially prominent women.) In Proverbs, one is the true woman, leading to life, and the other is the false woman, leading to extinction. The false woman, who is worldly or Satanic wisdom—a very dangerous type of wisdom—shows her face only occasionally in different chapters.

The Book of Proverbs does two things: it shows (1) what wisdom is and (2) how to attain it. We are especially interested in the latter. True wisdom is reflected in the face of Jesus, “who ... is made unto us wisdom” (1 Cor. 1:30).

A note of pathos permeates the Book of Proverbs. For those who do attain the true wisdom, there will be joy evermore.

The Book of Proverbs contains very deep thinking. It is difficult to teach that which is very deep. The proverbs are presented from the standpoint of experience, scholastic understanding, the study of fallen human nature, etc.

Proverbs 9

Prov. 9:1 Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars:

“Wisdom hath builded her house.” Past tense is used—the house is complete; it is an accomplished fact.

In Proverbs 8 and in another prior chapter of the Book of Proverbs, it is apparent that the framework for physical creation was set up by the Creator. Proverbs 8 mentions the wisdom that was involved in the planning and the creation of this planet and its purpose with regard to God’s future plans. There is the natural house and there is the spiritual house, physical creation and the new creation. God’s infinite wisdom and power were employed in both.

“She [wisdom] hath hewn out her seven pillars.” Wisdom can be thought about in two ways. For instance, we frequently speak of love as comprising all graces. The *sum of all graces*, when placed together in their fullness, represents love. The Apostle Paul fractured love into various distributions of how love acts. (His listing does not cover all distributions, however. That would be impossible in the present life; it would take an eternity to begin to understand God.)

Wisdom and Love are two of the four attributes of God. As love seems to be the sum of all graces, so wisdom, in one sense, is the summation of all types of knowledge (creation, workmanship, skill, intelligence, scientific understanding, etc.). In the Book of Proverbs, wisdom is present two ways: fractionally and as a composite whole. The “seven pillars” pertain to wisdom in the large sense.

The seven pillars are listed in Isaiah 11:2,3, “And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of [1] wisdom and [2] understanding, the spirit of [3] counsel and [4] might, the spirit of [5] knowledge and of the [6] fear of the LORD; And shall make him of [7] quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears.” Jesus is the One upon whom the spirit of wisdom was conferred in its fullness and in its entirety. He is the very embodiment of wisdom.

The seven pillars are also broken out in Proverbs 1:2–7, “To [1] know wisdom and instruction; to [2] perceive the words of understanding; To [3] receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; To [4] give subtlety to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. A wise man will [5] hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels: To [6] understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings. The [7] fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.” The preposition “to” helps to identify the seven pillars.

The word “wisdom” frequently calls to mind the Scripture “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Psa. 111:10). We are interested in *God’s* wisdom, not the wisdom of this world, not in making a name or reputation for ourselves. We want to know: who are we? where did we come from? where is our destiny? what is God’s purpose in the creation of man?

But in both Proverbs 1 and Isaiah 11, notice where “fear of the Lord” is placed? *Last* or next to last on the ascending scale. There are two ways to present a climax: either to start with the most important or to end with the most important. On an ascending scale of seven, the seventh is the most important, and on a descending scale the first is the most important. Therefore, with the fear of the Lord being the “*beginning* of wisdom,” the key is to understand or define the word “beginning.” In English, the word “first” can mean first in sequence or first in primacy. The word “beginning” in the “beginning of wisdom” pertains to *primacy*. In Isaiah 11, the “fear of the Lord” is the sixth pillar; the seventh, “quick understanding,” is *intuitive* wisdom, which only God now possesses. God knows without rationalizing or going through deductive analyses; He knows the end from the beginning. This suggests that all who possess the divine nature will be much like Him even though He will still be supreme as Emperor of the universe. He will have complete confidence in those who make the grade; there will be no question of any disobedience in the future. Hence He will grant them the capability of intuitive wisdom. Even Jesus did not possess intuitive wisdom at the First Advent, for he had questions.

Comment: The Masoretic supports the King James in Proverbs 1:2–7. “To know wisdom and instruction; to comprehend the words of understanding; To receive the discipline of wisdom, justice, and right, and equity; To give prudence to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion, that the wise man hear and increase in learning, and the man of understanding may attain unto wise counsels; To understand a proverb and a figure,

the words of the wise and their dark sayings. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge. But the foolish despise wisdom and discipline.”

Comment: A King James marginal reference for Proverbs 1:7 is “The fear of the LORD is the *principal part* of wisdom.”

Reply: Yes, primacy of importance is shown.

Prov. 9:2 **She hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table.**

Wisdom “hath killed her beasts; ... mingled her wine; ... furnished her table.” Again, past tense is used. There is a feast here, a table, a spread—and wisdom has already set the table.

Wisdom is the framework of the house, and in that house is a set table.

Q: Is this a reference to Jesus’ sacrifice, which God planned before the foundation of the world?

A: Yes, that is a primary thought.

God knows the end from the beginning. Therefore, He sometimes uses past tense for things that, from our perspective, are yet future.

The “beasts” are explained in *Tabernacle Shadows*. The Holy Spirit, in personifying Wisdom, states that the table has already been spread. In other words, wisdom has spread the table. Solomon was speaking of his personal experiences, but the Holy Spirit supplemented his thoughts and gave a higher connotation. The principle would be “Out of the mouth of babes comes forth wisdom.” Sometimes “babes,” which we are in many respects, will utter profound statements.

“Wine” pictures the *joys* of the truth in contradistinction to the water of truth, which refreshes and satisfies thirst. Wine does not satisfy thirst but brings joy; it loosens the tongue and provides happiness and cordiality in the good sense. A mixed or “mingled” wine is good wine. We are to be filled, saturated, with the truth—to be drunk with it. “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but *be filled with the Spirit*” (Eph. 5:18).

The calling and development of the Church to be of the Bride of Christ are one of the primary features in God’s plan. As a result of their reign, promised by God, the earth will be blessed. But the wine, the doctrine, and the types and shadows have already been provided. We, the consecrated, have been invited to this table where we feed on these things.

Prov. 9:3 **She hath sent forth her maidens; she crieth upon the highest places of the city,**

The “maidens” sent forth by wisdom are prophets, teachers, evangelists, etc. The “maidens” are wisdom’s children.

Q: Was Jesus referring to Proverbs 9:2 when he gave the parable of the king who made a marriage for his son (Matt. 22:2–10)? Some of the language is similar. He called those who were bidden to the wedding, but they would not come. “Tell them I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fatlings are killed, all things are ready; come into the marriage.” In other words, the table is spread and the parable proceeds to mention those who were sent to the feast but rejected it.

A: Yes. The parable starts with the beginning of the age. At the table were many empty places, for those who were invited made excuses for not coming. Then the king sent out into the highways for guests, here called “the highest places of the city.”

Comment: Matthew 11:19 says, “Wisdom is justified of her children.”

Reply: That is long-range justification. For instance, those who have given their lives to Christ are considered by the world as very foolish. They suffer shame, ignominy, rejection, persecution, etc., but when the faithful ones are exalted as kings and priests, they will be justified for having put their little all on the altar in the present life. Wisdom being justified of her children is the end product. It takes time for wisdom to be justified, for the course of true wisdom sometimes looks exactly the opposite—it looks like foolishness. The wisdom of God is foolishness to man.

Wisdom “crieth upon the highest places of the city.” In Old Testament times, prophets went to the gate of a city and preached the message on their hearts to all who entered the city. Another place they preached was in the second or third tier or balustrade of the Temple. “She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths. She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors” (Prov. 8:2,3). When the prophets went to these places, the Lord, through the Holy Spirit, gave them a megaphonic voice for the occasion.

God has also sent forth wisdom and had it cry through the Holy Bible. The Word of God has been published in most languages and gone throughout the world. Yet how few advantage themselves by examining it! The Bible has been conspicuously placed so that no one will have an excuse for not heeding it. As we study the Book of Proverbs, we will see more and more that there is no excuse. People become willingly ignorant.

Prov. 9:4 **Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him,**

Isn’t this marvelous? “Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither.” One does not have to be highly educated to get the truth, but one must take the proper steps. If one *truly hungers and thirsts after knowledge* in the depth of his soul or being, God promises He will answer.

“As for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, ‘Come, eat of my bread.’” The parable of the king who made a marriage for his son (Matt. 22:2–10) is as follows: “The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated

them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests." It is certainly possible that when Jesus gave that parable, he had in mind the good table of Proverbs 9. (The Book of Proverbs also mentions a wicked table.)

Once one sees the door of opportunity for truth open, he must respond of his own initiative.

REVIEW

The seven pillars of wisdom (Prov. 9:1) are mentioned in Isaiah 11:2,3 and Proverbs 1:2–7, but there is a difference in the two. The first chapter of Proverbs shows the aspiration and progress of those who *are seeking* wisdom, whereas Isaiah 11 uses past tense for wisdom *already secured* as personified in the person of Jesus.

One reason Bro. Frank did not want to have a class study on Proverbs is that he has certain definite opinions which, when explained, will result in some saying, "He thinks he knows it all." Not many brethren study Proverbs in depth, and Bro. Frank has definite views that vary quite considerably from what speakers have said from the platform on the rare occasions they are discussed.

Chapter 9 of Proverbs is a repetition of Chapter 1, but from a different perspective. "Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars" (Prov. 9:1). In the search for wisdom in Chapter 1, one begins on the outside—that is, the individual is not spirit-begotten but is natural-minded and searching for wisdom. In Chapter 9 the same principles are presented but on a higher plane pertaining to the *spiritual* house. In Chapter 1, when one who is approaching God as a natural man sees the heavens, he is in awe of the majesty and splendor of God through these, His created works. The universe is the old creation, the former physical, material creation. Chapter 9 has the same principles but applied to the spiritual house, the new creation, which has been in process of development down through the seven stages (pillars) of the Church. This is the plan of God as regards His spirit creation, which began with His Son, then the Bride, and the divine plan of the ages. This divine plan is much different from the material world.

"Wisdom hath builded her house." In other words, just as God had in mind—and still does have in mind—a plan for the whole physical universe (as proven by His giving names to all the stars), so a spiritual universe is being planned with The Christ.

Proverbs 9:1 is much like Proverbs 1:2, "To know *wisdom* and instruction." Proverbs 9 starts with *wisdom*: "Wisdom hath builded her house with seven pillars." Next we see a furnished table (Prov. 9:2). The suggestion is that if we want to go further and develop in the spiritual house, we must partake of this benefit.

Proverbs 1:2 continues, "To *perceive* the words of understanding." It is the same with the spiritual house. When we see the physical universe, we want to know the God who created and planned it: "Oh, that we could know thee!" And so it is with the awesome

divine plan spread before us with all of its bounties. We want to perceive the words of the *Bible*.

In Proverbs 9:3 maidens are sent forth to beckon with an invitation. "Wisdom crieth aloud, high in the street of the city [paraphrase]." Although the heavens are silent, their message is "heard." And so, within the divine plan is the high calling of the Church, and the invitation is heard throughout the world in the Bible, which has been translated into all languages.

The first chapter tells us to "receive the instruction of wisdom," which is broken down into "justice, judgment, and equity" (Prov. 1:3). This corresponds with the third step in Proverbs 9. If we are humble, simple, meek, and willing to *be taught*, then we are invited by wisdom, pictured here as a woman, to "turn in hither" and thus get the basic principles and understanding of truth.

Many scholarly Christians have regarded the Book of Proverbs as just *natural*, practical, helpful advice, but the book contains a spiritual and even prophetic intonation. Unfortunately, the book is studied very little.

Prov. 9:5 Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled.

Paraphrase: "Come, eat of my bread and drink of my mixed wine." We come to Jesus and we eat of his flesh and drink of his blood, spiritually speaking. Verse 5 corresponds to the fourth step in Proverbs 1:4, "To give subtlety to the simple [the babe], to the young man knowledge and discretion."

The mixed wine is favorable here. Water is truth, and wine is the joy and happiness of the truth. A "mixed" wine would be the combination of joy and sorrow.

The "bread" of life is several things: the Word of God; Jesus; his doctrine; and his flesh/humanity, which justified us.

The Memorial cup is more the sorrow aspect. Jesus asked, "Are ye *able* to drink of my cup?" Hence the drink would be strong.

Both Chapter 1 and Proverbs 9:9 speak of the *increase in learning*: "A wise man will hear, and will *increase learning*; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels." The progression is from the simple (a babe) to a young man to a wise man.

Steps 6 and 7 are incorporated together in Proverbs 9:10, whereas in the first chapter they are separated. The ones who increase in learning develop to such a maturity that they understand proverbs and dark sayings. This is quite an attainment in wisdom. And the last step is the goal, the chief part of wisdom: *reverence*.

When Solomon had the Holy Spirit, his reasoning was very good. The Lord blessed him according to his prayer for wisdom to teach the people better.

Prov. 9:6 Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding.

"Forsake the foolish [the vain world and its pleasures and intoxications], and live." Even the best of the world's goods are vain, transitory, ephemeral, short-lived.

Prov. 9:7 He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame: and he that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot.

“He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame.” Matthew 7:6 fits this principle: “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.” When the truth is earnestly presented to a scorner, he ridicules it to show how foolish the believer is. A very intelligent person can often make the Christian look like a fool; the quick wit causes embarrassment. Hence the advice is not to present truth—not to injudiciously and promiscuously cast pearls—to scorners, wicked men, dogs, swine. “To him that hath an ear to hear” is the principle to follow. In *proportion* to the interest shown, we present details of truth.

“He that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot.” This portion of verse 7 is a little stronger, more the rending aspect rather than just ridicule. We can at least superficially judge a person who is wicked, for Jesus said, “Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them” (Matt. 7:16–20).

Proverbs 1: 7 reads, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge [wisdom]”; notice what follows: “but *fools* despise wisdom and instruction.”

Solomon was a great mathematical builder. Among other things he built the temple, his own house, and a sea wall. In the beginning he had the blessing of the spirit of the Lord. In the Book of Proverbs, Solomon will tell how he fell. Just as Elihu felt compelled to write the Book of Job because of his presumptuousness and lack of wisdom in speaking negatively about Job, so Solomon felt compelled to write about his unwisdom and fall and then eventually his coming to his senses.

Prov. 9:8 Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.

How do we know the difference between a scorner and a wise man? A wise man would be teachable, and he would realize the need for and the soundness of the wisdom of instruction. A wise man would listen to the advice and profit from it. To try to convert a scorner is a waste of time and can bring hatred to the Christian. Truth can also result in hatred by those who profess themselves to be teachers of religion.

“Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.” How nice!

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

We all start as babes, then hopefully progress to young men and finally full maturity of character. To mature, we need other minds to help and stimulate us.

Nathan rebuked David, and David accepted the rebuke (as king, David could have ordered Nathan put to death). David also showed humility when Shimei cursed him and tried to stone him; David felt this was God's providence and retribution for something he had done.

Comment: Psalm 141:5 shows the attitude of those who wisely receive reproof: "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities."

Prov. 9:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.

As in Proverbs 1:7, the statement is repeated here about the fear of the Lord being the beginning of wisdom. True, the spirit of reverence does start the Christian in the way, but *our goal* at the end of our walk should be to be like God, who has four attributes: Wisdom, Justice, Love, and Power. We should attain love and know how to be just. In addition, the Holy Spirit is called the spirit of a sound mind and of power of logic, but the *end product of power* is to reign with Christ and to be with him as counselors, priests, and kings.

The following is true, but not necessarily in the present life. To be of the kings who will reign, wisdom plays a large part: "By me [wisdom] kings reign, and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth" (Prov. 8:15,16).

The word for "holy" (*qadosh*) is plural, meaning "the knowledge of the holy *ones* is understanding." In other words, the reference is to those who, just before they die, are faithful enough in this life to be of the Little Flock. For those who attain this level of understanding, their spirit will be transferred to the new life in a perfect body. (It is significant that "the knowledge of the holy ones" follows "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.") The goal of being one of the 144,000 holy ones is expressed in the hymn as "O, that I might worthy be, to see thy saints in full prosperity."

Comment: Both the RSV and the NIV have "the Holy One." Could it be plural in the sense of *Elohim*, thus emphasizing the *majesty* of God?

Reply: Such liberty could be taken in that sense.

Comment: The Companion Bible describes it as plurality of majesty.

(Note: In the next week's study, "Holy One" was given the preference.)

In the Book of Proverbs, Solomon is giving advice in sequence, and he is telling the dangers that would impede the progress of following his instructions. For instance, he says, "My son, give me thine heart," but he then counsels as to the dangers and points out what happened to him without saying, "I, Solomon, am repentant for what I have done." David, a man after God's own heart, fell into somewhat similar situations, but he was extricated because he took the necessary steps to receive God's goodwill and favor. Solomon probably will not be one of the Ancient Worthies, but he did finish his course with forgiveness and thus would more likely be of the Great Company of the Jewish Age. Just like Elihu, he was an overcomer but not a more than an overcomer.

COMPARISON OF PROVERBS 9:10 AND 1:7

In Proverbs 9:10, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom," the Hebrew word for "beginning" is different from that used in Proverbs 1:7. Bro. Frank differs with most of the scholarship on Proverbs 9:10.

In Proverbs 1, the Hebrew word translated "beginning" can mean either "first" (in sequence) or "first" (in importance), ie, "most important." Scriptural usage utilizes both meanings. The thought in Proverbs 1:7 is "Wisdom is the *principal* [or chief] part of knowledge [wisdom]." Because a minority of translators felt "principal part" was the correct thought, that alternate appears in the King James margin.

However, the word translated "beginning" in Proverbs 9:10 is consistently used in Scripture to mean "commencement" or "first" (in sequence). It is *contextual reasoning* that justifies the sense of "principal part" here. Both chapters (1 and 9) shows steps of wisdom, sequence, in *ascending order*, the last being "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom." In other words, "the fear of the LORD is the principal part of the whole objective of knowing God."

Just as in the first chapter, wisdom is pictured in a favorable light as a woman in Proverbs 9:1–12. In fact, some translators in the past said "dame wisdom," meaning a woman who was respected and highly appreciated. The bad woman was called "dame folly," meaning the foolish woman. ("Folly" comes from "fool.")

In Proverbs 9:1–12 wisdom, personified as a woman, is giving advice. She sends out maidens. Just as in Chapter 1, for the one who believes God is an intelligent Creator but has no understanding and is hungering to know Him, the Bible is the answer. One is to grow from the milk of the Word to strong meat to being a man of mature development.

"The knowledge of the holy is understanding." The word "holy" is in the *plural*. The thought is "the knowledge of the *Holy One* is understanding." The plurality refers to God's majesty.

In Proverbs 1, the very opening of the book is stating in effect, "Do you want wisdom? Do you have the desire to know wisdom?" Usually this desire starts from the reverence of believing that there is a God and that He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. The beauties of nature awe the individual, but he wants to know how to govern his life, and that is the *first* step of wisdom. The *last* step is knowing God. We read about God and His instructions in the Bible, but to worship God means that we recognize His greatness, which takes time.

In Proverbs 9:10 the Hebrew word for "beginning" is *techelt*, which technically means "to penetrate, to enter." Sequence and time are not the basic meaning, but where the word is used in the Bible, it does mean "first" (in sequence).

Ferrar Fenton's *The Complete Bible in Modern English* on page 126 says, "The fear of the LORD *reveals* wisdom." "Reveals" would be an opening, an entrance.

Darby's alternate translation, which he favors, reads, "The fear of Jehovah is the *principal* [part] of wisdom."

The *Amplified Old Testament* plays it safe both ways: “The reverent and worshipful fear of the LORD is the beginning and the chief and the choice part of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight and understanding.”

For the Septuagint, 70 Hebrew scholars translated the text of the Hebrew Scriptures into the Greek language around 300 BC. For Proverbs 9:10, just as in the King James there were dissenting scholars. The majority believed that it should read “the *beginning* of wisdom,” but some felt the thought was as stated in the footnote: “Or *summit*” — “the fear of the LORD is the *summit* of wisdom.” In other words, the highest achievement that man can attain unto is a deep appreciation of and reverence for God called the “fear of the LORD.” Such a reverential attitude is fully opened only at maturity. *Only at maturity*, then, can we begin to understand God and use the word “begin” in a *mature* sense. One who has a proper reverential fear of God obeys His commandments. The Little Flock, who will be given the divine nature, are those who fear God and obey His commandments to the best of their ability. They will prove so loyal in the present life that when they receive the divine nature, no circumstance would or could ever cause them to think or do contrary to the Almighty. Their characters will be so crystallized that when given a perfect body, a perfect mind, and power, their reverence would only be enhanced. (Generally power destroys people. When people who seem meek and humble are given power, they often get nasty and selfish. Would those in poverty stay humble if they suddenly became wealthy?) Those who get the divine nature will be just like Jesus: the same today, yesterday, and tomorrow.

(Deut. 6:2) “That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son’s son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged.”

(Job 28:28) “And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.” Notice, “the fear of the Lord *is wisdom*” — no mention of the “beginning.”

(Psa. 111:10) “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever.” The KJV margin has “success” for “beginning.” Success does not come until the *end*. “The fear of the LORD is the success of wisdom.” Success is the attainment of that which is hoped for.

(Eccl. 12:13) “Let us hear the *conclusion* of the *whole* matter: *Fear God, and keep his commandments*: for this is the *whole* duty of man.” In other words, this was the last utterance of Solomon (next to the last verse of Ecclesiastes). The sum and substance of God’s charge of responsibility for man is the fear of God and the doing of His commandments. This verse could not be stated more emphatically. The *whole duty* of man is to *fear God*. Solomon made mistakes before he learned this truth, but we hopefully benefit from his (and our own) mistakes.

In summation, the proper fear of Jehovah comes later in life with maturity. Therefore, the context overrules the particular application and meaning of the word. The majority opinion is not always the right opinion.

Prov. 9:11 For by me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy life shall be increased.

Prov. 9:12 If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself: but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.

Verses 11 and 12 are coupled with verse 10. "For by me [wisdom] thy days shall be multiplied." God's knowledge or instruction emanates from the *true* woman, who pictures wisdom. Some translators picture two women in the Book of Proverbs: false or foolish wisdom and true wisdom. Foolish wisdom has the appearance of wisdom but is actually folly. Verse 11 is saying that by obeying the instruction of the divine commandments, a person lives longer.

Verse 12 is stating that it is the personal responsibility of those who have made a commitment to serve God to obey or not obey His commandments. A scorner here is one who does not heed the Lord's instruction, the instruction of wisdom. For example, if Jesus were giving instructions in person, one who turned a deaf ear would be "scorning" him.

Prov. 9:13 A foolish woman is clamorous: she is simple, and knoweth nothing.

Verses 13–18 pertain to a "foolish [or false] woman." However, the foolish woman poses as one who has true wisdom, as a benefactor of pleasure. She is *worldly wise*, but the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. This woman calls to the "simple" (verse 16), but she herself is "simple." (The "simple" foolish woman is like those she is trying to attract.) People who are young, naive, relatively innocent, and perhaps giddy are immature; they are not cognizant of the serious problems that exist.

Prov. 9:14 For she sitteth at the door of her house, on a seat in the high places of the city,

The foolish woman sits in a conspicuous, prominent place. The word "seat" means "throne"; hence she has some worldly stature. Similarly, in Proverbs 8:2,3 true wisdom was pictured as a woman seated at three prominent places: a gate, a high place, and by the wayside (very convenient to passersby). Thus there are two women: one with true advice and one with false advice, both being conspicuously situated and near each other.

The Bible, the best known book, is available to all. If someone wants to know about God but hasn't searched the Bible, that individual is without excuse. God has chosen to make His Word a very published book so that no one will be able to say, "Why didn't you tell me?"

While both women are in very prominent places, the foolish woman has more glitz and show and is gaudy and clamorous. She is sitting as a harlot. In contrast, the true woman is relatively low key.

Prov. 9:15 To call passengers who go right on their ways:

The clamorous foolish woman is convenient to those who pass by minding their own business and not thinking of responding to a harlot ("who go right on their ways").

Prov. 9:16 Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: and as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him,

Those who are simple and naive are not contemplating wrongdoing, but lacking experience and not being alert to the dangers, they are liable to fall. On the other hand, because they are humble, they are also liable to following the Lord. Hence in Proverbs 8:4,5 wisdom calls out to the simple to listen to her. *Both* women are calling to the simple. Thus there are two classes of the “simple”; one class responds to improper advice and falls, and the other class responds to proper advice.

As a general rule, God is not calling reprobates who are hardened in sin, eg, drunkards. Rather, He is calling those who want to know Him, those who have not previously responded but are searching if haply they might find Him (Acts 17:27). Verse 16 shows the false woman sitting by the wayside calling to and inviting the passersby, trying to entice them.

Prov. 9:17 Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.

The false woman speaks in verse 17, “Stolen waters are sweet,” but the one who turns in “knoweth not ... that her guests are in the depths of hell” (verse 18).

Comment: Proverbs 20:17 gives the lesson: “Bread of deceit is sweet to a man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel [stones].”

Comment: Verse 5 also mentions bread, but that is a *good* invitation from the *true* woman (wisdom): “Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled.”

Reply: Yes, that is the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. God is behind the good invitation, the essence of true wisdom; and Satan is behind the bad invitation, the essence of deception, (false) wisdom that degrades the individual. The serpent in Eden appeared wiser than any of the other beasts—before it lost its legs and was made to slither on the ground. When the serpent ate of the tree with impunity, it seemed to give the lie to God’s words. In both cases it was wisdom, but one was the wisdom of Satan and the other was the advice or commandment of God. And this is the problem with the Christian: to discriminate between the two kinds of wisdom. Proverbs is basically a book of advice for the consecrated.

Maimonides, considered by some to be the greatest Jewish scholar, has treated the whole book of Proverbs from the standpoint of the two women. He likens the false woman to the flesh, the body. The true woman would be aspirations that are more noble. The Apostle Paul said, “The old man is to perish, but the new man is to grow and develop and increase.” To a certain extent, the false woman can be likened to the old (wo)man, the flesh and fleshly advice; and the true woman, to the new (wo)man, the new creature advice. *All of his life*, the Christian has to contend with the old man. “We have this treasure in earthen vessels” (2 Cor. 4:7). Although there are three enemies—the world, the flesh, and the devil—the flesh is the worst because it is with us at *all times*. “The heart [the false woman] is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jer. 17:9). The false woman, a siren who tries to seduce others, is deceitful and has an appetite for wickedness. Because our flesh is fallen, we must be very careful not to get into an environment in which we can be seduced. Once the seductive process begins, it is

almost irreversible ... like being caught by a boa constrictor. It is almost impossible to break that hold to commit sin. Therefore, the Scriptures tell us to make straight paths for our feet in order to avoid conditions where we are in danger of entrapment (Heb. 12:13). Most of the difficulties in life will be avoided by being aware of and avoiding danger. The person having that experience is more mature—he has been warned and instructed (he is not simple).

The “simple” class would be new in truth. (However, some Christians are babes all their lives.) Those who desire to develop and grow will follow the advice of true wisdom.

“Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.” In some ways there is an attraction for the pleasures of sin. The depraved flesh has an appetite for these desires. When that appetite is satisfied, when the sin is committed, there is a measure of satisfaction, but it is *very short-lived* and it jeopardizes the person’s eternal welfare. The short-term pleasure brings long-term regret, remorse, and grief.

Prov. 9:18 But he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell.

The victim knows not that the dead are there in the false woman’s house. The house of the dead is sometimes called the grave, *sheol*, the pit, the hidden or covered condition, and a charnel house (a house full of dead men’s bones). In other words, the false woman’s house is loaded with corpses. *Many* have been victimized to their destruction because they were enticed by this woman.

Going into the false woman’s house is like going into a haunted house of death. If the victim had known in advance what his actions would lead to, he would not have turned into her house. Hence it is the inexperienced element who get entrapped. The “simple” ones did not intend to get ensnared. The suggestion was made by an extraneous source. This advice does not pertain to those who are already entrenched in sin and satisfied with it. The advice is given to the inexperienced.

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

Proverbs 7

Proverbs 7 is similar to the latter part of Proverbs 9, but it goes into more detail.

Prov. 7:1 My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee.

The first five words (“My son, keep my words”) impress upon us the necessity to pay strict, close attention to the advice that God gives through the woman personified as wisdom.

Prov. 7:2 Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye.

Prov. 7:3 Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart.

Prov. 7:4 Say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister; and call understanding thy kinswoman:

While we may hear advice and warning, we must keep it *ever in mind*. If we are sensitive every day to these admonitions, they will help to protect us from succumbing to the snares that lie in the Christian's pathway. Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* treats all kinds of temptations, deviations, and distractions from the straight and narrow way, whereas Proverbs 7 concentrates on seduction according to the flesh.

"Bind them [God's commandments] upon thy fingers." To help the memory, one can put a string on a finger (an *outward* symbol to remember). For this very reason Jews wore frontlets on their foreheads and put fringes on their garments. But most important is the instruction of the inner man. To "write them [God's commandments] upon the table of thine heart" would be an *inner* reminder. We should become so familiar with God's instructions that we could say, "Wisdom is our bosom companion, our sister, our close relative."

Prov. 7:5 That they may keep thee from the strange woman, from the stranger which flattereth with her words.

Prov. 7:6 For at the window of my house I looked through my casement,

Here Solomon is telling that through the open part of the casement window in his house, he saw a harlot on the street corner trying to seduce passersby. He noticed one who slowed down and started to listen to her. When she talked to him, he began to respond as an ox going to the slaughter (verse 22).

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

Prov. 7:8 Passing through the street near her corner; and he went the way to her house,

The "young man void of understanding" was strolling in the direction of the false woman's house, not intending to enter. The account doesn't tell us whether the young man knew this was a "red-light district." It can be assumed either way. If he knew it was a district of ill repute, he should not have gone there.

Prov. 7:9 In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night:

Notice, the "young man void of understanding" was out for a very late afternoon stroll. Dusk and darkness were starting to set in.

Prov. 7:10 And, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtle of heart.

He saw the false woman with the attire of a harlot. In other words, her attire revealed her activities and hence the danger of succumbing.

Prov. 7:11 (She is loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house:

Prov. 7:12 Now is she without, now in the streets, and lieth in wait at every corner.)

Verses 11 and 12 are parenthetical. By nature the false woman was loud and stubborn, but not when she was seducing out in the streets. Subsequently we will find out this harlot is a married woman. Therefore, she was an adulteress, not just a fornicator.

She “lieth in wait at every corner” almost like a lion or a leopard, waiting to see who will be gullible prey.

Prov. 7:13 So she caught him, and kissed him, and with an impudent face said unto him,

When she caught the young man, she kissed him and with *boldness* began to speak to him. This reminds us of Joseph and Potiphar’s wife in Egypt. To take care of business affairs, Joseph had to go into the house. There she waited and took hold of him and tried to seduce him. In fact, she took such a good hold of him that when he fled for his life, he had to leave his garment behind. Had he succumbed, he would not have been Joseph of Egypt.

Satan or one of the fallen angels acted very aggressively trying to ensnare the unsuspecting Joseph. And so the Christian, male and female, can have this experience. The difficulty in extricating oneself is tenfold worse if one has not made straight paths for his feet; eg, going into a district where prostitution takes place is dangerous for the Christian.

Prov. 7:14 I have peace offerings with me; this day have I paid my vows.

Prov. 7:15 Therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy face, and I have found thee.

The false woman speaks in verses 14 and 15. Flattery is another danger. Not only was there the element of surprise when she caught him and kissed him, but now she flatters him. “The reason that I embraced and kissed you is that I have been thinking about you.” Imagine the stunned victim now caught in the boa constrictor’s first coils!

The “peace offerings” suggest a *religious* twist to the seduction. The temptation has the appearance of truth, but it is an entrapment in the final analysis.

Prov. 7:16 I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved works, with fine linen of Egypt.

Prov. 7:17 I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.

Prov. 7:18 Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning: let us solace ourselves with loves.

The false woman is saying these things on the street before the young man ever enters her house. She declares her intent right away. “We will both enjoy this pleasure until morning.”

Myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon are holy ingredients used for an unholy environment.

“Loves” (plural) in verse 18 would be all kinds of illicit love and pleasure. “We can indulge in uninhibited sex.” Next she explains why.

Prov. 7:19 For the goodman is not at home, he is gone a long journey:

Prov. 7:20 He hath taken a bag of money with him, and will come home at the day appointed.

Along natural lines, the false woman is saying, “You don’t have to worry about my husband coming back unexpectedly and interrupting our affair because he has gone on a journey with a bag of money.” (He would use the money to lodge elsewhere and would not return that night.)

“At the day appointed” is “at the day of the full moon” in some translations.

Prov. 7:21 With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him.

This is seduction. With her facial expressions and her words, the false woman is trying to be as amorous as possible right out there on the street.

Prov. 7:22 He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks;

Now the young man yields; he is overcome.

Prov. 7:23 Till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life.

“Till a dart strike through his liver” would be the fatal wound. A “snare” contained meat or bait that attracted the bird into being caught.

Prov. 7:24 Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth.

Prov. 7:25 Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths.

Prov. 7:26 For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her.

Prov. 7:27 Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.

“Way” is plural in the Hebrew. “Her house is the ways to hell.”

Proverbs 7 does have a spiritual application, but Satan has gotten more people to go into Second Death through the pleasures of the flesh than through wrong doctrine. The pleasures of the flesh have been a tool of the Adversary all along, and they are an attraction to both the most intellectual and the most ignorant persons. Both extremes can succumb, so the literal application should be kept in mind as a very real danger. Through the news media, our nation permits filth and corruption. From the leaders down to the common people, all are responsible for having winked the eye at the depravities. As the

United States becomes more and more like Sodom and Gomorrah, the degradation is pulling the country down.

Proverbs 7 is advice to the Christian Church, and it is dispensational. At the end of the age, this proverb becomes more and more real—even from the literal standpoint.

Spiritual Application

The setting is in the twilight years of the Gospel Age—the late afternoon stroll goes into the darker night. It is a progressive state. The “goodman” of the house would be the Lord. At the beginning of the Gospel Age, he went on a long journey, and now, at the end of the age, he returns. From the “bag of money” he distributed talents, one apiece, to the consecrated in the parable (Matt. 25:14–30).

This parable shows the danger of being attracted to the nominal system. The false woman is Papacy, the mother of harlots, and Protestantism, the daughters of the harlot mother. Those who have left the nominal system and appreciated present truth must be very careful that they are not wheedled back into it because of being disgruntled for one or more reasons, fellowship being one reason. No matter how nice the people are, the erroneous doctrines of hellfire, the Trinity, and immortality of the soul are taught. The doctrine of hellfire is blasphemy against God. Returning to the nominal system is returning to the “chambers [house] of death.”

The true woman represents the wisdom and advice given to the true Church. The harlot or false woman pictures the worldly nominal Church and its wisdom.

Q: What are the implications of verse 14? “I have peace offerings with me; this day have I paid my vows.”

A: The false woman is saying that she is religious (“I am a Christian as you are”). Here is the doctrine of love—*false* love. The thought that God can forgive unto the *uttermost* must be qualified; it is not a blanket statement. The Scripture Hebrews 7:25, “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the *uttermost* that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them,” pertains to those who may have been murderers, adulterers, etc., *prior to* consecration. The Scriptures of mercy and forgiveness *do not apply to gross sin* committed by the *consecrated*. Rather, they apply to those who repent and turn their backs on sin and accept the Lord and consecrate. Under certain circumstances one may be rescued, as it were, from the depths of hell after he has consecrated, but that possibility is about as scarce and rare as one making his calling and election sure and being a member of the Little Flock. If the ratio of Great Company to Little Flock is about 1,000 to 1, the possibilities of one succumbing and being retrieved are also about 1,000 to 1. It is a much different matter regarding the sinner initially coming to Christ. A distinction must be made between the sins *before* consecration and the sins *after* consecration; there is a *wide* gulf. The doctrine of false forgiveness is taught by the Papacy through the mass and the confessional box, but basically 999 out of 1,000 in this system are not consecrated and the responsibility of the unconsecrated is not the same.

Q: Could verse 14 be referring to a class closer to home, closer to the Bible Student movement, giving the Judas kiss of betrayal?

A: The Judas class was mentioned in the last study. This class, with a present truth background, will turn against their brethren, and there is the possibility that they will go into the nominal system.

The Pastor stated that one could go to the nominal Church for a prayer service, for example, if one had no other fellowship. This would still be true in a remote district where there were no other brethren, but this statement should not be misconstrued or used as an excuse or an argument for regular nominal Church attendance.

“Peace offerings” pertain to peace with *God*. False love and false forgiveness are subtle and dangerous. Proper steps must be taken for remedial release and salvation. It becomes a life and death matter. We are all weak. Illicit relationships must be avoided, for certain attractions of the body are practically uncontrollable. And for those who are faithful in the present life, the reward is beyond our comprehension. We are running for a truly *high, high* prize. We can little comprehend being with God eternally and having the immortal nature, incorruptibility, life inherent, dominion untold, and pleasures of the future, but they are well worth paying attention to the advice given by God. “*Choose life!*” (Deut. 30:19). These proverbs show the grave and real danger of the Christian being seduced, spiritually or literally.

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

Proverbs 10

Because Proverbs 10 is a radical change from the previous nine chapters, some introductory remarks are in order. In the ancient manuscripts, Chapter 10 starts a separate book—the second book of Proverbs. Proverbs 10 begins with “The Proverbs of Solomon” as Chapter 1 did, except that for Proverbs 1, there was additional wording: “the son of David, king of Israel.” Here in Proverbs 10 we are just being reassured that the Proverbs continue. Not only is Chapter 10 a separate book, but the character of that book is a little different.

Chapters 1–9 are more spiritual in the sense that they have both a natural and a spiritual application throughout. These chapters lay down certain principles at length. Proverbs 10 is a book of short, cryptic, succinct statements sometimes styled as “aphorisms.” Proverbs 10 is not structured in the sense of leading up to a conclusion like a story. It is a collection of separate statements that are very valuable to meditate on. The statements pertain mostly to conduct. Many of the highest scholars feel that the Book of Proverbs is not spiritual because it tells about proper and improper conduct in life. This is surprising because the New Testament is filled with a lot of *natural* statements of character development—plain statements such as “Speak evil of no man” (Titus 3:2) and “Owe no man anything, but to love one another” (Rom. 13:8). And Jesus said, “When thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret” (Matt. 6:3,4) and “Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil” (Matt. 5:37). Although the Book of Proverbs is more structured, the type of instruction is the same.

Notice that in Proverbs 10, a pro and a con are in each verse, a favorable and a less favorable statement. These are usually described as antithetical statements, ie, opposite statements. Generally speaking, the Book of Proverbs will be of that nature from Chapter

10 on. The order will be pro and con or con and pro. (Sometimes the order is reversed to keep us from being lulled to sleep by a rhythm.)

The Book of Proverbs is as though someone—say, King Solomon—thought of a proverb and wrote it down in a notebook. At another time he got another thought and wrote it down, etc. Subsequently, in Ezra’s day, the statements that had been written down in “notebook” fashion were codified to a certain extent so that the content of Chapters 1–9 (called Book 1) was separate from that of later chapters (called Book 2). (Of course the writing was continuous in the early manuscripts with no chapter divisions.) In Chapter 10 there is just one proverb after another.

Prov. 10:1 The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.

Q: Why are the genders used this way? Wouldn’t a wise son also make a glad mother and a foolish son be a sorrow to his father?

A: By their very natures, the joy goes in deeper with the father and the sorrow with the mother. There are illustrations in Scripture. Joseph was a wise son and the joy of his father, Jacob, for several reasons. For example, he was the son of his favorite wife, Rachel, and he was obedient. Esau was a foolish son, for he appreciated temporal things more than the spiritual (he sold his birthright for a morsel of food, for temporary pleasure and/or satisfaction). He also married two Hittite women (Gen. 26:34,35).

Comment: Proverbs 17:25 states that a foolish son is a grief to both father and mother: “A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him.”

Reply: That would be similar to the statement about Rebecca and Isaac in Genesis 26:35.

We cannot spiritualize verse 1 with the father and the mother. This proverb is along natural lines. While in many of his epistles such as Romans and Hebrews, the Apostle Paul used a structured philosophy to get across a particular intent for something that was especially on his mind, when he came to the end of these epistles, he gave a string of commonsense information: do this, don’t do that, and so forth. Although not quite like proverbs, the type of advice was similar.

On a higher level, being a wise son or daughter brings pleasure to God, and in proportion as one sins, it brings disappointment and grief in some respects. We know God does feel and is affected emotionally, for those who are consecrated are like the apple of His eye (Psa. 17:8). The eye is very sensitive if a little bug flies into it. And so God is sensitive to those who speak ill of us or persecute us, or if we do good or if we do evil. But verse 1 is just speaking along natural lines. Wisdom is being held up as an important adjunct to character.

Prov. 10:2 Treasures of wickedness profit nothing: but righteousness delivereth from death.

“Treasures of wickedness profit nothing” in the final analysis; temporarily they may seem to be beneficial but not with regard to eternal welfare. There is no long-term benefit for

the “treasures of wickedness” but just the opposite, even though in some instances they seem to have a short-term benefit.

This verse is speaking generally of the habitually wicked and not of Christians as such. Pursuing evil as a manner of life does not profit in the end even if it seems to do so momentarily.

Comment: “A certain rich man ... thought within himself, saying, ... Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry” (Luke 12:16). Even though this parable does not speak specifically of wicked acts, it illustrates not giving the time or thought to God’s Word but to self.

“Righteousness delivereth from death.” This advice applies to everyone, to both Christians and worldly people. As an unconsecrated person tries to do that which is right and good in the present life, it enhances the probability of his being amenable to the instruction and righteousness of the next age and of his eventually forming a character that will get life. The time spent in doing good is well spent, whether in this life or in the next. Any evil followed as a course in this life can jeopardize one’s opportunity even in the next age, for while the people will come forth from the tomb into a Kingdom with righteous laws, some will long for the conditions of the present evil world so that they can take advantage of their fellow man (Amos 8:5,6). Those who, in this life, build their characters on greed and selfishness can, in the next age, very well be numbered among those who are obedient only because it is expedient to do so; in their hearts they will be waiting for the reign of Christ to cease so that they can revert back to the style of living that they pursued in the present life. “Let favour be shown to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the LORD” (Isa. 26:10).

Comment: “In the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be [lie]” (Eccl. 11:3).

Reply: In other words, whatever character one is establishing now, the person will start out with that same character in the Kingdom Age.

Prov. 10:3 The LORD will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish: but he casteth away the substance of the wicked.

Q: Is the word “soul” in the Hebrew? The NIV and the RSV both omit the word, but the statement is more profound with its inclusion. Otherwise, it would be a simple statement that the Lord does not allow the righteous to go hungry.

A: The word “soul” is in the Hebrew (*nephesh*). The King James is correct.

In the Book of Proverbs, not only does a verse contain pro and con statements styled as “didactic” (it speaks twice; it has two tongues), but in addition, these statements are sometimes arranged in couplet form. In other words, in many cases, two verses will cover the same subject. The couplet form helps us to get the point better than if one verse were omitted. Some verses are didactic by themselves (a single verse), some verses are double, and in rare cases, some are triple.

Verses 2 and 3 are an example of a couplet form; they are saying the same thing with a little different type of metaphor. “Treasures of wickedness” in verse 2 are called the “substance of the wicked” in verse 3. Both verses refer to eternal death versus eternal life, and to transitory, temporal, ephemeral joys and pleasures in contrast to long-term benefits.

When the Book of Proverbs speaks of proper and improper conduct and goals, it is meant to encourage us as Christians with regard to the disappointments of life, for we will surely have them. We are in a marathon race and must continue and press on to the finish line. The proverbs are telling us, “Don’t be foolish. Think in the long-term.” Some ridicule the Christian as looking for “pie in the sky in the by and by,” whereas they view the here and the now as important. But the here and the now are not important *as regards temporal things*. Spiritually, however, the here and the now are important, for we must grow spiritually in order to please the Lord. These verses are talking along temporal lines—of health, wealth, power, and prestige. These goals can be very misleading.

Comment: Verse 3 seems to indicate that, generally speaking, the wicked would own more substance, have more of this world’s goods. The soul of the righteous not being allowed to famish would seem to apply more to the necessities of life than to abundance.

Reply: We are told to provide things decent and honest in the sight of all men (Rom. 12:17; 2 Cor. 8:21), but that does not mean the Christian will be wealthy in the present life.

Prov. 10:4 He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich.

Prov. 10:5 He that gathereth in summer is a wise son: but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame.

Verses 4 and 5 are related. Other Scriptures come to mind. “Do with thy might what thy hand finds to do” is the principle. Be “not slothful in business” (Rom. 12:11). “But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith *without works* is dead?” (James 2:20).

Comment: And the thought about the “harvest” can certainly have a spiritual connotation. We are to be “children of the day” and not to sleep (1 Thess. 5:5,6).

“The hand of the diligent maketh rich”—not rich in the present life or with present goods, but with a richness of character and, if faithful, the richest of rewards: the divine nature. Lackadaisical conformity to both the pleasures and the responsibilities of life is disparaged.

Comment: We are to lay up “treasures in heaven” (Matt. 6:20). Both Jesus and the apostles must have been very familiar with the Book of Proverbs because a number of their statements are based on Proverbs. All they had access to was the Old Testament and its principles, and yet, without straining, we are able to quote Scripture after Scripture from the New Testament.

Reply: The Book of Proverbs is quoted more often in the New Testament than we realize. We do not always recognize the quote because of slightly different wording.

The mention of a “harvest” shows that at the time the Book of Proverbs was written, an agrarian lifestyle was the norm. Generally speaking, people had to grow their own food and work by the sweat of their brow.

Gathering in summer is contrasted with sleeping in harvest. One who did not harvest the grain did not survive the winter. One gathers (diligently prepares) *before* the harvest. “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved” (Jer. 8:20). Summer is the time of favor and preparation. There were just two seasons: summer and winter. Therefore, summer was the time to plow and plant seed—to prepare for the harvest. The Feast of Harvest in the seventh month of the Jewish calendar was called the Feast of Ingathering. To “sleep” in the time of harvest is possible in both the natural and the spiritual picture.

Prov. 10:6 Blessings are upon the head of the just: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.

Prov. 10:7 The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot.

In the present life, the blessings upon the head of the just may not be that discernible in the eyes of others. We are laying up treasures in heaven rather than here on earth. These are the true blessings, which neither moth nor rust doth corrupt. Therefore, although others may not discern the blessings in the present life, they are very real and long-term in their benefit.

“Violence covereth [conceals] the mouth of the wicked.” In a society where wickedness is punished, the wicked hide, as far as possible, from public disclosure that which is really their hearts’ intent. Although they actively try to conceal the wickedness, it cannot be suppressed entirely.

Verse 7 harmonizes with verse 6:

“*Blessings* are upon the head of the *just*” = “the memory of the *just* is *blessed*.”

“Violence covereth the mouth of the *wicked*” = “the name of the *wicked* shall rot.”

The phrase “the *memory* of the *just*” suggests that in the next age people will admire the course and conduct of a true Christian whom God honors in the new government as one of the Little Flock or even with life as part of the Great Company.

Comment: Psalm 37:25 reads, “I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.” This shows that the Lord upholds the righteous throughout their lives.

Reply: Yes, that would be particularly true with Proverbs 14:3, “The LORD will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish [for lack of food].”

Comment: Psalm 87:5, “And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the highest himself shall establish her,” tells that the memory of the 144,000 will be particularly blessed and perpetuated.

“The name of the wicked shall rot [be forgotten]” because they led a useless, worthless existence. With even the most outstanding ones, such as Nero and Hitler, their memory will perish in time.

Prov. 10:8 The wise in heart will receive commandments: but a prating fool shall fall.

Prov. 10:9 He that walketh uprightly walketh surely: but he that perverteth his ways shall be known.

“The wise in heart will *obey* commandments [will be receptive to instruction].” A “prating fool” babbles nonsense; he is given to excessive talking.

Verse 9 harmonizes with verse 8:

“The wise in heart will receive commandments” = “he that walketh uprightly walketh surely.” Such a one has a foundation and substance.

“A prating fool shall fall” = “he that perverteth his ways shall be known [by the end result].” In the long-term picture, it will be made very clear and manifest who are the “wise” and who are the “fools.”

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

Prov. 10:11 The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.

“He that winketh with the eye causeth sorrow [vexation, mischief, trouble].” In most cases, winking with the eye is done in relative secrecy to others who are of the same ilk, nature, or kind. Some winks are good, but the bad winks seem to predominate.

Q: Can winking the eye also be closing the eyes to what has happened and pretending it did not happen?

A: The Apostle Paul says that even God winked in this way. “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30). In other words, God permitted evil because He saw that in the long term, the permission of evil will have certain benefits. A prime benefit will be the development of the Church class and the Ancient Worthy class. The permission of evil will be valuable in the future in evaluating the fruits of doing right and the fruits of doing wrong.

Comment: The RSV ends verse 10 a different way: “He who winks the eye causes trouble, but *he who boldly reproves makes peace.*” Which ending is accurate?

Reply: The RSV is taken from the Septuagint and it is correct (the Hebrew is wrong). Reason: the KJV ending was just used in verse 8 (“a prating fool shall fall”). In copying manuscripts with no line spaces in between, a copyist can easily pick up the wrong expression and inadvertently duplicate it. This happened even in the Sinaitic Manuscript. Fatigue, poor light, poor working conditions, etc., can result in replication. The clause is more viable in verse 8. Evidently that same clause in verse 10 is a transcriber’s error. “He who winks the eye secretly” is contrasted with “he who rebukes openly.”

Q: Is the lesson for us as Christians to rebuke openly and not to close our eyes to evil?

A: Yes. It indicates a sensitivity on the part of the righteous to not let silently go by that which is important in the sense of character development. The wise in heart will expose the evil for what it is.

Comment: Proverbs 6:12–14 reads, “A naughty person, a wicked man, walketh with a froward mouth. He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers; Frowardness is in his heart, he deviseth mischief continually; he soweth discord.”

Reply: Yes, that is street language in its most impure form. We use the term today “body language,” and there are all kinds of body language.

Comment: One of Job’s comforters harshly accused him by asking what evil he was winking his eyes at.

Reply: Job’s supposed comforters were constantly prodding him to admit that he had done something wrong. “Job, what have you done that you are trying to hide from us. Admit the wrong. The Lord wants you to confess.” He replied, “I can’t, for I do not know of any such wrong.” He could not understand why he was being persecuted with disease, loss of family and crops, etc. He did not know that the Lord had permitted Satan to try him to the uttermost except to take his life. The permission of evil was not understood in the Old Testament. And it was difficult for Christians in the Middle Ages, who experienced a famine for Scripture during the 1,260 years, to understand the evil.

Verse 11 harmonizes with verse 10:

“He that winketh with the eye causeth sorrow” = “violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.”

“He who boldly reproves makes peace” = “the mouth of a righteous man is a well of life.”

In regard to the mouth of a righteous man being a well of life, a person with good principles instructs others either by words or by conduct, example, and way of life. There is a saying, “I’d rather see a sermon than hear one any day.” In other words, a Christian is an example, an open book, in his life and conduct and can be a blessing, a well of life, to others by walking the straight and narrow. The mouth of the wicked is the opposite. A righteous person usually has good intentions; he wants to be a help to others rather than a stumbling block.

Comment: Perhaps Jesus had Proverbs 10:11 in mind (“the mouth of a righteous man is a well of life”) when he uttered the words in Matthew 12:34, “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”

Reply: Yes, and also for the Samaritan woman at the well.

From Chapter 10 on, many chapters in the Book of Proverbs are in the nature of one or two verses as a complete thought or proverb. This format is not conducive to group study because it is like eating nuts, which are hard to digest. As the body cannot acclimate to an entire meal of nuts, so the Book of Proverbs as a whole is not conducive to group study. And to devote an entire study to just a verse or two would be too time-consuming for the study leader to prepare. Therefore, it is more advisable to select, at most, just certain portions of the Book of Proverbs. Also, to study the entire book would result in numerous repetitive terms that are used incessantly. For example, righteousness is

contrasted with wickedness over and over in many, many ways. When Chapter 10 is completed, the study will continue on a selective basis.

Prov. 10:12 Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.

Prov. 10:13 In the lips of him that hath understanding wisdom is found: but a rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding.

Prov. 10:14 Wise men lay up knowledge: but the mouth of the foolish is near destruction.

Verses 12–14 are not as cohesively joined as are some of the other triplet verses. The connection would be that *verbal* communication has repercussive effects either beneficial or detrimental depending on whether the speaker has wisdom or lacks it.

Hatred does stir up strife when it is a *habitual* attitude of heart, but there are times when it is proper to hate. However, those times should be more or less only when certain serious occasions arise, and not as a habitual frame of mind of being hypercritical and/or cynical. In other words, the statement “hatred stirreth up strifes” must be modified, but as a general principle, when someone harbors hatred, the hatred does not stay with that individual. The hatred spreads—it stirs up strife in others.

The second half of verse 12 also needs modification: “love covereth all sins.” Many would like to make a credo out of this statement, but as with hatred, when “love covereth all sins” is a *habitual* frame of mind, it is injurious not only to the individual but to others as it spreads. Although the attitude of love, mercy, and consideration should be habitually entertained *as a general principle*, nevertheless, there are times when a distinction has to be made. Love does not cover ALL sins at ALL times. The New Testament tells us we should not pray for individuals who have committed sins unto Second Death. “There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it” (1 John 5:16).

If verse 12 is thought of as a generality without exceptions, it is an injurious statement. Verse 12 should be thought of as a generality *with exceptions*. In other words, each part of verse 12 needs some modification. On certain rare occasions hatred is proper, and on certain rare occasions love does not cover all sins. Friendship should not be allowed to interfere with proper reactions and judgments.

Comment: When a similar statement was made in the 1 Peter 4:8 study (“charity shall cover the multitude of sins”), the word “imperfections” was substituted for “sins”: “Love shall cover the multitude of imperfections.”

Comment: The Apostle Paul warned against the danger of improper hatred: “Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any *root of bitterness* springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled” (Heb. 12:15).

Verse 13 states, “In the lips of him that hath understanding wisdom is found.” Spoken wisdom benefits others.

Verse 13 reads, “A rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding [sense—RSV].” A “rod” would be a rebuke. The implication is that a rebuke should be given to one who

is void of understanding and *voices that lack*. Therefore, there are times when a lack of understanding is to be exposed.

Comment: An interesting cross reference in the NIV is “A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool’s back” (Prov. 26:3).

Reply: All three conditions are negative here. When a horse pulling a carriage gets out of control, it must be brought back into line with a whip. The whip demonstrates authority. A whip used judiciously has its place. The same is true of a rod for the fool’s back. Used judiciously, a rebuke is proper.

Comment: The sequence seems to be going in descending order: horse, ass, fool. The rod for the fool’s back is the harshest treatment.

Comment: Psalm 32:8,9 is appropriate: “I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.”

Verse 14 in Leeser’s reads: “Wise men treasure up knowledge: but the mouth of the foolish is an approaching terror.” Verse 14 in the RSV reads: “... the babbling of a fool brings ruin near.” With the foolish, we do not know what will come forth from their mouths. Whatever is uttered will be detrimental, and the listener is left in anxiety as to what problem will come forth. It will tend to poverty of spirit and mind. The foolish tend to listen to the foolish, and both go into the ditch together.

The Book of Proverbs presents the wise man as being not too talkative, but when such a one does speak, the words are meaningful and helpful. Conversely, the fool talks continuously with nonsense or worse coming forth.

Prov. 10:15 The rich man’s wealth is his strong city: the destruction of the poor is their poverty.

Prov. 10:16 The labour of the righteous tendeth to life: the fruit of the wicked to sin.

Verses 15 and 16 are a couplet. Two things are being contrasted but in a different way: a *righteous* rich man with integrity and honor versus an *unrighteous* poor man. In the *Fourth Volume* where the Pastor considers the different component parts in the Armageddon forces, he properly displays a generous attitude toward the rich who are given to funding endowments, subsidizing good works, and so forth, and who do not simply use their wealth on self and pleasure. The point is that Proverbs 10:15,16 is saying, “A man’s wealth is not necessarily the result of ill-gotten gain.” One may become rich through prudence, thrift, wise investment, etc. Many poor people utter blanket condemnation of all the wealthy.

Therefore, verses 15 and 16 not only complement certain rich men but attribute some poverty to laziness, negligence, indifference, etc.—to not wisely providing. With such individuals, their distress is a product of their own making. For example, when the prodigal son inherited riches, he went right out and lived a wild life, putting himself in poverty. Just to survive, he ate the husks that were fed to the swine.

“The fruit of the wicked [is] to sin.” They spend their money foolishly, as for the glorification of the body, the lust of the flesh, etc.

Prov. 10:17 He is in the way of life that keepeth instruction: but he that refuseth reproof erreth.

“He who heeds correction is on the way to life; he who refuses correction goes in the way of error [strays from the path of life]” (paraphrase).

Prov. 10:18 He that hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander, is a fool.

Comment: A person’s heart is wrong if he harbors the wrong kind of hatred, and to cover up that hatred with “lying lips” would be hypocrisy. Guarding the heart against the wrong kind of hatred would prevent this condition.

“He that uttereth a slander, is a fool.” There is a Tibetan proverb: “He who spits against the wind spits in his own face.” And there is another proverb: “He who spits in the cabbage eats it.” The one who utters the slander may think it is of benefit to downgrade the other individual and, to a certain extent, upgrade himself. But that would be a short-term benefit. In the long term, the slanderer is hurting himself.

Prov. 10:19 In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.

Prov. 10:20 The tongue of the just is as choice silver: the heart of the wicked is little worth.

Prov. 10:21 The lips of the righteous feed many: but fools die for want of wisdom.

Verses 19–21 are a triplet.

The first part of verse 19 in Leeser’s reads: “In a multitude of words, transgression cannot be avoided....” In other words, one who says too much puts his foot in his mouth; sooner or later he will say something he will regret. There was a king who was considered to be very, very wise. Whenever people went to him with calamities or good news, he would say, “This too shall pass away.” The saying is true, for both pleasure and sorrow pass away.

Not always but under certain circumstances, “he that refraineth his lips is wise.” There is a time to speak and a time not to speak.

Comment: Proverbs 29:11 reads, “A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards.”

Comment: And conversely, there are times when wisdom dictates that matters should be told. Example: when the Pastor had to defend himself publicly regarding the divorce.

Reply: He withheld information for a long time, but in doing so, the case built up against him. Even the brethren did not understand until he explained in detail.

Comment: It is wisdom to know how much to say and when.

Verse 20 harmonizes in saying, “The tongue of the just is as choice silver.” Just as choice silver is not thrown commonly around the street, so the tongue of the just is used judiciously. Silver is valuable and so is the conservative, wise tongue.

“The heart of the wicked is [of] little worth.” What comes out of the heart of the wicked is worthless. The word “heart” enters into much of Solomon’s thinking in the Book of Proverbs.

“The lips of the righteous feed many: but fools die for want of wisdom” (Prov. 10:21). Choice silver is valuable, as are the lips of the righteous.

Comment: With the tongue of the just being likened to choice silver in verse 20, the Scripture comes to mind, “The words of the LORD are ... as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times” (Psa. 12:6). Also, “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver” (Prov. 25:11).

Reply: Words from the *Lord’s* mouth are like silver refined seven times. Proverbs 10:20 says that the tongue or lips of *the just*—that is, of a relatively *mature* Christian (as opposed to a babe in Christ)—utter statements that are not frivolous but of value and help to the brethren. All true Christians are justified, including babes, but for the tongue to be as choice silver means one would have to be more developed in character, truth, and understanding of Scripture and to have imbibed more of the Spirit of God’s Word.

Comment: “Out of the abundance of the *heart* the mouth speaketh” (Matt. 12:34). Although verse 20 uses “tongue” for the first half of the verse, the second half mentions the “heart” of the wicked.

Reply: Yes, there is a tie-in, for the tongue is an outlet to the heart. Therefore, “heart” is also implied for the first half of verse 20.

Verse 20 continues, using a little sarcasm: “The heart of the wicked is little worth.” Tongue is not being compared with tongue, but with the heart. In other words, the heart of a righteous person does not have to be searched, for out of the abundance of the fullness of the heart, the tongue indicates the condition of the heart. The tongue is an index of the person’s motivation, character, and worth. But with a wicked person, one must go in back of the tongue. Allowances are often made such as “he means well” or “he is this way and that way, but basically at heart he is otherwise.” Nevertheless, the tongue of the wicked is truly an index to the heart, which is not worth much. The same principle operates for both the righteous and the wicked: “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”

Our Lord, instead of using the tongue of the human anatomy, used an illustration from nature: a tree is judged by its fruit. The kind of fruit determines whether a tree is good or bad. Also, the kind of water (sweet or poisonous) indicates the condition of the well. The water that wells up out of the earth is either good or bad.

Verse 21a: “The lips of the righteous feed many” in that they nourish and edify others; they are constructive. The terms “just” and “righteous” imply a depth of character.

Verse 21b: “But fools die for want of wisdom.” The KJV margin has “fools die for want of *heart*.” The Hebrew word literally means “heart.” The heart is the seat of emotions, compassion, mercy, pity, etc. With fools there is a dearth of substance, a lack of compassion for and interest in others. The fool feeds self, whereas the righteous feeds many.

Comment: There is the expression “have a heart,” meaning “show some mercy.”

Prov. 10:22 The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.

Truly the blessing of the Lord does make one rich, but the second half of verse 22 requires more explanation. The thought is that the blessing of the Lord adds no *unnecessary* sorrow. The hymn says, “Send sorrow, send pain. Sweet will thy messengers be and sweet their refrain.” Sweet will be the messengers of sorrow and pain if they produce the peaceable fruits of righteousness and the desired condition of more praise and worship for the Lord and a closer communion with Him. There are trials and sorrow for the Christian, but no *unnecessary* sorrow. Necessary sorrow and discipline are educational.

Prov. 10:23 It is as sport to a fool to do mischief: but a man of understanding hath wisdom.

NIV: “A fool finds pleasure in evil conduct, but a man of understanding delights in wisdom.”

RSV: “It is like sport to a fool to do wrong, but wise conduct is pleasure to a man of understanding.”

More literally, the Hebrew is, “To work out evil devices is laughter to the foolish; so is wisdom to the man of understanding.” Laughter is being compared with wisdom.

Prov. 10:24 The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him: but the desire of the righteous shall be granted.

Prov. 10:25 As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more: but the righteous is an everlasting foundation.

Comment: For verse 24 the saying comes to mind “Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die” (Luke 12:19,20). Those who fear getting old and just live for self and pleasure will still get old—that which they fear will surely come to pass. That type of life has no lasting benefits, and it sows death and corruption, whereas those who live to serve the Lord sow to the spirit and to life.

Common to both the wicked and the righteous in verse 24 is the *long-term* result. The wicked do not fear the present but delight in it, yet there is a foreboding about the future and their destiny. The implication is that the wicked do occasionally experience qualms about the future, but they suppress the qualms because of the current benefit they think they are getting from doing the mischief. On the other hand, very often the full desires of the righteous do not seem to be granted in the short term. They can experience a feeling of lack at present, but faith says, “Persevere. This is a marathon race. In the end the Lord will grant the reward for trying to serve Him and do His will.” The righteous should be

exercised by the naked truth and should obey for the sake of principle, even though the benefits may not be apparent at the present time. In fact, obedience may cause ostracism in the short term. For the wicked, the long-term result will be negative. For the righteous, the long-term result will be positive.

Comment: A related Scripture is Psalm 145:19,20. "He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them. The LORD preserveth all them that love him: but all the wicked will he destroy."

Comment: The Sermon on the Mount has a similar thought: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled [granted]" (Matt. 5:6).

Verse 25 also applies to the long term. The thought of the whirlwind passing is that when the judgment comes, it will come suddenly.

Comment: Verse 25 is comparing building a foundation on sand with building a foundation on rock (Luke 6:48,49).

Reply: Yes, the fact that when the whirlwind passes, the wicked are no more shows they did not build their house on the proper foundation. Great is the desolation of the house built on sand. In contrast, the righteous are "an everlasting foundation." A superstructure is built on a foundation, permanent or temporary.

Comment: Proverbs 10:7 ties in with verse 25: "The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot."

Comment: Verse 30 is also related: "The righteous shall never be removed: but the wicked shall not inhabit the earth."

Prov. 10:26 As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him.

This verse is all negative. (When there is a negative and a positive, sometimes one is first and sometimes the other to break up monotony and vain repetition.) Vinegar adversely affects the teeth, causing the enamel to wear away over time. Indians used to go blind over the years from the smoke in their teepees if the hole at the top was not large enough. As a slug is repulsive in appearance and slow, so a sluggard is grievous to those who send him. The implication is that the sluggard is sent with a message. A modern-day example of a sluggard would be an elected official who fails to perform. Those who voted for or sent the sluggard did not realize his characteristic until after the fact.

Comment: There would be a negative impact on those who sent the sluggard because the job would not get done. Perhaps the lesson is that we are to use discretion not only in what we do ourselves but in regard to those we deal with, elect, etc.

Comment: That would also apply to elders elected by the various ecclesias.

Comment: "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise" (Prov. 6:6) would be a contrasting thought.

Reply: Yes, the ant has no idle moment but makes use of all its time and gets things done.

Prov. 10:27 The fear of the LORD prolongeth days: but the years of the wicked shall be shortened.

Prov. 10:28 The hope of the righteous shall be gladness: but the expectation of the wicked shall perish.

In verse 27 “days” of the righteous are contrasted with “years” of the wicked. Our life is but a watch in the night; even if we live to be age 100, it is as nothing when compared with eternity. The lesson is one of attitude. The attitude of the Christian is exemplified by the Apostle Paul, who wrote about the brevity of the present life. He looked to the future, which was 2,000 years away. In vision he was taken up to the third heaven, to the Kingdom Age. Although he was not allowed to speak about the things he saw, they were reflected in his writing, giving a depth of meaning. Compared with eternity, Paul described the present life as short. And so here in verse 27 the *present short time* (“the fear of the LORD prolongeth *days*”) is compared with *eternity* (“the *years* of the wicked shall be shortened”).

It is like a contradiction. In the final analysis, the years of the present life will be shortened for the wicked, but in the present life the wicked *seem* to be flourishing and prospering. What seems to be long term is actually short term when balanced against eternity. That is also true for the righteous—what seems to be long-term suffering is actually ephemeral when balanced against the blessings of eternity.

Verse 28 is related to verse 27 and is self-evident.

Prov. 10:29 The way of the LORD is strength to the upright: but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity.

Prov. 10:30 The righteous shall never be removed: but the wicked shall not inhabit the earth.

Verse 29: “The LORD is a stronghold to him whose way is upright, but destruction to evildoers” (RSV). In Egypt the ankh was used before Christianity came on the scene. It was a cross with a ring on the top. The ring symbolized “everlasting” and the cross “life”—ie, everlasting life through the cross. This illustrates that when the wheels of motion are in operation, the spirit realm can foresee things before they occur. Time is different for spirit beings. The spirit realm could see Christianity before it occurred because it was in operation. The principle would be like looking down on the earth and seeing a mountain with a single road going around it and cars going up that road; as the watchers from above saw the speed of the cars and a curve coming, they would know the cars would collide head-on. Hence they can prophesy that an event will occur in 10 seconds, 10 years, 20 years, etc. In regard to the ankh, it is *not a proof* of the lack of newness of the Cross as the channel of life but was a foregleam that was easily seen by those in the spirit realm. The fallen angels have the advantage of perspective and longevity of life.

Verse 30: “The righteous shall *never* be removed” even though they *appear* to be removed. They die, but they are eternal. Paul said of Abraham, who had died: “God is a God of the *living*.” In other words, Abraham will be *resurrected*; hence from God’s standpoint, He does

not speak to the dead but to the living. “The wicked shall not inhabit the earth,” but at present they seem to.

Prov. 10:31 The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom: but the froward tongue shall be cut out.

Prov. 10:32 The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable: but the mouth of the wicked speaketh frowardness.

Verse 31: “Frowardness” means perverseness. (“Froward” can also be thought of as “forward.”) A decision for Christ is the best thing we can do, but the world views it as the dumbest. A decision for Christ brings forth wisdom, but the froward tongue shall be cut out. If one who persecutes Christians is to be saved, *everything* will have to be recanted by that individual with retribution. The persecutor will have to confess his own stupidity and perverseness; he will have to negate it and suffer retribution.

Comment: The same principle applies to the brethren now. A public sin must be expiated with an open confession.

Truth and wisdom come out of the mouth of the righteous, but frowardness, foolishness, and reprobate words come from the wicked.

Verse 32: “The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable.” Be “swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (James 1:19). In other words, guard the tongue. Do not make careless statements. “The mouth of the wicked speaketh frowardness”—it has no inhibitions, no restraints, no governor.

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

Proverbs 1:8–33

Prov. 1:8 My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother:

“My son” is a *personal* address. The term shows a paternal interest. This masculine address would apply to consecrated females as well. All who are more than overcomers, male or female, will get the crown.

“Father” would be the Heavenly Father. “Mother” refers to the Sarah Covenant, “the law” covenant for the new creature, the mother of us all (Gal. 4:26). The commandments given to us as Christians are pictured as coming from a mother.

Solomon, who wrote this proverb, was probably concerned for Rehoboam, his son. The Lord took the advice and overruled it for the new creature. Similarly, sometimes David’s personal thoughts prophetically applied to Messiah. When David had these feelings, the Holy Spirit came upon him and guided them so that they could be spiritually applied. Thus unbeknownst to him, he spoke above his own wisdom.

Verse 8, then, is like a parent teaching a son or like a teacher instructing a student with a tender approach. A personal, from-the-heart confidentiality is implied in the expression

“my son.” And so the Heavenly Father addresses His children in this tender manner, as it were.

“My son, hear the instruction of thy father.” The word “instruction” in the Hebrew is *musar*, which means discipline. Down through history the father has usually been the one to administer corporal punishment when necessary. The mother’s role has been more along the line of reasoning with the child, of telling why correction was needed. Hence the mother tends to instruct the child from a rationale standpoint rather than from a disciplinary standpoint.

There is the expression “Spare the rod and spoil the child.” However, if a parent has ten children, perhaps only one or two need a rod at any time. The rest may be obedient. Hence it is the fractious, insubordinate child who needs corporal correction and discipline.

Comment: A Hebrew word other than *musar* is used only two times in the Book of Proverbs. The 25 or so times that “instruction” is used, it is a translation of the word *musar*.

From the standpoint of the Heavenly Father, “He chastens those whom He loves.” “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?” (Heb. 12:6,7). The Lord has given adequate information in His Word—all the instruction necessary for the person to be brought up in righteousness. But through providence He brings discipline (*providential instruction*) upon His children. In contrast, verbal instruction (counsel, advice, etc.) comes from the mother, the Sarah Covenant. Where necessary, the Father brings upon His children outer experiences (providences) to complement the instruction of the mother and to encourage the growth of the child to proper manhood or womanhood. All the instruction necessary for the Christian is in the New Testament—and in a secondary sense in the Old Testament.

Prov. 1:9 For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.

In the Hebrew an “ornament of grace” is a chaplet, diadem, or garland (RSV and NIV). All of these are like a thin crown that goes around the head. Also, “they shall be ... chains about thy neck.”

Comment: With the neck being a symbol of stubbornness, the chains would indicate complete submissiveness to the instruction of the Father and the teaching of the mother (the “they” of verse 9).

Reply: Acquiescence to the instruction and teaching will eventually be a blessing to the individual, but in the present life, they act like a governor, a restriction, a yoke. If obedient unto death, the instruction and teaching become a chaplet around the head and an ornament about the neck—a picture of glory. Joseph is a good illustration. The Pharaoh rewarded him with a chain of honor around his neck.

Comment: Proverbs 4:9 calls the “ornament of grace” a “crown of glory.” “She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a *crown of glory* shall she deliver to thee.”

The following Scriptures apply to the Father:

(Prov. 13:24) “He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes [as needed].”

(Prov. 19:18) “Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.”

(Prov. 22:15) “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.”

(Prov. 23:13,14) “Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod [as needed], he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell [*sheol*].” Some insubordination is implied. The disobedience has to be dealt with in the short term so that in the long term the child will not be headed for death, extinction. If an established bad character goes into the grave (*sheol*), the chances for getting life in the next age are diminished in proportion to the extent of waywardness. The parent bears responsibility for administering discipline when needed.

“Beatest him” would mean strong punishment. In the old days, a leather belt was used. Today such punishment is considered cruel and inhumane, but we are living in Satan’s world and his thinking predominates. Some of those who receive short sentences should get a caning. The beating is not to be unto death—“he shall not die.”

Comment: Under the Law, it was better for the parent to beat the child, for if the child continued in disobedience, the parent had to stone him.

Comment: For their good, God ended the reign of sin in Sodom and Gomorrah by destroying them.

Comment: If a dog is properly trained when a puppy, a small rope will be sufficient later on to restrain it rather than a heavy chain.

Comment: A shepherd may break the leg of a straying sheep and then carry the animal, keeping it close to him, until the leg heals. The sheep henceforth will not stray, having learned to depend on the shepherd.

Prov. 1:10 My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.

Comment: “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

Reply: When temptation arises, the Christian should have that attitude, desiring to be strengthened so as not to consent.

Notice the wording: “If sinners [plural] entice thee ...” The implication is that those who do the enticing are more confirmed in the sin, that this is a way of life for them (as opposed to just an isolated, sudden incident that arises through peculiar circumstances). It is a strange thing that when a group of individuals is incarcerated for wrongdoing, a minority may not have intended to commit the sin but were inveigled into the situation through a communal spirit. Peer pressure constrains an individual to do wrong.

Comment: A worldly example would be peer pressure to join a street gang.

Reply: Initiation may require criminal acts of varying degrees, let alone the acts committed after becoming a member.

Prov. 1:11 If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause:

“Let us lay wait for blood” indicates premeditated sin of a serious nature. Such urging by a gang or group should immediately alarm the Christian. Usually the enticement is more subtle.

When faced with temptation, we should ask, “If I succumb, what will this lead to?” This question will usually turn a gray matter into a black or white situation where the sin will be clearly discerned.

Prov. 1:12 Let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole, as those that go down into the pit:

In this description, the sinners are again seen as hardened, as confirmed in wrongdoing. There is a saying pertaining to death: “You can’t take it with you.” In other words, when a person dies, his properties and possessions are relinquished. He comes forth naked from the womb as a baby, and he goes into the grave naked (without possessions).

Prov. 1:13 We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil:

The main goal of the sinners was not to kill the individual but to seize his goods. *Greed* of the worst kind was the factor behind the person’s death. When parents instruct children what not to do, they generally tell of dire results in the case of disobedience. For example, “If you get near the car of a stranger, he may abduct or kill you.” Here an extreme case of group sin is presented.

(Hos. 4:2) “By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood.”

(Hos. 6:9) “And as troops of robbers wait for a man, so the company of priests murder in the way by consent: for they commit lewdness.”

(Hos. 7:1) “When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria: for they commit falsehood; and the thief cometh in, and the troop of robbers spoileth without.”

The Book of Hosea shows that crime was particularly prevalent in the northern kingdom. Lawlessness prevailed. History repeats itself—we are again experiencing this condition today.

To “swallow” one up “*alive*” (verse 12) means to murder a healthy person, to cut him off violently, and then to take advantage of the possessions remaining behind—to “find all [of the murdered person’s] precious substance” and to “fill ... [their own] houses with [the]

spoil." This is gang commitment. The leader of a gang is usually the most corrupt, the one who suggests and plans the crime; others follow him.

Prov. 1:14 Cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse:

Participation brings advantage, for the purse or spoil is divided among the gang members.

Because the example in verses 10–19 is along natural lines, many feel that the Book of Proverbs is not addressed to the Christian, but there are spiritual lessons and principles.

Q: Would an example be when Christians are too chummy with the world and thus are doing worldly things? They become entrapped, not realizing that worldly associations lead to worldly activities.

A: Yes, common sense should tell the Christian that becoming too chummy will lead to unprofitable and even destructive commitments and involvements.

Comment: Association with nominal churchianity is another pitfall.

Reply: Yes, there are rewards, but they are illegitimate for the true Christian. Supposed peace of mind, fellowship, and friendship that are not helpful to the new creature can be the result. Some truly consecrated Christians do not realize that in going to the nominal Church and a particular denomination, erroneous doctrines will have a permeating effect even though they are not taught every week (example: hellfire). Association on a regular basis gives tacit approval and endorsement to God-dishonoring doctrines. The Christian should ask in advance, "What will this lead to?" A defense mechanism is thus built up.

Comment: Another example would be where one allows himself to be stumbled by others, thus meriting Second Death.

Comment: Romans 3:15 speaks of the human race in general being swift to shed blood.

Reply: There are different ways of shedding blood. For instance, so far in Laodicea we do not see the severe physical persecution and being brought up before councils that characterized the other periods of the Church. Therefore, the Pastor reasoned that our peculiar day is more of a mental battle for the Christian. In principle, the persecution takes place in the mind through insults, indignities, isolation, etc. The *Manna* says that slander is murder. Irreparably damaging a person's character can be considered murder. We should have kind feelings towards others lest disparaging remarks pop out inadvertently. Of course, there are times when it is necessary to reveal certain matters about a person.

Comment: In the Dark Ages, those who labeled another as a heretic could confiscate his property and goods.

Reply: Yes, and sometimes getting the goods was the chief motive in making the accusation and in bearing false witness.

We are to be a *persecuted* Church, not a persecuting Church.

Prov. 1:15 My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path:

The “they” class are confirmed in sin—they have beaten a “path.” Putting a foot on that path is just the initial step. Refrain from that first step. Stay off the path. Being lonely and wanting fellowship or wanting recognition make the decision to refrain more difficult for the individual.

“My son” could be either the father or the mother speaking. The principles of righteousness should teach us to *watch where we are going*. How do we make straight paths for our feet? We must have some kind of counsel as to what to do and what not to do, and we must be careful not to get inveigled into something we would later regret.

Prov. 1:16 For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood.

Sin is a way of life with confirmed sinners. A safeguard for us is to ask, “Would Jesus do this? What would he do?” Also, we cannot allow our decisions to be made by a group. A group standard can be wrong. Then continue to reason: “If I join or do so-and-so, what could it lead to?” The conclusion will be “I would rather not get involved.” An old saying is pertinent: “Look before you leap.” “Watch before you take a step.” The desire for fellowship and recognition can emotionally lead us to take a step that will make us sorry.

Spiritual lesson for verse 1: “My son, hear the instruction of thy father [God and His Word], and forsake not the law of thy mother.” And prayer is necessary to bring us into a mood or condition of mind where we are more apt to listen to advice.

Prov. 1:17 Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird.

This verse is a continuation. (Verses 10–19 are all one sequel.) Solomon had said, “My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.” Then various blunt enticements and behaviors of the sinners were mentioned—actions and evils that were obvious. But other factors like peer pressure enter in. The gang spirit is to “Throw in your lot with us. Be a brother.” Group behavior has a certain magnetism that is very dangerous and can blind a person to the enormity of the suggestion. Now when verse 17 says, “Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird,” some have been confused as to the meaning.

Comment: Verse 17 is saying, “It is useless to spread a net when the birds are watching.”

Reply: If the bird is watching, if the bird is informed, then the net spread for its capture is in vain. Verse 17 is saying, “My son, in the light of the instruction I am giving you, lest you be entrapped, I am telling you what the situation is. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. When temptation arises from a group fellowship and/or peer pressure relationship, you will know immediately it is a trap. Get as far away from the temptation as possible.” But for innocent, unwary, unwarned individuals, the trap can be set right in front of them and they will not recognize it as a trap because they let their emotions affect their behavior. A mother will warn a child in advance that if a stranger stops his car, opens the door, and asks a question, the child is to stay as far away as possible. The informed child will then be alert if such a scenario occurs, recognize it as a danger, and thus avoid the trap. Solomon is saying, “If from what I am telling you, you have enough sense to be forewarned, then any net of enticement will be set in vain. You will see the net; you will be aware of the danger.”

Comment: The Companion Bible gives a different thought. “The sight of the net does not deter the birds. They still go on to their capture and death.” The next verse requires this sense. “So men go on in their evil ways, though they know it is to their own ruin.”

Reply: That is the alternate view, which Bro. Frank does not accept. If one does not heed the Lord’s instruction, he will become entrapped in the net set before him—even though he sees the net. But if the individual is forewarned and heeds the instruction, then when a group of sinners tries to entice him, he is aware that it is a net and he stays as far away as possible.

The word “bird” is not in the Hebrew; the word is “wing.” The “bird,” the “wing,” is the *individual* who will be entrapped—the simple one, the one who needs instruction, the son. “My son, if you listen to my instruction, then you are the bird that is aware the net is being set and you will avoid it. But if you do not heed my instruction, then you will be a trapped bird.”

Regarding the “wing,” the one who receives the instruction with obedience and understanding is like the bird, and the wing is the Word of God, the instruction of the Father to His simple ones who are in need of discretion and admonition. The birds on the wing are to respond to the Lord’s teaching. However, like the bird, we can become ensnared even though the evil is apparent. Because of peer pressure, we can let our emotions overtake us and want to be one of the gang. Once we are entrapped and part of the group, it is almost impossible to get out.

Prov. 1:18 And they lay wait for their own blood; they lurk privily for their own lives.

Verse 18 is speaking of the gang members who are robbers. They want goods and do not care if they kill a person to obtain them. Solomon is telling the one who is listening to his advice, “The very fact the gang members say, ‘Join us and share the profits,’ shows they have been living a life of crime. While they seem to be getting away with the crimes now, in the long term, they will be the victims. They have become addicted to a way of life from which they cannot extricate themselves, but they will not get away with their crimes. If you, my son, join them, you will be in that same position.”

“They lurk privily for their own lives.” In other words, for those who become addicted to crime in the present life, their chances for getting life in the Kingdom are greatly jeopardized. While sins will be forgiven in the Kingdom Age, those who willfully practice sin now will have more difficulty at that time, for they will have to retrace their steps in order to obtain salvation. Jesus died for *every* person, so all are guaranteed an opportunity to get life, but for those who constantly sow to the flesh with gross evils, their chances for life are zero—if they come to the point of incorrigibility.

Prov. 1:19 So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain; which taketh away the life of the owners thereof.

Verse 19 is not referring to Adamic death, for all so die. The reference is to eternal life being lost, to Second Death. Such sinners are jeopardizing their eternal salvation. When God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with the drastic method of fire from heaven, it was

for their own good. Had God not destroyed these two cities, a majority of the inhabitants would have become incorrigible in their sins.

Prov. 1:20 Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets:

Humanity cannot plead ignorance as an excuse for sin, *even if they have not heard the name of Christ*. How could God condemn and judge the world unless something was available to make them responsible? That is how the Apostle Paul reasons. To condemn a blind man for his blindness would mark the one doing the judging as unmerciful and unjust.

How does wisdom cry aloud in the streets? There are two kinds of wisdom: true wisdom and false wisdom (or folly). Both kinds of wisdom are personified as a woman, and both cry aloud in the streets, although verse 20 is referring to true wisdom. The false woman, the harlot, has her decoys and methods calling to humanity. Two messages go out: the true and the false. There are two sources of wisdom in the world: (1) God (and the Bible) and (2) Satan. The problem lies with the listener, who hears both kinds of wisdom. Does the individual respond to proper or improper advice?

Thus mankind cannot plead ignorance as far as right and wrong are concerned. They can plead ignorance about Jesus, but not about right and wrong. All have the light of nature testifying that there is a God, and all have a conscience to a greater or lesser extent. The heavens, the dew, the refreshing rain, the gentle breeze, the beautiful flowers—all are the reflection of a benevolent Creator.

Regarding conscience, Adam's perfect image has not been completely obliterated in fallen humanity. All are born with some degree of a moral conscience, the innate ability to know, in a general sense, the distinction between right and wrong.

Comment: We do not know to what extent the fallen angels influence the actions of people, say, in the tribes of deepest Africa. Nevertheless, the individuals themselves are responsible for not having resisted gross wrongs.

Reply: In the conscience are innate fears that serve as feelers of danger. When we are faced with an evil influence, there are antennae, as it were, that give some warning. The question is, do we respond to the warning or do we flee in fear?

There are two forces in the world: evil and good. Both are available to the individual, and how he responds is the issue. As consecrated Christians, we are fortunate that Christ has been made unto us wisdom. Hence we are walking in the path of life. But that does not mean that we cannot be ensnared. While to us certain things are blatant wrongs, there are also more subtle temptations to do wrong and injury, the principle being very much the same.

Comment: One example would be where an ecclesia makes a wrong decision that violates principle. There is a temptation to go along with the *group* decision and thus to take the easy, peaceful path.

Reply: It is dangerous for a consecrated person to say he or she does not want to hear anything that is controversial—to just pursue a path of peace. The Lord has not called us to be put into an antiseptic tank where there are no disease germs. Fighting against sin

gives us strength and helps us to develop character. If we should be defeated, we need to ask for forgiveness as well as strength so that the next time we will be more faithful.

Prov. 1:21 She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, saying,

The spiritual application would be “the city [of Christendom].” Two voices are publicly heard in Christendom: true wisdom and false wisdom.

Prov. 1:22 How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?

The three categories are (1) simple ones, (2) scorers, and (3) fools.

First, the simple ones. They are satisfied and in need of nothing—a criticism particularly of Laodicea.

Comment: The NIV has a footnote: “The Hebrew word rendered *simple* in Proverbs generally denotes one without moral direction and inclined to evil.” Simplicity can apply in a positive sense but not here.

The Bible tells us that we are all born and shapen in iniquity. We grow up from an infant, to a babe, to a child, to a teenager, to a young adult, to an adult, and to one in old age. We start out knowing nothing.

The “simple ones” in verse 22 have developed up to a certain level. The NIV brings out the *natural* standpoint. But on a *spiritual* level, applying to the consecrated, we are told not to let anyone deceive us away from the simplicity that is in Christ (2 Cor. 11:3). Unfortunately, some take this statement and abuse it. They are not interested in chronology, prophecy, etc., for these subjects cause divisions. They emphasize that Christ bought us, that our lives are joyous now, that we are guaranteed life in the future—but they do not recognize sin or the need for growth and development. Hebrews 5:13 refutes this type of thinking: “For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe [a simple one].” A leading elder said from the platform, with great enthusiasm, that continuing in the milk of the word was an evidence of maturity. That statement is completely contrary to Scripture. On another occasion that same elder said we should not seek to fellowship with studious brethren, for our Christianity is manifested when we go to the humble brethren who know little. The same attitude is shown by classes who study the *First Volume* over and over year after year. They stress the heart to the neglect of head knowledge, but both are needed. The Scriptures tell us to develop from a babe up to manhood.

The Apostle Paul continues on in Hebrews by listing the fundamentals of truth, telling us to *leave them and go on to more advanced truth*: “Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment” (Heb. 6:1,2). He also said he would like to tell more about the Melchisedec priesthood but could not because the brethren were still babes.

Next we will consider the “scorners.” Scorners (or mockers) are outwardly critical of others and they find fault with good advice. Scorners are bolder than the simple ones. Filled with self-esteem and self-confidence, they oppose the counsel and advice of true wisdom, and they refuse to listen to the Lord’s counsel. Thus they fail to make progress or grow in grace and knowledge. Scorners oppose wisdom per se or whomever wisdom is moving to pronounce her message.

Comment: Several verses in Jude bring this warning right down to our day in speaking about the bold, scorning element. “How that they told you there should be *mockers* in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts” (Jude 18). “Likewise also these ... *speak evil of dignities*” (Jude 8). “These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves *without fear*” (Jude 12).

Another form of scorning is being cynical.

The third category is “fools [who] hate knowledge.” The Scriptures tell us that only a fool says in his heart, “There is no God” (Psa. 14:1; 53:1). Some fools say this outwardly but not necessarily in their hearts. Because they like to be different and to be controversial, they will say, “What is the Bible? It was written by man. Why should we pay special heed to it?” Infidels say, “In this large universe how could the great God be interested in *little* earth and its *tiny* inhabitants?”

The three categories are in an ascending order of wrong: simple ones ⇒ scorners ⇒ fools. The fool is the worst category. The simple one does not want knowledge and the scorners mock knowledge, but the fool hates knowledge. Each category gets bolder and more active. In fact, the fool actively opposes truth.

Comment: Matthew 5:22 reads, “But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.” Calling one a fool seems to be the worst category.

Reply: For us to put another person in that category is one thing, but true Wisdom can do that.

Prov. 1:23 Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.

The Lord (Wisdom) is talking to simple ones, scorners, and/or fools—to those whose general demeanor is such. If per chance these people think and have a change of heart when they hear wisdom crying in the streets, God will help them in a very beneficial way. He will pour out His spirit on them. This is marvelous!—but how many heed the cry?

A brother who had been an atheist gave a testimony at a convention. He was a truck driver, and through the skin of his teeth, he was delivered from a terrible accident. As he sat stunned in his cab, he said, “Thank God!” But he had been teaching there was no God. He began thinking ... was his deliverance a miracle or a coincidence? Not long after that, a brother witnessed to him and the truck driver consecrated.

Comment: The NIV is good for verse 23: “If you had responded to my rebuke, I would have poured out my heart to you and made my thoughts known to you.” Jesus’ words in Matthew 23:37 are similar, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” Jesus applied the same principle to Israel at his First Advent.

Reply: Once the opportunity is turned down, the door is almost sealed, particularly if one *hates* knowledge. The Lord has called many, many people (“many are called”), and many respond but remain as babes.

Prov. 1:24 **Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;**

The unconsecrated in Christian lands are being particularly addressed in verses 24–32.

The first part of Chapter 1 showed that people are apprised of the existence of God through nature. Next comes the Word of God. Then the chapter addresses those who have heeded the Word but warns them of the dangers of the way, especially the babes in Christ. Now the chapter is beginning to address those who have not made a consecration.

The two parts of this verse (“I have called, and ye refused” and “I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded”) imply that a person gets more than one opportunity in life to change his or her course through some kind of providence. This is especially true in the so-called Christian nations.

In the future no one will be able to say, “Why didn’t you tell me?” Even in non-Christian nations, God can still judge them in the light of conscience and nature.

Comment: Regarding being willingly ignorant, Noah gave a message that was not heeded. In our day, groups other than Bible Students preach that a judgment day is coming. This should lead all hearers to investigate the subject, but it does not. When the feet members, give their final message, their words will not be heeded either. These are opportunities from the Lord for the unconsecrated to listen.

Reply: In other words, this principle of announcing judgments in advance has been ever operative—in the first dispensation prior to the Flood, down through the age, and in our day.

Comment: Isaiah 65:12 gives the principle: “Therefore will I number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter: because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear; but did evil before mine eyes, and did choose that wherein I delighted not.”

Reply: Of course Isaiah 65:12 is addressed to the Jewish nation, who were ostensibly God’s people. As time went on, they forgot and neglected their covenant with the Lord. Those in Christendom, too, are professedly God’s people, although many of them have not made a consecration to the Lord. Nevertheless, in both cases there is responsibility.

It is interesting to consider the different methods or the mechanics used for witnessing down through the ages. Noah's witnessing reached only those within the range of his voice. In the 120 years prior to the Flood, most of Noah's time was preoccupied in building the Ark. However, during that time, he did warn about the Flood and was a "preacher of righteousness." At that time, the civilized portion of the world was much smaller, but how could Noah have witnessed to so many? The peculiarity of building an Ark and prophesying about a Flood when it had not even rained attracted people to see the "crazy fellow who is building a huge vessel." During the Jewish Age, the method used was for prophets to go to the gate of the city, a strategic location through which all who were entering or exiting the city had to pass. When the Temple was built, there were Temple gates as well as the city gate for preaching a message. In the Gospel Age, missionaries such as the Apostle Paul carried the message to other nations. After many centuries, the printing press resulted in printed matter that could be sold and distributed. Today we have the mails, television, the computer, etc. The Adversary uses other techniques in our day to countermand the witnessing influence through the media. One is to use the label "cult."

Prov. 1:25 But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof:

Here is a class who have not responded yet have received reproof. They are willingly ignorant. The Bible is available in the library and in most homes and institutions, but in what way has this unconsecrated class received reproof?

Comment: The sobering experiences of life should be enough to get a thinking person to search out God.

Comment: Throughout history the Lord has sent prophets, apostles, teachers, etc.

Reply: In addition to being made cognizant of good and evil from the conscience each person possesses, there have been prophets and the Bible. Prior to the invention of the printing press, which was most of the Gospel Age, little written material was available, but there were expounders of truth.

Prov. 1:26 I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh;

Comment: This verse brings to mind Psalm 2:4, "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision."

Reply: Yes, and that is especially true at the end of the age. Following the First Advent and the application to Jesus, a judgment came on the Jewish nation in AD 69.

Comment: If we are to love righteousness and hate iniquity and this is God's thinking (to "laugh at ... [retributive] calamity"), it shows that when these judgments do come—in whatever age—the truly consecrated should try to see the judgment from God's standpoint and know that it is necessary even if it brings a lot of suffering.

The technique of warning of a coming judgment if the message was not heeded was used by the minor prophets.

Some picture God as being so superior that He has no emotions, but that is not true. He has mercy, patience, tenderness, etc., but He also can mock and laugh at the frustration of individuals. We must believe what the Scripture says of Him: "I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh." His plan will be very effective and will work out with the degree of success He intends. And there will be no deviation. Nevertheless, He has emotions.

Comment: This would be like a reversal of roles. "You laughed at and mocked me. Now I am laughing at your calamity [retribution]."

The mocking was demonstrated in an outstanding way by Elijah during his contest with the false prophets of Baal. Elijah was thoroughly right in his words and actions; he had the true spirit of God. The contest was set to reveal that the true God would be the One who would answer by fire. Elijah mocked: "Perhaps your god is on a journey! Or perhaps he is sleeping!"

Prov. 1:27 When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you.

Prov. 1:28 Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me:

Verses 27 and 28 are a divine principle. There comes a point of no return from the standpoint of God's mercy and forgiveness. If the individual continually does not heed and keeps refusing God's providence, message, etc., because he feels cost and sacrifice are involved and he prefers to stay in an unconsecrated state with worldly attractions and pleasures, then later on, when calamities occur and it becomes more convenient to look for mercy, it will be too late. This principle can be considered from an individual standpoint or from a group standpoint. Sometimes the Lord sends poverty, pain, sickness, etc., as instructive agents to make a person think twice before it becomes the point of no return. However, if the individual does not heed in spite of a further extension of favor and opportunity through providences, then he will not change.

Comment: An example of this principle would be the Flood.

Reply: We can imagine how those outside the Ark tried in vain to get in when the heavy rains began. The slime and pitch on the outside emphasized the futility of trying to get in the Ark after the door was closed.

There are different types of judgment, however. Some are to the point of perishing in Second Death, and others are just lost opportunities for individuals who will walk up the highway of holiness in the Kingdom. For example, Esau lost the spiritual inheritance for a mess of pottage.

Leeser's says, "They shall seek me *earnestly*." The RSV says, "They will seek me *diligently*." "Earnestly" and "diligently" are the correct thought. The KJV cannot be right because to seek the Lord "*early*" would be commendable. Here they are seeking the Lord *late* but earnestly.

Prov. 1:29 For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD:

“They hated knowledge.” This phrase was used in verses 7 and 22. Fools hate knowledge.

They “did not choose the fear of the LORD” because they did not want to give up anything and they preferred to live for self. The Kingdom will not be a “happifying” experience for many of the rich in the present life when they come forth from the tomb and have such a reversal of fortune. They will constantly compare the present with the former and will long for the former conditions. With such an attitude, some will live into the Little Season by obeying only through prudence.

Comment: Another reason for not consecrating is to retain the friendship and respect of worldly friends.

Prov. 1:30 They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof.

Prov. 1:31 Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.

Retribution is indicated. Those who do wickedly know they are doing so, but they enjoy it. However, many have a subconscious fear of a possible future judgment. As a general principle, the very evil that one inflicts on others is, in turn, inflicted upon him. “What a man sows, that shall he reap” means not only that a judgment will come but that it is usually of a similar kind.

Prov. 1:32 For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.

“The turning away of the simple shall slay them.” In this chapter, it was the simple who were enticed into evil. Although they did not deliberately choose evil, they responded to evil and fell. They found themselves victimized and ensnared. Although they were entrapped, although their hearts were not intent on doing evil, they subsequently found it impossible to retrace their steps and reverse their course. Hence they continued on in their entrapment.

“The prosperity of fools shall destroy them.” The Masoretic reads, “The *confidence* of fools shall destroy them.” “Confidence” is the correct thought. What is the point?

Comment: This is a more serious or dangerous condition than what happens to the simple. The fools are really damaging their characters.

Proverbs 14:12 reads, “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” Confident fools are given to inordinate behavior that leads to Second Death. Obvious sins are easy to perceive, generally speaking, but babes in Christ could be stumbled by them. For the less obvious sins, those in the gray area, more development is required to recognize their subtlety. Babes are especially susceptible to these sins because they do not perceive them as sins. On the other hand, the mature have exercised their minds to discern between good and evil. If, in the overall picture, Christians respond favorably in resisting the evil, they will grow stronger and stronger in the faith, and their eye of perception will become clearer and clearer in understanding the subtleties of sin.

The simple are turned away in the court system. This verse is addressing problems of the unconsecrated. They get ensnared into involvement with a criminal element, but then later turn king's evidence or plea bargain.

Hardened sinners become so accustomed to their evil way of life that it is habitual and enjoyable to them. Thus, in the final analysis, they too are entrapped. The judgment will surely come in due time, either in this life or the next.

Prov. 1:33 But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.

Hearkening unto the Lord is not just one act. The thought is: "If you initially respond to my leading, and then *continue* to hearken unto me, you can reach a state where you become inured to evil." We should all strive to find evil more and more repugnant. Our desire to hate evil becomes a protection because our flesh, the world, and the devil try to make us succumb. As we hearken more and more to the Lord, we become stronger and stronger in the faith and get measurable, proportionate protection from evil. We should try to keep the conscience as tender as possible. If we are punished for a purported wrong, at least we have peace of mind.

Comment: John 14:27 reads, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Reply: That is the hope, promise, and assurance of the Christian.

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

Proverbs 2

Prov. 2:1 My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee;

Chapter 2 is largely a repetition of the principles enunciated in Chapter 1. The first chapter begins with the call of God, which is available to all mankind through nature. "The heavens declare the glory of God" in *international* language (Psa. 19:1). No one has an excuse for not being aware of God's existence because all nature speaks. The hand that made us is divine; the stars sing as they shine.

While the heavens are an international sign language, yet the Bible is not available to all people despite the good efforts of Bible societies. However, if one really wants to find God, the Word of God will come to him. God's providence will see to it that the individual is led to the holy Scriptures.

When one desires "to *know*" more about the intelligent Creator revealed in nature, the next question is where "wisdom and instruction" can be found (Prov. 1:2). When one is truly searching for God that haply he may find Him, the next step is "to *perceive* the words of understanding" (Acts 17:27; Prov. 1:2), and those "words of understanding" are in the Bible. But this is only the beginning. The next step is "to *receive* the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity" (Prov. 1:3). In other words, after perceiving that the Bible is the Word of God, one hearkens to it, submits to it—that is, one *makes a consecration*. Then Chapter 1 goes on to show the development of the Christian, the

various steps that are to follow consecration. Chapter 2, on the other hand, starts with those who have *already made a consecration*. The consecrated are addressed as “my son” (or “my daughter”). Chapter 2 tells us that it is one thing to consecrate—to believe that there is a God and that the Bible is His Word—but more is required. One must “receive ... [God’s] words” and “hide ... [His] commandments” (Prov. 2:1).

What does it mean to “hide my commandments with thee”? To lay up, store up, or *treasure* God’s commandments—to *examine them frequently*.

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

“Hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom.” In the Hebrew, the second half of verse 2 reads: “and *extend* thine heart to understanding.” It is one thing to hearken (“Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; ... So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty”—Psa. 45:10,11), but there is more. Incline the *ear* to receive instruction, and extend the *heart*. The ear pertains to the head, whereas the heart is a deeper affection.

Comment: Inclining the ear unto wisdom gives the thought of intensity, *intense interest*. One listens intently in order to hear everything wisdom has to say.

Reply: Yes, it is as if a microphone is given to one testifying so that every word can be heard. When one inclines his ear, he wants to hear everything the Lord has to say.

Comment: Psalm 119:33–36 echoes the same sentiments: “Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart. Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight. Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.”

Reply: Psalm 119 is the testimony of David himself; in it he lays bare his heart. If David was a man after God’s own heart, then we will be blessed in proportion as we hearken to these words.

Comment: Two sentences in the *Expanded Comments* are very good: “The Lord will bless every *real* truth-seeker. For such alone truth was written, to such alone it will be revealed.”

Reply: Yes, the Lord will bless those who truly hunger for knowledge of Him.

Prov. 2:3 Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding;

“Crying” and “lifting up the voice” suggest prayer, *earnest prayer*.

Prov. 2:4 If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures;

To seek wisdom “as silver” and to search for wisdom “as for hid treasures” would indicate perseverance, diligence, effort, *work*. If we are praying (even praying aloud) and asking the Lord for wisdom, we cannot then just sit back and wait and expect to find

wisdom. The Lord is willing to give that understanding, but we must exert effort: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally [generously], and upbraideth not [one who makes such a request]; and it [wisdom] shall be given him” (James 1:5). When Daniel inquired for wisdom, he was called “greatly beloved” even though it was not time for the revealing of such truth.

Comment: Some will spend a lifetime searching for literal buried treasure, expending all of their money and energy.

(Matt. 13:44) “The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.” Notice that when the man found the treasure, he hid it. When we find God’s commandments, we are to hide them in our hearts.

With the voice one cries to the Lord for understanding, and then, in harmony with that prayer, he searches. Silver is not found on the surface of the ground but through diligent effort. The person starts by looking for telltale signs and hearkening to reports of areas where silver has already been found. Then the digging begins and looking for a vein of silver. When a vein is found, the person follows it, *continuing* to dig and expending *much effort*. And so it is with us in our ongoing search for truth—we must search the Scriptures *daily* (not occasionally) as for “hid treasures.”

Another analogy is the search for sunken treasure. Some people research information on shipwrecks in which gold and silver were part of the cargo. They obtain a map and follow it diligently, plumbing the depths day after day in search of the treasure.

The start of Chapter 2 pertains to those who are already consecrated rather than, as in the beginning of Chapter 1, to the unconsecrated. For the consecrated, the search continues for deeper truths, for a closer walk with God. With diligence one must incline the ear, extend the heart, and search for wisdom as for hidden treasure. The reward will be deeper understanding, as expressed in verse 5.

Comment: We are told that the word of the Lord is like silver refined seven times. “The words of the LORD are pure words: as *silver* tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times” (Psa. 12:6). Also, Psalm 66:10 says, “For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as *silver* is tried.” Silver has a much higher melting temperature than gold. Hence it is more difficult to refine and purify.

Prov. 2:5 Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.

To know God, we must *daily* apply ourselves to His Word and obey its precepts. If we diligently apply ourselves *for years*, then we shall “understand the fear of the LORD [Jehovah], and find the knowledge of God.” Even after we find the vein of silver, much work remains to be done. We should faithfully seek after wisdom, panting as a hart for water brooks to have daily sustenance and strengthening from God’s Word.

The problem with many Christians is that when they get a certain quantity of knowledge, they are satisfied. True, Jesus has satisfied, but that does not mean we can sit down and rest. We must FOLLOW him wherever he leads us.

Comment: Silver is used instead of gold because silver represents truth and because wisdom and truth are closely related.

Reply: Gold (the divine nature) is the goal! God promises we will obtain the prize of the high calling if we follow His instructions.

Notice that the word “treasures” is plural (verse 4). And so the Lord rewards those who diligently seek Him by providing nuggets of truth from time from time. Mountains of rock and debris must be searched in order to obtain a little gold, and doing this entails much sacrifice and effort.

Prov. 2:6 For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.

The word “wisdom” (Hebrew *chokmah*) that is frequently used in the Book of Proverbs is a more comprehensive term. There are many facets of wisdom. God is the source of wisdom; it flows forth “out of His mouth” (ie, out of the *Bible*). All of our hopes are contained in the Holy Scriptures through Jesus.

Prov. 2:7 He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly.

God “layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous.” The word “wisdom” in this verse is not the same Hebrew word as in verse 6. “Sound wisdom” is *practical* wisdom. The thought in Hebrew is *substantial* wisdom, and that which is practical is substantial—there is a reality to it. “Faith is the *substance* of things hoped for” *even in the present life* because we get a down payment as we obey the Lord and His instruction in daily living (Heb. 11:1).

God “is a buckler [a shield] to them that walk uprightly.”

Prov. 2:8 He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints.

This verse suggests that Chapter 2 is addressed to a *consecrated* class: “his saints.” Many consider the Book of Proverbs to be natural wisdom. It is natural wisdom—in fact, *very profound* natural wisdom—but we, as Christians, should read “my son” (Prov. 2:1) as an address to the *consecrated*.

God guards the “paths of judgment.” The “paths of judgment” would be providences and experiences—and sometimes chastenings. The Pastor said, “God’s providences met with obedience and trust constitute the means whereby we are *progressively* justified.” True, we are justified at consecration, but there are degrees of development of justification. The experiences that come on God’s people are tests. We are tested to see if we really love the Lord our God with all our hearts, minds, souls, and strength. Even if one fails in a test or experience, if that individual recognizes his deficiency and repents, asks for forgiveness, and tries to reform, that very failure can work for good. One should not become disheartened, for “a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again” (Prov. 24:16).

Comment: “Keeping the paths of judgment” is a reminder of the Garden of Eden. After Adam and Eve were expelled, the Lord kept the way of the tree of life (Gen. 3:24). God

protected or guarded the access way lest anyone enter the garden and partake of the tree of life.

Reply: Enoch and Elijah were subsequently put in the Garden of Eden. Spiritually speaking, we are in the Garden of Eden, feeding on the tree of life (the Cross and what it exemplifies).

God protects the “way of his saints.” In the book *Pilgrim’s Progress*, Pilgrim was trying to get to the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem. En route he was presented with all kinds of temptations, seductions, and pitfalls. For example, chained lions along the path almost devoured him. Thus it takes faith to keep pressing on in the narrow way when the Adversary is roaring.

Prov. 2:9 Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path.

Verse 9 sums up verses 1–9. If one does all the things mentioned in verses 1–8, then he shall be victorious in understanding “righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path.” “Righteousness, justice, and equity” remind us of the third step of wisdom in Proverbs 1:3, “To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity.” Our goal is to attain the wisdom, fear, and love of God.

“Righteousness, and judgment, and equity” are basically the same word in Hebrew. Proverbs 1:3 holds these out as a goal, hope, or promise in the quest for understanding God. Similarly, each of the messages to the seven churches in the Book of Revelation ends with a promise to be given to those who are faithful unto death.

We must exercise faith with works in the sense that faith without works is dead. Without works, faith is merely a superficial belief (James 2:17).

We must develop the understanding of “righteousness, and judgment, and equity” if we are to be the priests, kings, prophets (teachers), and judges of the next age. We practice in the present life. If faithful and diligent, we begin to “understand” righteousness, judgment, and equity.

The Book of Proverbs concentrates on the inner man, the heart condition. We are striving to have a heart and mind like God and Jesus. With every step of obedience comes a reward of knowledge. When the Israelites entered Canaan, the promise was that every step they took in faith and confidence in God would be rewarded. In other words, we are to lay hold of the promises and make progress.

Comment: Righteousness, judgment, and equity seem to be three aspects in understanding right and wrong. Having the wisdom to understand right and wrong helps us to know which path to take in our Christian walk.

“Righteousness” is understanding what justice is. “Judgment” is the next step: the carrying out or enactment of justice. There are different levels of development in judging a matter. For instance, consider the stages in a court trial. First, information is collected to bring out the facts and the background and to understand both sides. Next the information is weighed. The verdict follows, and then comes the sentence.

Certain observations are in order. If faithful in verses 1–9, we will get the rewards of paths of pleasantness both in the present life and in the next life. The end of the chapter (verses 12–22) tells why wisdom is important: to keep us from falling into the pit. A man and a woman are shown, as follows:

1. The man is trying to deceive by *doctrine* and lead others astray from the right path (verses 12 and 13). True wisdom is needed lest we be deceived by wrong doctrine out of the mouths of *consecrated* teachers, leaders, and friends, whose teachings lead to forsaking the way of sacrifice and going off in other directions. We must have wisdom and understanding, with obedience, in order to detect and avoid the pitfall of erroneous doctrine.
2. The woman pertains to *morals*, enticement along fleshly lines. Earlier in the Harvest period, there was a wholesomeness in society, generally speaking. Even those in the world were ashamed to do certain things. At that time some of the brethren said: “Adultery and sexual sins of the flesh will never be a problem for the Christian because they are so obviously wrong. There is no danger of the Christian falling along these lines.” But the attraction of the flesh has *always* been a temptation; it has been a tool of Satan all down through history. Many have forsaken their consecrations because of the pleasures of the flesh. We must perceive and shun such temptations and seductions as far as possible. On a higher level, the woman pictures the false Church.

Thus the man is a teacher of doctrine, but the woman is seductive in two ways: (1) according to the natural flesh and (2) through the teaching of the false Church. What is the attraction of the nominal Church? Companionship, fellowship, numbers, and convenient doctrines that make life not too hard. One can do what he wants and then confess his sins to the priest; that is a form of deception or hypocrisy.

Comment: Papacy’s being pictured as a harlot fits well with the seductive woman here in Proverbs.

Comment: Verse 16 talks about how the woman entices. She “flattereth with her words.” One example of “flattery” in the nominal Church is the teaching of eternal security: once in grace, always in grace. “Just believe in Jesus and be saved” is a form of flattery because it makes one a “Christian.”

Reply: Yes, “once saved, always saved” is a very dangerous teaching.

Notice that both the man and the woman forsook the way (Prov. 2:12,13,16,17). They were once in the way but subsequently forsook it. Hence the “woman” can be a consecrated sister who seduces.

The practical lesson of verses 1–9 is that as we lay up treasures in heaven day by day, as temptations come to the mind, decision-making is required: whether to obey or to disobey. As the treasures increase in heaven, the individual is not as apt to go astray because he is weighing the consequences: life, the high calling, to see God, to see Jesus, to reign with him. When doctrinal deceptions come, those who have been seeking for truth as for hid treasures will not succumb. The ways of truth are ways of pleasantness.

Chapter 1 laid out a broad spectrum or summary outline of the way of truth. Chapters 2–5 pick up threads of Chapter 1 and expand upon them. It is important to realize that Chapter 2 pertains to those who are already consecrated and the importance of making progress. No matter how long we have been consecrated, we should still be panting for truth as the hart pants for water brooks in the desert. We should so desire truth that if we do not have it, we miss it. “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Heb. 10:25).

Q: Several times it was stated that verse 9 is a summary statement. It begins with the words “Then shalt thou understand.” Verse 5 also starts with those words: “*Then shalt thou understand* the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.” Therefore, wouldn’t verse 5 also be a summary statement? And wouldn’t verse 5 tie in with verse 7 of the first chapter, which reads, “The fear of the LORD is the principal part of wisdom”? Doesn’t the summary statement in verse 5 verify the statement in Chapter 1 that obtaining the knowledge or wisdom of God is a *process*?

A: Yes.

Prov. 2:10 When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul;

Verse 10 marks a break in thought. Verses 10–15 pertain to the evil man, and verses 16–19 tell of the strange woman.

Progression is shown. Wisdom has been entering into the heart for some time in a developmental manner and has now reached a stage in which it is pleasant to the soul and guards one from temptation (verse 11).

Prov. 2:11 Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee:

When one has laid up or accumulated treasures in heaven for a while, as the scale tips more and more to heavenly things, the individual is aware that temptations of short-term pleasure would adversely affect long-term benefits. The result is discretion to realize what would be sacrificed or lost by some foolish act, such as Esau selling his birthright for a mess of pottage. The laying up of wisdom helps one who is confronted with temptations to realize what would be lost by going off the beaten path.

Prov. 2:12 To deliver thee from the way of the evil man, from the man that speaketh froward things;

Who is the “evil man”?

Comment: The NIV says, “Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men, from men whose words are perverse.” Wisdom delivers one from evil actions and evil words.

Reply: In other words, wisdom delivers one from false doctrines, which are deceptive “words.”

Q: Could the “evil man” be oneself if we do not abide by the instruction we receive?

A: That option remains open, for “man” is a supplied word. Thus the evil could be that which is residual either in one’s own fallen nature or in someone else’s.

Prov. 2:13 Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness;

Notice that the evil one was previously consecrated: he has left “the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness.” None are upright except the justified; only the consecrated can be spoken of as being just. Hence this wisdom is not just worldly wisdom. The Book of Proverbs is much more than just shrewd advice given to people in general. This book is spiritual and it applies to the consecrated.

Here is a consecrated individual who is not only being deceived himself but is an instrument of deception to others. Thus the unwary can be deceived by the doctrine and behavior of those who are not walking properly in the way of uprightness.

The King James Version gives the impression of a sudden, radical departure from the “paths of uprightness” into utter “darkness,” but that is not the thought. The departure would take place in a gradual manner but then manifest itself when it is openly expressed. The departure is preceded by a changing condition in the heart, mind, or will of the individual. In time the change becomes a more open manifestation that can be discerned by those who are obeying the path of wisdom, by those who have been instructed in the way of wisdom to discern the wrong. There is a split in the path: one is the way of uprightness and the other is the way of darkness. The departure can be slight at first, but it is a departure going in the way of darkness.

Prov. 2:14 Who rejoice to do evil, and delight in the frowardness of the wicked;

The thought is not that one says, “I delight to do evil; I know this is wrong, but I do not care,” for such a bold statement would not be a deception to others. There is a marked distinction between black and white, but a tint or shade of gray is more difficult to discern. Verse 14 indicates that the evil person, whoever he might be, is now more confirmed in his thinking. He thinks the evil is quite all right; the way seems more pleasurable and he is not ashamed.

Q: Would Lot’s wife be an example?

A: Her thinking led to an overt act of disobedience, but the tugging in her heart existed much earlier. When she was extricated from the city by the two angels, her heart was not fully in accord, as was subsequently manifested.

To “delight in the frowardness of the wicked” would fit the Scripture “there is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof is death.” To “seem right” would mean that the wrong being committed is justified by the individual. It is a form of self-justification.

These verses are leading up to the manner in which temptation comes to a person. Temptation starts with *wrong thinking*, for wrong that is harbored in the mind or heart increases the temptation. Resistance to wrongdoing becomes nil, and the temptation overcomes the individual.

Prov. 2:15 Whose ways are crooked, and they froward in their paths:

The man here leads to the woman. As we continue and find out about the woman and then consider the man and the woman together, the particular problem of this chapter will become more meaningful.

Prov. 2:16 To deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the stranger which flattereth with her words;**Prov. 2:17 Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God.**

What about the “strange woman?”

Comment: The NIV says in verse 16, “It will save you also from the adulteress.” Would this be from the aspect of the nominal system with the adulteress being Jezebel?

Reply: For other reasons not yet considered, the application here would be more a literal one. Years ago one of the brethren regularly preached the truth to prisoners. After a while he gained recognition as the chaplain. In time he was even given a clerical robe. He subsequently confessed to several brethren that there was a tug-of-war of desire for recognition and for wearing the garment, and he asked, “Is what I am doing proper?” The inappropriateness of what was happening was evident, for he was forsaking meetings and conventions for the more appealing “honorable” type of service. This case is an example of getting pleasure from a wrong with the result that the mind gets confused and begins to reason: “Maybe this type of service is not so bad. After all, I am doing a service for the Lord.” But the effect was harmful.

The effect of true wisdom will “deliver” the individual (the “my son” or “my daughter” class) from the way of the evil man and from the strange woman. One who has the guard or protection of sound wisdom, of understanding and discretion, will be safeguarded from the evil man and the strange woman. In addition, there is a relationship between the two. The strange woman has forsaken “the guide of her youth.” Like the evil man, the strange woman is also a consecrated individual who has left the way.

The strange woman “flattereth with her words.” In her current condition, she is “strange,” but when she was formerly with the Lord, she was not strange. In other words, she has become *estranged*. She departed from the way of truth and took the strange or wrong path, forsaking “the guide of her youth” and forgetting “the covenant of her God.”

Verse 17a in the New International Version reads, “Who has left the *partner* of her youth,” giving the thought of her husband. The latter part of the verse shows her relationship with God: “and ignored the covenant she made before God.” The thought is that this pitfall is not for the single consecrated man or the single consecrated woman, but it affects married couples. In other words, marriage is a bona fide, God-recognized relationship that can be broken only in cases of adultery or fornication (a broader term including very serious abnormalities). Under such circumstances the guiltless spouse is free to seek a divorce.

Q: Can the husband be Christ, referring to the espousal of the consecrated to him? The individual may not be grossly sinning but simply forgets his or her consecration in the sense of living a worldly life.

A: More definition is needed, for sometimes one's going back into the world is merely a perception and not a reality. Elsewhere the Scriptures do expound on the subject. In other words, probably more people who have consecrated go out of the truth and into Second Death because of adultery, the flesh, than for any other reason. The flesh is our worst problem, for we are in it at all times. "We have this treasure in *earthen vessels*" (2 Cor. 4:7). We are born in sin and shaped in iniquity (Psa. 51:5). Our struggle against the flesh can be a mental, moral, and/or physical battle. He who rules his own spirit is better than a general who takes a city (Prov. 16:32). As one becomes more immersed into the thinking, mind, and Word of God, the better are his or her chances of becoming victorious. The Bible covers every phase of life.

Comment: In 1 Thessalonians 4:6, the Apostle Paul warns, "That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified."

Comment: The defrauding would be not only in money matters but also along the lines of the flesh and adultery.

Comment: This chapter is a good contrast between the importance of an intellectual understanding of the Lord's commandments regarding wisdom and the emotional pursuit of an adulterous woman.

Reply: When properly understood, wisdom is a development not only of the intellect but also of the emotions. We must have reverence for God and admire Him, His thinking, and His dealings with others and with us personally. Rather than just obey a commandment, His law should be written in our hearts so that besetments and deceptions become trivial when compared with our desire to serve and know Him more deeply.

Reading about the wicked one delighting in his own frowardness brings to mind the thought that one of the most deceptive subjects today is love. What is it to love the brethren? Jesus said to "Love one another," but in what way? The Apostle John enunciated the principles of love in his epistles. Sometimes love properly expresses itself in hatred—we are to hate the wrong yet guard against vindictiveness. The other extreme from vindictiveness is where love becomes liberality, which is a weakness. The proper course is a middle ground in between. We are to love righteousness and hate iniquity. Jesus was rewarded because he achieved this dual development (Heb. 1:9). Unfortunately, one can feel fully comfortable in a misconception of the subject and a pursuing of the wrong path. We all need continual instruction and prayer that we have the correct perception on this subject and that we are not led astray by the ingenuousness of the mind, which can justify almost any course.

Comment: Ecclesiastes 7:25,26 reads, "I applied mine heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of things, and to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness: And I find more bitter than death the woman, whose heart is

snare and nets, and her hands as bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her."

Reply: Over long years of consecration, we have seen many go out of the truth. We are in a marathon race. Some who were exceptionally zealous in the beginning have burned out. They relied on their enthusiasm, efforts, drive, and joy but not on the Word of God.

Prov. 2:18 For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead.

Prov. 2:19 None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life.

The destiny of those who are so deceived is very unfavorable. The seventh chapter of Proverbs repeats the same story and tells that such a departure is the path to Second Death. This departure is on an individual or personal level. In one sense it has nothing to do with nominal Babylon, but in another sense it does. Therefore, both applications are helpful.

The nominal Church application will be considered. The danger of Second Death is for those who have left the nominal Church for present truth and then return to it with the doctrines of hellfire and the Trinity. After being in covenant relationship with God, such a course is very dangerous. But the literal application of an adulteress woman is equally important.

Her paths *incline* "unto death, and her paths unto the dead." Rescue is still a possibility, but when one goes back into the system and begins to reside there, the path leads down and down to the pit of everlasting (Second) death, with rescue becoming more and more unlikely as time goes on. The longer the path is trod, the more the person is in the chains of everlasting darkness.

"None that go unto her return again." In other words, the percentage of those who are rescued is very, very small. The longer one goes downward, the less are the chances of retrieval. Numerically speaking, it is a seemingly hopeless situation for those who do not wake up and take immediate action, asking for deliverance right away.

Prov. 2:20 That thou mayest walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous.

Verses 20 and 21 are the happy end or benefit of properly received wisdom: one is delivered from the evil man and the evil woman. The way of the evil man seems pleasant to him (verse 14), but true wisdom brings true pleasantness.

Prov. 2:21 For the upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it,

"The perfect" are the consecrated who maintain integrity of purpose. Our wills can be perfect but not our deeds; hence even those who faithfully keep on the right path need the robe of Christ's righteousness. "The upright shall dwell in the [Beulah] land," the land beyond Jordan, the Promised Land. "The perfect [those who are faithful unto death, those who have a maturity of character and thus do not leave the path of righteousness] shall remain in it [the heavenly land of promise]."

Comment: With the first seven chapters of Proverbs, the adulterous woman is mentioned four times (2:16–19; 5:3–14; 6:24–32; and 7:6–23).

Reply: Yes, the repetition shows the importance of the application as a warning to the consecrated.

Prov. 2:22 **But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it.**

God's purpose regarding the Kingdom is to remove the incorrigible transgressors from the land of uprightness. In the Gospel Age, the same work is taking place among the currently consecrated.

The introduction of both the evil man and the evil woman keeps the discussion from being one-sided. If either a consecrated brother or a consecrated sister leaves the way of truth, he or she is not fit for the inheritance of the saints in light. The pitfall is a danger to both genders. Both can go astray and become estranged from their covenant relationship with the Lord.

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

Proverbs 3

Prov. 3:1 **My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments:**

As with Chapter 2, this chapter opens up with the words "My son."

Two prominent words stand out: "law" and "commandments." The "law," though singular in form, is collective in meaning.

Comment: The NIV uses "teachings" instead of "law," which broadens the thought to both New and Old Testaments.

Reply: The Hebrew word is *torah*, which is an all-embracing word.

Two other words stand out: "forget not" and "keep." To "forget not" would be the *mental* remembrance; the "keeping" would pertain to the heart. This is the proper procedure: head first, the heart following. We must rightly divide the Word of truth before we assimilate it. This verse seems to indicate that with each step of knowledge *and obedience*, grace is the reward. A step of knowledge, a step of grace, a step of knowledge, a step of grace, etc., going from glory to glory.

"Let thine heart keep my commandments." How can we keep God's commandments unless we remember the law? (The "law" and "commandments" are synonymous terms here.) Mentioning the heart means we should go beyond *duty* love. *Heart* love is *delighting* to do God's will. *Duty* love is obeying because God so instructed and we do not want to disobey Him. As we grow from babes to youths to adults, we must go through duty love.

As we obey, we begin to feel how reasonable and wonderful God's thinking is, and we begin to like His thinking and to think more as He thinks.

Comment: This proverb is written by Solomon, yet he says, "Forget not *my* law." This would fit spiritually, but was he referring to his own law?

Reply: When we read the Psalms, the same use of pronouns occurs. David is speaking, but he is speaking prophetically. The Word of God is meant to be a general rule, but it has a special application for the Gospel Church. We are approaching the Book of Proverbs spiritually: What can the Christian learn from the Book of Proverbs? Is it a spiritual book? Many Christians would say no (and also no to the Book of Ecclesiastes), but the New Testament, and especially the epistles of Paul, quote more thoughts and phrases from Proverbs than from many other Old Testament books. Therefore, the Book of Proverbs is spiritual.

Prov. 3:2 For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.

"Long life" is literally "life of years." In other words, "length of days, life of years, and peace shall they add unto thee." Verse 2 is the result of verse 1, the result of not forgetting God's law and of keeping His commandments in the heart.

Comment: One who could perfectly keep the Mosaic Law given to Israel would live forever.

Why are both days and years mentioned? Remembering God's law lengthens one's *days*, and keeping His commandments in the heart lengthens one's *years*, the latter being the higher step. Since this verse is addressed to the consecrated of the Gospel Age, why isn't immortality mentioned as the reward for obeying God's commandments from the heart to the best of our ability under the robe of Christ's righteousness? Because verse 2 applies to both the Little Flock and the Great Company.

The mention of length of days and length of years reminds us that we are in a trial period with rewards for obedience and faithfulness. Just intellectually understanding truth is not enough to get life. We must first *remember* and then *keep* with the heart. When Jesus said of the world of mankind that all those in their graves would *hear* his voice and come forth, that "hearing" is relatively superficial. After mechanically hearing or *receiving* truth, we must hearken (*obey*) in order to get life. The Word must sink down deep into our hearts (Luke 9:44). It is like a set of stairs that is doubled: (1) hearing/remembering and (2) keeping/obeying.

The "peace" that is added for remembering God's law and keeping His commandments is also progressive. As we advance in understanding God's Word and His will—and in proportion to our obedience—we have peace. Thinking on the following helps to prevent discouragement: (1) However long ago we received truth, we can thank God that we are still interested *today*. (2) We should reflect back on God's past providences. (3) We should meditate on what a great blessing it is that, of all mankind, we have been called through Jesus and heard truth. We should *never* entertain the thought "Maybe God never called me" as an excuse to go back into the world.

Hence peace is another step. As time goes on and we render obedience, we should expect and pray for a measure of peace as an assurance that all is right between us and the Lord, that our consecration is in order.

Introverts are more prone to despondency than extroverts. However, when extroverts have an experience that results in their questioning their standing with the Lord, they occasionally plunge into a deeper despondency than those who are introverts. All who are called, introverts and extroverts alike, are meek and humble.

All three—days, years, and peace—will be added for hearing and obeying. Clearly this is a progression.

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

“Let not mercy and truth forsake thee.” Notice the sequence: mercy is mentioned before truth, which is not the usual sequence. “Truth” is an embracive term that can mean justice, righteousness, knowledge, etc. “Mercy” is also embracive, meaning compassion, kindness, tenderness, pity, etc. It is not as embracive as the word “love,” but “mercy” is the proper term here. The *end* of the commandment is love out of a pure heart (it is a development), whereas here mercy precedes truth.

The point is that we should be merciful to *others*, for we cannot be merciful to God (we cannot show pity, tenderness, compassion, etc., toward God). We are merciful, first, to fellow Christians and then to mankind. An example of putting truth ahead of mercy would be that if our emphasis is on discerning a fault or a wrong, it is difficult to be merciful. The New Testament says to remember thyself lest thou get high-minded and fall (1 Cor. 10:12). We are to consider others as we would like God to consider and have mercy on us. Verse 3 is not saying to ignore truth, but to recognize others as trying to do the best they can. If we were in another person’s shoes, we might not do as well.

We should even be merciful to ourselves, remembering that we are fallen creatures. As God is merciful to us, so we should be merciful to others.

As this proverb starts (verses 1 and 2), it pertains, first, to *us*, to what *we* must do (“[You] forget not my laws; let *thine* heart keep my commandments”), and then it has to do with *God* (“Forget not *my* laws; let thine heart keep *my* commandments”). Notice that knowledge comes *before* obedience because we must *know* what we are to do. Many Christians erroneously *think* they know, but they do not because they lack a “Thus saith the Lord.”

Now with verse 3, the proverb pertains to our treatment of *others*, and here there is a reversal: *mercy comes first*, then truth. In other words, we should have compassion or pity on others. However, this does not mean we should wink the eye at wrongdoing. Love and concern for another individual may be to point out that his actions are completely out of harmony with Scripture. To do this is risking the friendship of what another thinks about us. The principle is to esteem others better than ourselves where possible (Phil. 2:3). (For example, one who is poor at math may not be better at studying chronology.) The point is that in judging others, we should realize that if God has called them, there is probably at least one quality that is better than our own. Each of the

consecrated probably has a talent that is superior to that of another person. Also, it is important to think of all the consecrated as being children of God. We can judge outward actions but not whether or not one is in the truth—unless one clearly commits grievous sin and leaves. As long as a person has professed consecration, is outwardly trying to please God, and is dedicating his or her life in that direction, that individual must be considered a child of God and esteemed better than ourselves where possible. God will determine the final outcome.

Although mercy comes first with regard to our treatment of others, with regard to God the order is different. His Word, His thinking, His knowledge, and His truth come first and then our obedience. If we put truth first with others, we may have truth and no mercy. Putting mercy first suggests that someone needs forgiveness, someone whose conduct is not quite up to par. And this is true for ourselves as well. Having mercy means that we realize a certain lack or want in ourselves as well as in others.

We must guard against the Laodicean spirit so prevalent today that takes the attitude “I am full and in need of nothing else.” Those with this attitude are in danger of being spewed out from special favor and even from all favor.

Comment: In regard to the judging of others, Isaiah 11:3 says that Jesus will not judge by the seeing of the eyes or the hearing of the ears. When we judge a matter, we must find out the facts and have two or three witnesses.

“Bind them [mercy and truth] about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart.” This also shows *progression*, starting with the binding about the neck and continuing till they are written upon the table of the heart. But why are mercy and truth to be bound about the neck? Why are mercy and truth to be written on the heart? Around the neck would be a necklace, as it were, of mercy and truth. With this arrangement, mercy and truth would go with the individual at all times as a constant reminder. A pendant hanging from the necklace would fall down over the heart or breast, from which mercy and truth would go inward. “Write them [the *commandments*] upon ... thine heart.” In other words, this verse enjoins the *serious study* of God’s Word.

Reading is not studying. Writing God’s commandments on the heart would be incising, inscribing, or cutting them permanently into the “table” of the heart. It is interesting that the heart is likened to a “table.” The Ten Commandments were incised into tablets of stone; the heart would be a “table” or tablet of *flesh*.

Comment: A marginal reference is 2 Corinthians 3:3, “Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart.”

Prov. 3:4 So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man.

If we obey the counsel in verses 1–3, then verse 4 is the logical conclusion eventually. Finding “favour and good understanding in the sight of God” would mean being esteemed by Him and having His commendation. Finding “favour and good understanding in the sight of ... man” will occur in the Kingdom, for in the present life such obedience means walking contrary to the current of common opinion. The world

generally hates the faithful and regards them as foolish. This reminds us of Jesus' development from a babe: he gradually grew in wisdom and favor with God and man.

Even though worldly people may think a Christian is foolish and is wasting his time, and even though they feel uncomfortable in his presence, they may say, "He is living in harmony with his beliefs." Such blameless behavior is sometimes commended by neighbors and business associates.

Comment: Romans 14:15–18 reads, "But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died. Let not then your good be evil spoken of: For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men." This shows that even with knowledge, one must show mercy toward the conscience of others.

Reply: That is true regarding our dealings with both the brotherhood and mankind. We should try to avoid that which would offend others. For example, years ago it would have been offensive to other Christians to work on a Sunday. Another example was the Catholic prohibition in past years against eating meat on a Friday. Therefore, if you knowingly invited Catholics to dinner on a Friday, it would have been wrong to serve meat. But if Catholics just happened to walk in on a Friday while you were eating meat, it was not wrong to continue eating meat.

Prov. 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

Prov. 3:6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

These two verses, which are very familiar, contain an important lesson. The word "all" should be emphasized: "Trust in the LORD with *all* thine heart." "In *all* thy ways acknowledge him."

Comment: We may get to a point in our consecration where we feel that our own understanding is pretty good, but verse 5 directs us back to the Lord's Word to keep looking for *His* understanding.

Comment: Jeremiah 17:9 tells that "the [natural] heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Hence we cannot trust our own feelings.

Reply: To our dying day we have a conflict or fight of faith with the new creature being in the old temporal vessel. Since the heart can be so deceitful, it is wise to be on guard continually. This means, too, that we should daily search the Scriptures and not ever feel that our understanding has reached a sufficient level. We need the Lord's guidance in all of life's affairs.

Comment: Jeremiah 9:23,24 reads, "Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD."

Comment: We are not to lean on the understanding of others either but to study out the matter for ourselves from God's Word.

Reply: The Scriptures say to prove all things and to hold fast that which we find to be true.

Q: How many people truly believe that the Lord will direct their paths?

A: Verses 5 and 6 are a good text to keep continually in mind. To truly believe and obey this counsel, one has to be humble.

Comment: There is a fine line between taking a passive role and an active role. One might misinterpret the text and think we should passively sit back, do nothing, and just trust that the Lord will direct our path. Rather, we are to *actively* bind, write, trust, and acknowledge.

Reply: It is wrong to be either passive or overly active in the sense of depending on works. "Have we not done wonderful works in thy name?" (Matt. 7:22). Letting the Lord do everything is the other extreme. We should ascertain as nearly as possible what the Lord's will is for any activity.

Comment: Jeremiah 10:23,24 gives an insight into Jeremiah's heart and mental condition: "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. O LORD, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing."

"In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." The word "all" makes this a broad statement. From time to time every one of the consecrated would slip or become careless on this point to some extent through excitement, fatigue, etc. However, one must recover and again look to the Lord for leadership. In other words, verses 5 and 6 are discussing our reaction to *God's providences*. We must trust in God with all our heart and search for His direction. He has promised to direct our paths *if* we acknowledge Him in all our ways with all our heart. Thus the directing of our paths is *conditional*.

Comment: David is speaking to his son Solomon in 1 Chronicles 28:9, "And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever."

Comment: Instead of "he shall direct thy paths," the NIV says, "and he will make your paths straight." Hebrews 12:13 speaks of making "straight paths for your feet." The thought is of a correct path.

Reply: Verse 6 suggests that one who begins to wander from the straight path will be corrected or directed by God's providence *if* that providence is recognized and responded to.

Prov. 3:7 Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.

“Be not wise in thine own eyes” is related to the thought of leaning not to our own understanding. We are to trust in and fear (reverence) Jehovah. Because we cannot obey perfectly, there is no one who does not wander a little at some time in his Christian walk, but if we daily seek to serve God, we will return like the magnet to the pole, the direction to the divine will being north. If we fear the Lord, we will be made aware of our situation and depart quickly from the path that leads to evil.

Prov. 3:8 It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.

Q: Is the thought that we are in the womb and that the navel, through the umbilical cord, is the source of nourishment for the whole body?

A: The umbilical cord is certainly related to the navel. We, as new creatures, are like the fetus in the womb. We are in a process of development. The fetus has no mind of its own but receives all of its nutriment and liquid through the umbilical cord.

Q: Could the umbilical cord be likened to the Grace Covenant?

A: From one perspective. We are developed under the Grace Covenant. The Sarah Covenant is the mother of us all.

The development of the fetus is dependent wholly upon receiving nourishment through the navel. Spiritually speaking, the navel refers to the health of the flesh, and marrow refers to the health of the bone structure. Bones are dependent upon marrow for strength. Marrow provides moisture or oil to the bone, and as long as the inside of the bone is moist, the bone will be very strong. A bone deprived of marrow gets so dry and brittle that it can be crushed into powder with the hand. However, if moisture or oil is supplied to the dry bone, it will be restored to a condition almost as good as new. (The Hebrew word for “marrow” is “moisture.”) Therefore, marrow makes the skeletal frame strong—which suggests a firm and settled Christian, one with character and backbone. The Holy Spirit is the oil needed by the Christian.

Comment: Ezekiel 37:1–5 tells of the Valley of *Dry Bones*: “The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit ... and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live.”

Reply: In Proverbs 3, moisture is the source of life; in Ezekiel 37, breath is the source. In both instances the bones are dry if the needed nutriment or element is withheld.

Prov. 3:9 Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase:

Prov. 3:10 So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.

The principle in the Gospel Age is that those who are generous to others reap a blessing themselves. Under the Law the firstfruits were dedicated to the Lord. Those who did this with a fullness of heart (not grudgingly) were rewarded and more than blessed with the remainder. "Honour[ing] the LORD" would be honoring Him, His children, or others according to their need (Gal. 6:10).

Verse 10 tells of the reward for such generosity: "So shall thy barns be filled with plenty." "Barns" is plural because we have a barn in heaven and a barn down here. Those who are generous in spirit are themselves blessed and protected abundantly even in the earthly barn, but at the same time treasure is being laid up in the spiritual barn.

The reward for generosity continues: "So shall ... thy presses ... *burst out* with new wine." Normally, this would suggest a blessing along natural lines, but to burst out spiritually with new wine means that the new creature is blessed with new understanding and encouragements in Scripture. "Wine" usually symbolizes doctrine, teaching, and the *joys* of the truth.

Comment: In terms of this prosperity, in Mark 10:29,30 Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."

Reply: The family becomes much larger. When people get older in the world and their friends die, there is such a gulf between youth and old age that they begin to feel more and more lonely, and they sense how others react to them as they slow down mentally and physically. This has been described as "the travail of old age." But for the consecrated, distinctions between male and female or between age and youth do not exist. There is a communication among them. One who accepts and obeys the truth is far more than compensated for anything left behind. We have a large, diverse family throughout the world. Therefore, the "new wine" bursting out from the presses is quite comprehensive, suggesting new fellowships, new experiences, new joys, and an enlargement of one's own personal development.

Prov. 3:11 My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction:

This reminds us of Hebrews 12:5, "And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Also pertinent is Revelation 3:19, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." Psalm 94:12 reads, "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law."

When Paul said in Hebrews 12:5, "Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh to you as unto children," he expected those whom he addressed to be familiar with Proverbs 3:11. He was addressing fellow Jews who had become Christians and were supposed to know the Old Testament.

What does it mean to “despise not the chastening of the LORD”? We are not to murmur at, resent, or disregard what the Lord’s providences permit.

“Neither be weary of his correction.” Nor are we to “faint” (Heb. 12:5) no matter how difficult is the trial of patient endurance. If a certain providence comes into our life and lingers for day, months, or years, we are not to fret but to endure it.

Comment: The NIV says, “Do not resent his rebuke.” We are not to ask, “Why me?”

Reply: Although the Greek and the Hebrew suggest that not being weary is the correct thought, we do commonly hear this question being asked in the world. The consecrated may not verbalize this question, but some may wonder in their hearts.

“Neither be weary of his *correction*.” There are two kinds of “correction”: correction for wrongdoing and correction for right doing as a test of faithfulness.

Comment: If we start to leave the correct path, the Lord will give us an experience to bring us back. In nautical terms this is called “course correction.”

Comment: Paul suffered many things, some for his former persecution of Christians but most were for right doing (2 Cor. 11:23–28).

We are chastened both for wrongdoing and for right doing. The Apostle Peter says that chastening for wrongdoing is necessary, but it is not meritorious—it does not count as laying up treasure in heaven. David said, “Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word” (Psa. 119:67). In other words, he had received a course correction for wrongdoing and he gave thanks for God’s providence. On the other hand, chastenings for right doing build us up as new creatures. The Apostle Paul said, “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Heb. 12:11).

Q: Is the “chastening” of Hebrews 12:11 a result of wrongdoing or right doing?

A: Both. Chastening for wrongdoing is to keep us from going off the path, whereas chastening for right doing is discipline. In proportion as we suffer for righteousness’ sake, we are laying up treasures in heaven. We will be rewarded abundantly for faithfully suffering for Christ’s sake or for righteousness’ sake, whereas suffering for wrongdoing is simply compensatory.

Q: The word “chastening” seems to carry a negative connotation. Can we prove that it also occurs for right doing? For instance, Job underwent a lot of affliction, but this was not for wrongdoing.

A: “Chastening” in Hebrews 12:11 is the Greek *paideia*, meaning instruction, training, discipline. The Heavenly Father disciplines for both wrongdoing and right doing.

Comment: Regarding right doing, Ephesians 6:4 translates the word as “nurture”: “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the *nurture* and admonition of the Lord.” And 2 Timothy 3:16 translates it as “instruction”: “All scripture

is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for *instruction* in righteousness."

"Discipline" means "disciple," bringing one into a certain order or arrangement. Jesus suffered for right doing, for discipline, because God saw it would be for his ultimate good. Jesus humbled himself under the mighty hand of His Father. "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:8, 29). God was looking for a certain standard, even in Jesus. Had Jesus not suffered, he might have been too severe in his judgment of mankind. Paul reasoned that God humbled Jesus so that he would be a *merciful* High Priest. Jesus was perfect morally, but he was not perfected for the office as earth's King and Ruler. Suffering for righteousness' sake had a tenderizing effect upon him that was needful to round him out and qualify him. If Jesus needed this, how much more his imperfect followers need to suffer for righteousness' sake! Hence we need both kinds of discipline: for wrongdoing and for right doing. In contrast, Jesus needed discipline only for right doing. Being humbled under the mighty hand of God is discipline.

Paideia and *musar* (Hebrew), both translated "chastening," do not refer to doctrine (a verbal teaching) but to *providence* and discipline in Proverbs 3:11 and Hebrews 12:11.

Comment: Joseph said to his brothers, "Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive" (Genesis 50:19,20).

Q: How do we know when we are being corrected?

A: As we grow more mature in Christ, we begin to see more of our faults. Different providences bring out our faults.

Comment: Prayer is another factor. We should pray, "Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins" (Psa. 19:12,13). These prayers show a willingness in our hearts to see and correct our faults. Sometimes corrections go right over our heads, and we do not recognize the providence until the second or third time. If we truly want correction, we will continue to receive providences in this direction.

Comment: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Psa. 51:10). If our desire is wholly in that direction, we will be enabled to see our faults. If we do not receive correction, we are illegitimate children (Heb. 12:8).

Sometimes other Christians remind us of our problems. If we do not see our faults, we will hear about them in one way or another. Providence is the disciplinary factor.

Comment: Another way providence can correct us is through a study or a talk.

Prov. 3:12 For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.

Verse 12, which emphasizes sonship, shows that the Book of Proverbs is a spiritual book. The natural person finds many commonsense axioms in this book, but it especially has

spiritual connotations. From God's standpoint, all of the unconsecrated are children of the Devil in the present age.

This verse fits in with the advice in Hebrews 12:5–11, "And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." This Hebrews account seems to clearly indicate that the Apostle Paul originally thought of Proverbs 3:12 and then was philosophizing to explain the verse in more detail.

(Deut. 8:5) "Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee." Here God was talking to natural Israel. The first part of the verse makes it less intimate than the direct address "my son."

Verse 12 should be encouraging to those who have the spirit of depression because of a shortcoming or a transgression. If a person stumbles and then recognizes providential leadings, this verse should help to counteract the depression. It should also help the one who, in going through a trial, searches his heart and can find no way in which he was responsible. Consider Job, for example. He did not know that God was permitting Satan to test him to the utmost with the restriction of just not taking his life. In several chapters Job said, "I made a covenant with my eyes," "I visited the poor," "I gave needful and helpful advice in the gate of the city," etc. He had been greatly respected and could not understand why he was having such hard experiences. The point is that a Christian should expect such disciplinary experiences for *both* wrong and right doing.

Comment: God's words to David through Nathan the prophet are interesting because they reveal His dealings with the Ancient Worthies. "I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men" (2 Sam. 7:14).

Reply: That especially happened with regard to David and Solomon.

Prov. 3:13 **Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.**

"Happy is the man that *has obtained* wisdom" (past tense) is the thought. Although somewhat synonymous, there is a difference between wisdom and understanding. What is that difference?

Comment: "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding" (Job 28:28).

Reply: That is one of the first lessons to learn.

Comment: For the word “getteth,” the King James Version margin says “draweth out”: “Happy is the man ... that draweth out understanding.”

Comment: “Understanding” is perceiving and knowing, but “wisdom” has the connotation of knowing what to do in a certain situation, of *applying* the understanding. For example, wisdom helps one to make the right decision. “Wisdom” is more active, whereas “understanding” is more passive.

Comment: “Wisdom” is deeper than mere understanding.

Reply: “Wisdom” (Hebrew *chokmah*) is a broad term that is used frequently. One *receives* “understanding”; one who responds to or “getteth” understanding is benefited.

Prov. 3:14 For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.

Comment: Wisdom cannot be measured by material things.

Reply: It is more powerful than silver and gold.

Comment: The New International Version says, “For she is more profitable than silver, and yields better returns [gain] than gold.”

Reply: Yes, the word “merchandise” indicates an analogy with retailing and sales. The NIV has caught the gist of the meaning.

Prov. 3:15 She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.

This verse carries on the thought of verse 14. “Rubies” are precious stones, so the contrast is with gold, silver, and precious stones.

Comment: In some places, rubies have more value than diamonds.

Reply: The rarity of a perfect ruby is prized more than the diamond in certain instances.

Prov. 3:16 Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour.

Although “riches” in the present life are not done away with entirely, those who are looking for gain and are led and motivated by possessions (gold, silver, goods, property, land, etc.) will lose out if they do not seek wisdom first and strive to obey God’s instructions. The “riches and honour” of the Christian are spiritual treasures laid up in heaven. Earthly silver and gold are not to be compared with the divine nature and its possessions.

“Length of days” being in the “*right*” hand shows the primacy of wisdom’s importance. Those who respond to wisdom will have a lengthening of life not only on this side of the veil but on the other side too with everlasting life.

Comment: Even from a worldly point of view, for a person who lives a wanton lifestyle, the life expectancy is shorter, generally speaking, than that of a person who lives more uprightly.

The temptation in the present life is to obtain riches and honor first and then to look for life secondarily. But one's existence should be the most important goal. The Christian wants God's instruction and wisdom and to know Him. Riches and honor come in the next life as a result of obedience in the present life.

Prov. 3:17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

This verse corresponds with the thought "happy is the man that findeth wisdom." All of wisdom's paths lead unto ultimate peace and to atonement, to at-one-ment (rest with God) beyond the veil.

Comment: There is a partial rest now and a full rest beyond the veil.

Prov. 3:18 She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her.

Why is wisdom likened to a "tree of life"?

Comment: Revelation 2:7 reads, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

"Tree of life," happiness, "ways of pleasantness," and "peace" are the fruits or reward of those who obtain wisdom in the final or finished sense.

Comment: The hymn "Divine Wisdom," No. 74, beautifully captures the spirit of this portion of the Book of Proverbs.

Happy the man who learns to trace
The leadings of Jehovah's grace;
By wisdom coming from above,
He reads and learns that God is love.

Wisdom divine! who tells the price
Of wisdom's costly merchandise?
Wisdom to silver we prefer,
And gold is dross compared to her.

Her hands are filled with length of days,
True riches and immortal praise;
Her ways are ways of pleasantness,
And all her paths lead unto peace.

Happy the man who wisdom gains;
Thrice happy who his guest retains;
He owns, and shall forever own,
Wisdom and Christ are truly one.

Reply: Yes, wisdom and Christ and God are truly one. This hymn is really quoting Proverbs 3:12–18, but the words are arranged in a very fluid and lovely fashion.

Prov. 3:19 The LORD by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens.

Prov. 3:20 By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew.

Why were verses 19 and 20 inserted in the topic “Happy is the man that findeth wisdom” (verse 13)? Intervening verses tell of the blessings of wisdom in its fullness, of the effects wisdom produces on the individual (it is like a tree of life, etc.). Then come verses 19 and 20.

Comment: The context seems to be in Job 28:12–20. There Job is asking where wisdom is found. “But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not with me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls: for the price of wisdom is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold. Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding?”

Reply: In the remaining verses of the chapter, Job shows that *God* is the source of that wisdom. “*God* understandeth the way thereof, and *he* knoweth the place thereof. For he looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven; To make the weight for the winds; and he weigheth the waters by measure. When he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder: Then did he see it, and declare it; he prepared it, yea, and searched it out. And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding” (Job 28:23–28). Job raises the question “Where is wisdom?” Then he says, “It is not here; it is not there, for the real source is God Himself.” Although Job did not understand why he had to suffer and he had not yet gotten the answer, he did know that God had the answer. Christians as individuals, in their own personal experience, are likewise tested in this manner.

Comment: The question “Why were verses 19 and 20 inserted here?” is related to Proverbs 1:7, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning [principal part] of wisdom.” The benefits of wisdom had just been mentioned. Now verses 19 and 20, in showing that God is the *source* of wisdom, reinforce a holy, reverent awe of Him.

Verses 1–18 describe the fruits of wisdom (“happy is the man that findeth wisdom,” etc.). Verses 19 and 20 go on to show that the very embodiment of wisdom is Jehovah Himself, as follows:

1. Out of chaos, God created the earth and ordered its surface. Out of confusion, perplexity, and complexity came a finished product. We see the results in the beauty and balance of nature. In the beginning, the earth was void and darkness was on the

face of the deep, but God said, "Let there be light, let there be ..." That there is a God all nature shows. Out of chaos, God created order and beauty, but it took time.

2. By wisdom God founded the earth, and by understanding He established the heavens. There are many universes, but if we consider just our own solar system, we see order; eg, we see the sun and the moon and their effects. In considering the earth, we know that it was once void and darkness was upon the face of the deep; ie, the entire globe was covered with water. When God said, "Let the earth appear," the continents and the mountain ranges were pushed up from underneath the water. In other words, "by His knowledge the depths were broken up" (paraphrase). From underneath the mass of water, the continents were pushed up to the surface. As they were pushed up, the water drained down into the cavities left behind, which we call oceans. Thus bodies (plural) of water were formed, whereas previously there was only one body of water over the entire earth. When the depths were broken up, land appeared and water drained off the continents in rivers to empty into receptacles called oceans or seas.

As individuals in our personal quest for the knowledge of God prior to consecration, we were in a traumatic situation as we gradually came into truth. Now as we look back, we can see that God called us, but earlier we did not know where we were going. We were aimless and lacked structure, focus, and commitment to serve Him. Now, as a product of His dealing with us, we have reached a more developed state (although, of course, there is always room for improvement). Nevertheless, we can see that something radical has happened. This "broken up" condition is a process the Lord uses to develop us throughout our consecrated walk. In other words, each individual Christian has trials. If we are rightly exercised, the hard experiences of life produce results that can be very beneficial—just as in nature God brought order out of the darkness and void of the past. Thus in verse 20 the traumatic experience is contrasted with the good and gentle experience. By God's knowledge the depths are broken up (this would be the traumatic or drastic action), but the clouds drop down dew (showing peace and refreshment). Verse 20 shows the ups and downs: there are periods of trial and trouble, and there are periods of blessing and refreshment.

First, an atmosphere was created (Genesis 1). Then, prior to the Flood, mists (distillation) rose up from the earth itself. Now, after the Flood, the dew drops down from above. Many famous poets make statements that are to be taken not literally but in a figurative or poetic sense. That is the case here with the gentle dropping of rain. We see the balance of nature whereby the sun evaporates moisture from lakes and oceans and sucks it up into clouds. The wind blows the clouds over land and the clouds then drop rain on the ground. Of course torrential rains can fall, but here, in a figurative sense, the clouds are seen to drop a gentle rain, almost like a mist. The former clouds of trouble, which result from the breaking-up process, can become clouds of blessing and refreshment. If we are rightly exercised, our trials result in the peaceable fruits of righteousness. "No chastening [trial] for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are [rightly] exercised thereby" (Heb. 12:11).

In other words, verses 19 and 20 are saying that wisdom is inherent in the Creator, and what He has done with regard to physical creation, bringing order out of chaos in nature, He can do with our imperfect bodies and minds, producing blessings and order for the new creature. In the Christian's desire to be perfect, God can bring the individual up to a

certain level or measure of blessing with peace and faith. If out of disorder in nature God creates beauty, order, and discipline, so it is in the life of the individual in his quest for wisdom and its fruits. As wisdom is a tree of life to the individual, so the clouds drop down dew.

Prov. 3:21 My son, let not them depart from thine eyes: keep sound wisdom and discretion:

Prov. 3:22 So shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck.

Prov. 3:23 Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble.

Prov. 3:24 When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.

Prov. 3:25 Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh.

Prov. 3:26 For the LORD shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken.

Verses 21–26 describe the ideal condition. Sudden fear is a tactic the Adversary frequently uses in trying to destroy the Christian. He is likened to a lion because of its *roar*. The lion's body is not sleek like the leopard's but is rather chunky. Except for short bursts of speed, the lion lacks the swiftness of other animals and yet it is the king of beasts. Nor does it have the endurance of the cheetah. The lion's head is a prominent and imposing feature that seems to obscure the body behind it. But it is the roar that establishes superiority and unnerves the victim.

“Be not afraid of sudden fear.” A Christian should desire to attain or develop to the point where he has the peace of God even when something suddenly occurs. With this peace of God that passes all worldly understanding, the Christian can better withstand the test. As we desire and hunger for the wisdom from above, one of its products is peaceful sleep. We can be assured that nothing happens to God's people without His knowledge. When a trial occurs that seems sudden to us, it is not sudden from God's standpoint. He knew *in advance*; therefore, if He permits the trial, we must realize that God knows all about the situation. We must exercise faith that since He knows and since He allowed the trial to happen, then so be it. All of the very elect will have this peace to some extent. Jesus feared dying, for his soul was “exceeding sorrowful, even unto death” (Matt. 26:38). But he was given a compensatory blessing subsequently. After that fear, he went forth to the Garden of Gethsemane with calm assurance. On the Cross he again had a severe experience: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

Sudden fear may be permitted to come upon an individual to bring out, in time of extremity, crystallized goodness. When a trial occurs, know that compensatory aid and assistance lie ahead. The foot of the Christian will not stumble permanently, for the LORD promises to “keep thy foot from being taken” *if* we do not take ourselves out of the circle of God's love. We may trip momentarily (and rise up seven times) but not stumble in the sense of Second Death unless we willfully do so. We should not judge ourselves by emotion because emotion does not necessarily indicate the true merit of the individual.

(Psa. 112:4,7,8) “Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness: he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous. He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD. His heart is established, he shall not be afraid, until he see his desire upon his enemies.”

“Be not afraid ... of the desolation of the wicked.” “The wicked” would be especially the Adversary. The Lord permits spiritual and earthly instruments to test us, but behind them are the machinations of the Adversary. The thought is “Be not afraid of the intended destruction of you as an individual by the one[s] confronting you.” The wicked desire to destroy the righteous, but the righteous should not be afraid of this destruction.

Verse 26: “For the LORD shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken.” This verse sounds like Psalm 91:11, “For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.”

Verse 21: “Keep sound wisdom and discretion.” “Sound wisdom” is a different Hebrew word than was used earlier. It is the essence, substance, or quality of wisdom. This word is sometimes translated “substance.” “Practical wisdom” would be the thought—something substantial. “Discretion” means to get the point or gist of something; ie, it means to rightly understand the situation. The result is life to the soul (like a tree of life).

Q: Verse 21 says, “Let not *them* depart from thine eyes.” Does “them” refer to sound wisdom and discretion or to knowledge and understanding?

A: Both—both the preceding and the following.

Verse 22: “So shall they [sound wisdom and discretion] be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck.” Life to the soul is an *inner* blessing; grace to the neck is an *outer* adornment. The neck is a symbol of servitude, pride, arrogance, stateliness, nobility, fortitude, and strength of character.

The advice is “My son, apply your heart to this type of wisdom. If you faithfully heed the instructions, the outcome will be favorable—even though you may lack the confidence.” In fact, it is dangerous to put off the armor. “Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off” (1 Kings 20:11). “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12). In other words, the Christian should not get so confident that he removes the armor.

Wisdom sees, discovers, and reveals, but discretion acts upon, seizes, and possesses. Verses 23–26 are the natural results of obtaining wisdom and discretion.

Verse 24: “When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.” The Apostles James and Peter were in prison together. Then James was taken out and beheaded. Herod intended to do exactly the same thing to Peter the next day, and what did Peter do? Two men were shackled to him with chains, but with fullness of faith, he went into a sound sleep. He was not afraid; he was not overanxious. No doubt he prayed earnestly before he slept, but then he let the matter rest with the Lord.

Prov. 3:27 Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it.

“Withhold not good from them *to whom it is due.*” This instruction would not apply to a panhandler, for example, to one who makes begging and loafing a way of life.

Comment: 2 Thessalonians 3:11,12 warns about those who sponge off the brethren: “For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.”

Reply: When a person is truly in a pitiful situation and we have the means, we should be of some assistance. When a gift is given with spontaneity, when it is a “freewill” offering, it has more value in God’s sight. A gift given out of a sense of duty and obedience is not as meretorious.

Prov. 3:28 Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and tomorrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee.

Do not procrastinate in giving assistance. Also, to say “go, and come again” to the individual who comes to you for help would embarrass him by forcing him to humble himself a second time. Let your heart speak in such matters.

Comment: The Apostle James extracted a principle from this text: “If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?” (James 2:15,16).

Reply: “What doth it profit” both to the individual in need and to you yourself?

Prov. 3:29 Devise not evil against thy neighbour, seeing he dwelleth securely by thee.

When a neighbor does not butt into your affairs and harbors no ill feelings toward you, it is not advisable to judge him in respect to other matters. Be hospitable and kind.

Prov. 3:30 Strive not with a man without cause, if he have done thee no harm.

This is conditional: “*if* he have done thee no harm.” By getting emotional, we can carry a matter too far and cause an argument or confrontation unnecessarily. If there is no evidence of premeditation, ill feeling, or intentional harm toward you, do not strive with him.

Comment: Conversely, there can be a just cause for strife.

Reply: Yes, the qualification here is “if he have done thee no harm.” If he has caused injury, ask for an explanation: “Why did you do such-and-such? What was your motive? You have harmed me.”

Comment: Romans 12:18 captures the balanced principle: “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.” An allowance is made for having a confrontation when there is a just cause.

Prov. 3:31 Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways.

Prov. 3:32 For the froward is abomination to the LORD: but his secret is with the righteous.

Aggressive people who oppress others may momentarily get ahead, but we are not to envy their results or copy their methods. Their aggressive ways are an abomination in the Lord's sight.

An example of "good aggressiveness" would be contending earnestly for the faith. The Lord's secret is with the humble, the meek, the lowly, the contrite.

Prov. 3:33 The curse of the LORD is in the house of the wicked: but he blesseth the habitation of the just.

Prov. 3:34 Surely he scorneth the scorners: but he giveth grace unto the lowly.

Prov. 3:35 The wise shall inherit glory: but shame shall be the promotion of fools.

A person who is contentious by nature manifests this trait continually. Therefore, it should be obvious that such people are destined for trouble. Thorns, thistles, brambles, and darnel—all of which are good fodder for fire—are destined for destruction. We are to love our neighbor as ourselves.

The Book of Proverbs focuses on the attribute of wisdom. The Apostle John focuses on the attribute of love. The outcome of the wise class is that they "inherit *glory*." Verse 35 proves that the Book of Proverbs is speaking to the spiritual class, to those who are called to be the sons of God, and not to mankind in general. The spiritual words of wisdom are so beautiful that even to the natural man they sound like common sense, but they do not apply to the natural man.

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

Proverbs 4

Prov. 4:1 Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding.

Jesus, the antitypical Solomon (see verse 3) is saying, "Hear, ye children, the instruction of Jehovah."

"Attend to know understanding." The Revised Standard Version reads, "Be attentive that you may gain *insight*." The Companion Bible uses the word "discernment."

Prov. 4:2 For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law.

“Good doctrine” is “sound learning” (NIV). The Hebrew *leqach* means “to take in, to receive, to absorb.” We are to absorb good doctrine; ie, *God’s* doctrine, the teaching of Scripture, the advice of the Heavenly Father and of Jesus, rather than secular knowledge.

“Forsake ye not my law [teaching].” Be attentive to the teaching or instruction of God; absorb as much as possible so that you are fit for life’s experiences.

Prov. 4:3 For I was my father’s son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother.

Spiritually, Jesus is giving the advice, for he is the Father’s Son, and his “mother” was the Sarah Covenant. Jesus is speaking to us, to Christians as “children.” Solomon wrote the Book of Proverbs under the influence of the Holy Spirit; consequently, he did not know the full significance of all that he wrote. Here, from a *natural* standpoint, Solomon is saying that David, his father, instructed him in Scripture, and even his mother, Bathsheba, was religious-minded.

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

While David may have literally told Solomon to always keep the instruction in mind, we read this verse on a higher level as though Jesus is speaking to us. Jesus is saying, “Do not forget the precepts you have learned, for it is easy to slide back.”

Comment: Jesus said, “My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me” (John 7:16).

Reply: Yes, and when Jesus tells us here, “Let thine heart retain my words,” he is really quoting what the Heavenly Father said to him. When Jesus was created as a spirit being, as the Logos, he had to be instructed.

Prov. 4:5 Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth.

“Wisdom” is the Hebrew *chokmah*, referring broadly to God’s wisdom. We say that the four attributes are Wisdom, Justice, Love, and Power, but these are a condensation of many, many attributes of God expressed in only four words. Wisdom can be understanding, learning, teaching, instructing, etc. Justice can be righteousness, equity, etc. Love can be mercy, forgiveness, pity, etc. Each of the four attributes embraces many qualities. In other words, the “wisdom” of verse 5 is all-inclusive. The source is *God—He* has the wisdom that we desire to acquire in ourselves.

“Get understanding.” “Understanding” is insight, and insight can be perception, rightly dividing the Word of truth, etc.

“Forget it not.” The problem was that Solomon did forget. God was pleased with Solomon initially. When Solomon prayed in connection with the inauguration of the Temple, God appreciated that Solomon did not ask for anything for himself but requested knowledge so that he could teach and help the people. But in time Solomon’s wives weaned his heart away from the Lord by mixing in their own heathen religions. Paul admonishes us not to let those things slip (Heb. 2:1). Israel was unsuccessful because the people “forgot his works” (Psa. 78:11). If they had properly appreciated their deliverance from Egypt through the plagues and the dividing of the Red Sea, they would have been assisted in walking the

strait and narrow way. Their forgetting was the key point that faulted the first generation in the Wilderness, all of whom over a certain age perished except Joshua and Caleb.

“Neither decline from the words of my mouth.” The Revised Standard Version has “do not turn away from the words of my mouth.” The swerving can be more intentional than the forgetting. How do we forget? We are distracted by other things so that we lose our focus. Paul said, “This *one thing* I do ... I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:13,14). Interruptions to our focus should disturb and frustrate us. To “decline” means that after a while God’s words lose the appeal and power they once had.

Prov. 4:6 Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee.

“Forsake her [wisdom] not, and she [wisdom] shall preserve [protect, guard] thee.” The Holy Spirit is spoken of as a sentinel. Hence the Holy Spirit and wisdom are closely related.

Comment: These verses are really a series of commands. One must *actively go* in the right direction.

“Let this mind [the spirit, enthusiasm, direction, focus] be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5). Temptations in life are distractions that try to wean us away from the Lord.

Prov. 4:7 Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.

Verse 7 starts out with the all-inclusive wisdom, but it tells us that in proportion as we acquire the wisdom of God, we should walk up to the light. We are to get both wisdom and understanding (insight).

An article in the *Reprints* speaks of the four attributes as holding a conference. At the conference each one discussed its own importance. Then they sat down and devised the divine plan of God, but when they came to a settlement, who did they let tie in all of the details? Wisdom. Of course from man’s standpoint, wisdom is the last attribute to be seen. Wisdom will not be fully appreciated until the end of the Kingdom when all of the righteous are saved, but actually, in the working out of the divine plan, wisdom is first. In planning the details, wisdom was in harmony with the three other attributes. The Book of Proverbs focuses on the importance of wisdom.

(Prov. 13:20) “He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.” Those who desire to walk the path of wisdom should look to the Lord and to His teachers for help. Being schooled and trained by those who are above average results in some of their wisdom rubbing off on the individual who follows the counsel. In other words, if we want to be wise, we should seek the counsel and friendship of the wise, not the foolish. The company we keep does have an effect on us.

Prov. 4:8 Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her.

“Exalt” and “embrace” wisdom.

Prov. 4:9 She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.

“A crown of glory shall she deliver to thee” in the final analysis. If one really attains wisdom sufficiently, the divine nature is the result. “She will bestow on you a beautiful crown” (RSV).

There is a sad note in the Book of Proverbs in the sense that Solomon does not seem to be an Ancient Worthy. Later in his life his failings and the value of wisdom were so on his heart that they created in him a mood of penitence wherein he wanted to warn others not to follow his example. God was pleased to honor the penitent attitude of this wonderfully wise man so that it became a part of recorded Scripture. The same is true of Elihu, who wrote the Book of Job as an act of penitence.

Comment: The Great Company will have a similar attitude when they realize they have missed out on the prize of the high calling.

Comment: The pronouns “she” and “her” are being used once again in this chapter, likening wisdom to a good and virtuous woman.

Reply: We as daughters and sons should look upon God’s wisdom as our mother. The emphasis is that we should be childlike. “Of such is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 19:14). We are to be as children in desiring and following instruction. “As newborn babes, [we are to] desire the sincere milk of the word” that we may grow thereby (1 Pet. 2:2). Then we are to continue on with that same desire. If followed through with enough persistency, we will attain our goal.

Several notable individuals have observed that a person who has a goal and who *persists* in striving for that goal is, on the whole, more successful in life. Now there is talk of an emotional IQ, instead of just the intellectual IQ. Those who have an emotional IQ are more successful than those with just the intelligence IQ. One of the chief factors is being able to “embrace” a goal. An example is clinging to the Savior’s feet so that he does not leave. This is an attitude of persistency, of not giving up, of forging ahead. We are told that a righteous or “just man falleth seven times, and [but] riseth up again” (Prov. 24:16). He keeps going toward the goal, holds it fast, does not forget it, embraces it, etc. The Book of Proverbs is written in the spirit of giving advice and telling how to stick to a goal and not letting anything come in between. If we exalt wisdom, it will promote us and bring us to honor. “When thou dost embrace her, she shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: [and] a crown of glory.” The divine nature is acquired by those who have this continuity and focus of attaining the goal.

The “ornament of grace” is a “fair garland” in the Revised Standard Version. A garland or wreath was given as a crown of victory in Greece for athletic success. Today excellence is rewarded with dollars (a million-dollar contract, for example), but real honor is the privilege of being recognized as one of the Lord’s own, as part of His family. True nobility is what we desire with our imperfections left behind. If wisdom is followed through with consistency of zeal, desire, and hunger, it will result in honor.

Comment: Chapter 3 ends with “the wise shall inherit glory.”

Reply: Yes, the Book of Proverbs is very repetitive. In fact, the repetition causes some to lose interest, but if a dying individual said over and over, “Be faithful, be faithful, be faithful,” etc., it would not be vain repetition. Out of respect for the sobriety of the circumstance and the desire of the dying individual, we would pay attention. Similarly, the repetition here is earnest exhortation for us to *desire wisdom as the principal thing*. It is a costly sacrifice to obtain true wisdom.

Prov. 4:10 Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many.

Verses 1–9 are a separate unit with Jesus’ instruction. Verse 10 starts with “O my son” and begins to give the Father’s instruction.

“The years of thy life shall be many.” This thought was expressed in Proverbs 3:2. The repetition constantly reminds us to obtain and retain wisdom and instruction in the right way.

Wisdom is the first of the four attributes from the standpoint of a progression. Each step of knowledge is to be followed by a step of obedience. Grace is the reward followed by more wisdom, and the path of wisdom leads to more and more light. The path of the justified shines with more and more light unto the perfect day, and that day is yet future. In other words, the light increases on this side of the veil and climaxes on the other side, for the Eternal One is all light.

Prov. 4:11 I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths.

“I have led thee ...” From the standpoint of counsel, we were “led” in right counsel in all of the previous chapters. But in addition to the written Word, the Lord also leads us in right paths providentially. We must listen very carefully to discern these providences. The Shepherd goes before his sheep. He gives his instruction and walks ahead, and we *follow* him. Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice and they *follow* me” (John 10:4,5).

Therefore, we must exert some initiative in order to be rewarded. For example, when the disciples were in the sinking boat in the storm, Jesus was walking right on by until they called to him in desperation. Then he stopped and walked toward the boat. Another example is when the Apostle Paul met with the disciples by the river outside the city of Thyatira. He started to leave, and then Lydia invited him to stay. He was trying to draw out the initiative of the party who “heard.” In the final analysis, the Lord loves freewill voluntary service given spontaneously out of our love and appreciation for him. This is more meretorious than just dutiful obedience. Hence the Old Testament sacrifices were called freewill offerings, for they were voluntary even though detailed instructions were given. Depending on the conscience, the one who sinned brought the sin or trespass offering voluntarily. The Lord gives the instruction and the incentive and then steps back, as it were, to watch our response.

Prov. 4:12 When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble.

“When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened.”

Comment: Verse 12 in the King James sounds contrary to Paul's advice in Hebrews 12:13 to make straight paths for our feet. Another version says, "You will walk without breaking stride; when you run, you will not stumble."

Comment: The instruction is so deeply embedded in the individual that his steps will be paths of obedience.

Q: Does this verse fit in with Psalm 18:36, "Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip"?

A: Yes, there is a relationship, but we would then have to go into that Psalm.

The paths that we traverse can be of three kinds: (1) a crooked, winding path; (2) an up-and-down path; or (3) a straight, level, direct path. The third path is the best. Morally, a straight and level path is the shortest distance between two points. Since it has no stumbling stones, one can traverse it with greater safety. The crooked and winding path rambles and wanders. The Israelites wandered in the wilderness for 38 more years because they did not have a proper focus of attention. In regard to the inhabitants who already possessed the land, Joshua and Caleb said, "Let us go up, for the Lord will give us the victory." (Their attitude was similar to David's toward Goliath.) But the Israelites dissembled and took the discouraging advice of the majority, ie, the other ten spies.

The Pastor talks about resoluteness of purpose, which is another way of describing the straight path. The Christian is relieved of certain entanglements and difficulties just by pressing undistractedly toward the mark, by having the attitude "this one thing I do."

A curved path is more fatiguing. As one rounds the various curves, other side paths are seen. These are temptations to wander. Notice how blinders prevent a horse from seeing distracting influences and thus help it to keep a focus of attention. And so, the Lord gives instruction. If it is heeded, He will keep us from stumbling. We are rewarded for each step of obedience.

Prov. 4:13 Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life.

Prov. 4:14 Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men.

Pilgrim's Progress well illustrates the obstacles the Christian meets.

Comment: In other words, if we know we have a weakness, we are to avoid, as far as possible, anything that would be a temptation.

Reply: We make straight paths for our feet when we look directly ahead to the goal that the new creature desires and do not let the old nature distract, attract, or divert us into devious paths, for temptations will come. While the Lord removes all the stones directly *in* the path, there will be temptations and enemies on each *side* of the path. One temptation will call to go this way; another will call to go that way. The Devil knows our weaknesses only too well. Because of their unique posture in observing us in our personal lives, the invisible fallen spirit beings easily see our weaknesses. They see us not at our Sunday best but as we really are. Hence they know our weak points only too well and try to divert us from the path of righteousness by temptations along the way. We

hear, as it were, the voice of a siren (a woman) or a person giving us seemingly rational and good advice, but it is not the advice of the Lord. Do not lose focus and enter the path of the wicked.

“Go not in the way of evil men.” We are to *observe* what is going on and to *recognize* bad company. This is a form of *judging*. For example, it may be just the house of mirth. A Christian can laugh, but if mirth becomes a style or mode of living, it should be avoided. Or consider a boy who is trying to do what is right. Others tempt him, telling him to prove he is a man and not a square by smoking. If he gives in to the temptation, he becomes addicted.

Prov. 4:15 Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.

Side paths can be very injurious to the new creature. Do not enter into them even for a few steps, for entering even a little makes it harder to back out. Flee from side paths as though they are enemies and your life is in jeopardy.

Prov. 4:16 For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall.

This verse tells the motivation of the evil class: “they sleep not, except they have done mischief; [and] ... unless they cause some to fall.” Some may even try this with humor, as though this were a sport and not really vicious. But the fun is at the expense of the Christian. In our innocence and guilelessness, we may not be aware of the dangers involved. One safeguard is to back up and observe the general atmosphere of the situation—even where friends are involved.

“Their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall.” This is real mischief. Such people plot how to victimize the Christian in temptation.

Comment: Proverbs 1:10–19 presents the same thought.

Reply: Yes, sinners entice the Christian right after the initial drawing of the high calling. The temptation mentioned in Chapter 1 is the *reward* of the wicked. In that case, the evil or temptation to disobedience is more obvious, but the reward can cause our downfall. Here in Chapter 4 we are told of the wiliness, the craftiness, of the temptation and of the motivation of the tempter (it is his *delight* to entrap and pollute us). The base nature of man brags about his sins.

Comment: We have chapters and chapters of instruction. Can they be summed up with the instruction to “*love* righteousness” and to “*hate* iniquity”?

Reply: Yes, that broad desire should be our constant prayer. To *love* righteousness means we must be *filled* with it. As Jesus said, “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me” (John 4:34) Obeying the Father was his basic desire. David was a man after God’s own heart because he yearned for His company and would be satisfied just to be a gate keeper rather than have a position of prominence if that meant the difference between his failure and success.

Prov. 4:17 For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence.

Prov. 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

(Psa. 97:11) "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." Light is likened to seed that is planted and buried. Of course it takes time for the sprouting seed to break the surface of the ground and come up. In other words, the Lord has thought of our needs, particularly as new creatures, and has made arrangements to satisfy them; light has been sown and is thus available for us. Light brings joy and happiness; truth rejuvenates and uplifts us.

(Psa. 119:105,130) "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." The Word is likened to a lamp that shines ahead on the path, and yet from another standpoint, the entrance of God's words upon the mind and heart makes a light inside the individual.

Comment: Not long ago it was mentioned with regard to Psalm 119:105 that the lamp shines immediately ahead of our feet and the light shines ahead into the distance.

(2 Pet. 1:19) "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." This verse shows the importance of prophecy or dispensational truth. Dispensationally, we are in the end time, so it is proportionately important to stay in God's light. The word of prophecy is *more sure* than the voice the apostles heard and what they saw on the Mount of Transfiguration. As wonderful as that experience was, God's Word of instruction is far more valuable because the experience was but for a moment and we live every day by the Word. The "day star" is the sun, which represents Jesus.

(Rom. 13:12) "The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light."

We are judged by our effort to do what is right, and not necessarily by our success, for we have the robe of Christ's righteousness to cover unintentional sin. We are measured by our exertion (our will) in trying to obey God. The Father is pleased by our daily effort and struggle, our persistency in straining forward to the goal.

No matter what part of the Gospel Age an individual lives in, the light that is due is made available, and it will be understood by the individual who has the right heart condition and is endeavoring to obey.

Comment: It is significant that verse 18 did not end after "shining light." The clause "that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" proves that the light is *progressive* and that it is necessary to *keep exercising* ourselves in that direction.

Reply: The end or "part B" is the dispensational aspect. Christians will be enlightened both as a class and as individuals as the enlightenment comes "more and more unto the perfect day." Personal obedience is rewarded with proportionate light and instruction.

Prov. 4:19 The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble.

“The way of the wicked is as darkness” because they have no objective. Each day they seek pleasure and gain; they have no long-term goal.

Comment: They do not even realize they are stumbling.

Reply: “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. 14:12).

Prov. 4:20 My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings.

Prov. 4:21 Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart.

In Old Testament times, the Israelites had *visual* signs to remind them of Scripture, eg, frontlets on their foreheads. *Audible* instruction is also important. In fact, that which is both seen and heard is remembered better.

Prov. 4:22 For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh.

(Prov. 16:24) “Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.”

(Prov. 12:18) “There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health.”

Prov. 4:23 Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

(Matt. 12:34,35) “... out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.”

Prov. 4:24 Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee.

(Prov. 16:28) “A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends.” “Put away from thee a froward mouth” because it “soweth strife.” It brings forth no fruit, nothing of substance to benefit man, but just thorns and discomfiture.

Prov. 4:25 Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.

Prov. 4:26 Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.

“Ponder the path of thy feet” would be like taking an inventory of one’s actions from time to time.

Prov. 4:27 Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.

(Heb. 12:1) “And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.” Time does heal. When certain habits are initially given up, it can be a real struggle. But as each day, week, and month go by and the habit is resisted, the temptation gradually eases. That which is lame can be healed by keeping straight paths, but not overnight.

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

Proverbs 5

Prov. 5:1 My son, attend unto my wisdom, and bow thine ear to my understanding:

(Prov. 2:1) “My son, ... receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee.”

(Prov. 3:1) “My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments.”

(Prov. 4:1) “Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding.”

How often the admonition is repeated of the importance of paying attention to the instruction in the Book of Proverbs! Repetition is necessary because we quickly forget. The information is very important because of the dangers to the Christian life.

Prov. 5:2 That thou mayest regard discretion, and that thy lips may keep knowledge.

In verse 1 we are once again cautioned to be attentive and to incline our ear to instruction, and verse 2 gives the reason: “that thou mayest regard discretion, and that thy lips may keep knowledge.” If we continually keep in mind the dangers involved and the necessity to hearken to the voice of wisdom, then we will be able to discern a temptation as much *in advance* as possible—that is, *before* we get entangled.

“That thy lips may keep knowledge.” “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Matt. 12:34). Getting in with the wrong company and not being attentive to wisdom leads the new creature to compromise. Instead the Christian should leave the scene.

Prov. 5:3 For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil:

Verse 3 tells of the danger of a “strange woman,” who has an attractive line of talk (sweet talk). The nation of Israel had itching ears; they wanted prophets to preach pleasant and complimentary things to them. Because of this trait they were condemned as a people. Likewise, complimentary words are a characteristic of the strange woman, for they break down barriers. Dale Carnegie wrote and lectured on “How To Make Friends and Influence People.” He advised starting with a little pep talk to win confidence before presenting the real pitch.

The lips of the strange woman “drop as an honeycomb.” The drops of a honeycomb are an overflowing of honey from the comb. Hence the drippings are the sweetest part of the honey, for eating the honeycomb with the honey mixes in a wax flavor. The drippings are pure, undiluted sweet honey. In other words, the strange woman has an attractive approach to ensnare the individual.

“Her mouth [palate] is smoother than oil.” While one can draw a spiritual lesson on a higher level—the “strange woman” being appealing but erroneous doctrine, for example—probably, numerically speaking, the greater number of the Lord’s people fall

along the lines of *literal* sexuality. Look at the world today. Even in programs of a high nature, sex seems to permeate and this trend imperils the nation.

If one listens to smooth talk from the opposite sex and is attracted and there is an embracing, the lips are not sufficient. Soul or throat kissing is the next step in the pattern. And what follows almost invariably? Sexual intercourse. Animal desires overcome the individual, and many Christians have fallen in this way. Chapter 5 warns that since this is the case, when you see or sense a trap, flee from it as fast as possible. Otherwise, it will be overpowering to the imperfect flesh. Our flesh has basic desires, so wisdom is to get out of harm's way.

Later in the Book of Proverbs the Christian will have another experience. The Christian may be very dutiful in skirting the temptation described here in Chapter 5, but sometimes the woman is so forward that she takes the initiative. One can be overtaken by the suddenness of the approach. Chapter 7 tells how she lifts up an impudent face and kisses him and then tells him that she has everything planned back at the house, for the "goodman" (Jesus) has gone off on a journey. Chapter 5 is warning to watch out *before* there is any entanglement in the pleasures of sin. The Christian should be sufficiently instructed along this line, so that if a "strange woman" throws her arms around him, as it were, he will instinctively break away.

Consider the example of Joseph in Egypt. Potiphar's wife spoke to him on several occasions and then openly tried to entice him. He had to tear himself away, his robe being left behind. When the first method did not work, she became more aggressive, trying to entrap him when no one was around.

Repetition of instruction is essential because of the dangers. Many Christians have been a hair's breadth from falling. What a delicate balance—that one's entire career or walk can be ruined by yielding to temptation! The end thereof is the death of the new creature.

"Strange woman" is also translated "loose woman" (RSV) and "adulterous woman" (NIV and Leeser). Later the woman is seen to be married, so the sin becomes adultery rather than just fornication.

In the spiritual picture, the smooth talk of the mother and the daughters can lead to death. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell [gehenna] than yourselves" (Matt. 23:15).

Prov. 5:4 But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a twoedged sword.

Wormwood is contrasted with the honey and the honeycomb of verse 3. On one end of the spectrum is wormwood, and on the opposite end of the spectrum is honey. While at first appearance the pleasures of sin seem to be as sweet as honey, they are abnormal and dangerous—they lead to death. While this type of sin may seem like honey in the mouth, in the belly it is wormwood. Sin has its momentary pleasures, but it is the downfall of the individual. The end is wormwood.

The opposite of the strange woman's mouth being smooth like oil is a "sharp ... twoedged sword." The oil is an unguent, a balm, a salve for open sores. In contrast, the sword is sharp and cutting.

Comment: Ecclesiastes 7:26 is a cross-reference: "And I find more bitter than death the woman, whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her."

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

The end being death is a theme that is repeated over and over in the Book of Proverbs. "Her steps take hold on hell [*sheol*]."

Prov. 5:6 Lest thou shouldst ponder the path of life, her ways are moveable, that thou canst not know them.

The Hebrew for this verse is difficult to translate. The second "thou" is translated "she" in several versions. The Revised Standard Version reads, "She does not take heed to the path of life; her ways wander, and she does not know it." The Hebrew can be either pronoun, but "thou" in the King James seems to be more accurate.

It is dangerous to even ponder temptation, for decision making should be done *in advance* of the temptation. Delaying in the face of temptation gives the serpent an opportunity to strike. We should go by our former instincts of instruction. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

"Her ways are moveable," ie, devious, shifty.

Prov. 5:7 Hear me now therefore, O ye children, and depart not from the words of my mouth.

Q: Is the plural "O ye children" significant, as opposed to "O my son"? The last time the plural was used (Chapter 4), Jesus was speaking instead of the Heavenly Father.

A: Yes, the plural is significant, but in what way we do not know.

Prov. 5:8 Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house:

In Proverbs 7, as Solomon was looking out a window, he first saw a naive traveler and then he saw a woman and her house down a side street. Step by step she entrapped the traveler. As soon as a Christian senses such a temptation, he or she should be scared to death.

Prov. 5:9 Lest thou give thine honour unto others, and thy years unto the cruel:

This verse is very sad. When one has spent many years of sincere consecration with an abiding interest in God and His Word and His leadings, it is very sad to see him or her get entrapped. In nature we are saddened to see a cute little animal get devoured by a viper or ferocious beast. We think, "How foolish to get within range of a real enemy!" And so years of consecration and goodness can go down the drain in a moment.

While it is possible for a Christian to fall and then be retrieved, the Book of Proverbs is showing that, numerically speaking, the chances of deliverance for a consecrated individual who commits adultery are very, very small. Probably a great number of Christians have had narrow escapes from Second Death by resisting temptation along this line. The advice of verse 8 is to flee and not get even near the house of the loose woman.

Comment: “When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and *commit iniquity*, all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, *he shall die for it*” (Ezek 33:13). Of those who commit grievous sin, some like to say, “Remember all the good he has done.”

Reply: That is an excellent cross-reference.

Comment: The viewpoint expressed is of the man being seduced by the woman, but the situation can be vice versa.

Reply: Yes, the application can be both ways. Many do not realize that the Scriptures are oriented to the male because the man pictures Christ and the woman is the espoused virgin.

Comment: Ezekiel 18 is good, and particularly verse 24: “But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.”

Reply: That is why verse 9 is so sad: “Lest thou give thine *honour* unto others, and thy years [of righteousness] unto the cruel.”

Q: Is the destiny here in Proverbs 5 strictly Second Death, or could one be retrieved and still get life?

A: The individual is not retrieved, for Proverbs 5 takes the polarized view of the great danger of the hypnotic influence of seduction. The picture is taken in the extreme, showing Second Death as the destiny. If a moderate picture had been used, people would seize upon it. The danger and the severity of seduction are emphasized here. To show a way of escape would undercut the power of the picture.

Q: If one had earned honors and then fell, could the individual still get life but without the honors?

A: Not in this picture. Extrication from this situation is most difficult, so that possibility is not presented here.

Comment: Perhaps one good illustration would be the Nazarite vow, which is spiritually comparable to consecration. Under that vow the hair was growing, but if one became unclean, all the hair was cut off. In other words, all the previous honor and righteousness were forgotten. If that individual was retrieved, he would have to start all over again growing the hair, for everything good of the past was washed away by the serious transgression.

Comment: If one does not have the strength to avoid the pitfall in the first place, how much more strength it takes to get out of the pitfall!

Reply: Even from a natural standpoint, it becomes more hopeless. There is a way of escape, but it requires deep remorse and straight walking thereafter. This is very difficult to do, for the individual becomes weaker and weaker in the sin.

Prov. 5:10 **Lest strangers be filled with thy wealth; and thy labours be in the house of a stranger;**

The King James margin has “strength”: “Lest strangers be filled with thy strength.” The Revised Standard reads, “Lest strangers take their fill of your strength, and your labors go to the house of an alien.”

Sometimes an enemy, in capturing an animal, will inject it with a parasite or the eggs of a parasite. The host animal then dies from the parasite, for the parasite weakens and weakens it, taking all of its vitality. The strange woman and her friends similarly sap the strength of the victim. In one case of a consecrated couple where the sister deflected, the deflection got so bad that the brother had to move out of the house and live like a bachelor, for the house became a pandemonium of orgies.

Prov. 5:11 **And thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed,**

Verse 11 suggests the parasitic view.

Prov. 5:12 **And say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof;**

The word “despised” can mean “disregarded”: “my heart disregarded reproof.” Over and over the Book of Proverbs gives the advice of wisdom, telling us what to do and what not to do.

Prov. 5:13 **And have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me!**

Notice the exclamation point!

The lives of many of the consecrated change as they move from one location to another. Their experiences may vary, but if they are rightly exercised and sincere, their instruction continues.

Comment: The plural “teachers” and “them that instructed me” are significant. When someone does stray, the Lord uses *multiple* agencies to bring the individual back.

Reply: Yes, when one moves from one location to another, the Lord somehow raises up individuals to help the sincere Christian in his new locale. For example, if a sister is unequally yoked, she must follow her husband to a new job location and situation. The Lord’s arm is not shortened. And so “teachers” is plural.

Prov. 5:14 **I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly.**

This is an unusual verse. Here is a faint, faint hope of retrieval. It is like a plaintive, sad voice that is speaking.

Comment: Solomon himself must have felt the sentiments expressed in verse 14. He realized how close he was to losing all life.

Reply: Yes, like the Book of Job, the Book of Proverbs was written as an act of contrition.

Q: Does the term “in the midst of the congregation and assembly” mean spiritually that the Christian can seemingly be in good company, right in the ecclesia, but eventually the hypocrisy comes out? The gross sin can be carried on secretly for a time while the individual is still meeting with other Christians.

A: Yes.

Comment: In other words, if someone has gone back into the world, it is obvious the individual has strayed and is in sin, but it can happen even when one is seemingly living a Christian life.

Reply: Many years ago, an active prostitute attended an ecclesia from time to time on Sundays. In another class, there was an individual who was always criticizing others and refusing to vote for any elders or deacons. It turned out he was a smoker.

The Christian way is very difficult, but the rewards are great for those who diligently pursue the right course. We need the Lord’s grace continually. We can never boast as one having put off the armor—ie, as one who does not need the armor—for the forces of evil are greater than we. Only by God’s grace can we stand.

Verse 15 continues in the same vein but from a slightly different approach.

Comment: The words toward the end of the Vow urging caution between the two sexes are very appropriate for the thoughts here in Proverbs 5. “I further vow, that with the exceptions below, I will at all times and in all places, conduct myself toward those of the opposite sex in private exactly as I would do with them in public—in the presence of a congregation of the Lord’s people. And, so far as reasonably possible, I will avoid being in the same room with any of the opposite sex alone, unless the door to the room stand wide open. Exceptions in the case of brethren—wife, children, mother, and natural sisters. In the case of sisters—husband, children, father, and natural brothers.” This portion of the vow is a help in being obedient to Proverbs 5.

Reply: The vow certainly is in harmony with the spirit of warning to make straight paths for our feet. We should skirt, avoid, and walk around trouble rather than enter into dangerous environments.

Prov. 5:15 Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well.

The previous context of this chapter furnishes light as to what is referred to here. In the marriage relationship, ardor and romance are initially experienced. However, as the years go by, man, as a base creature, wants to experiment and seek new pleasures—and hence

may look elsewhere to satisfy his physical desires. The Lord is saying to stay at home and not to experiment or dabble on the outside with other personalities (described in verse 17 as “strangers”). “Strangers” would apply to those outside the marriage relationship both in the truth and in the world. The husband should be a homebody and not look for other waters of pleasure to satisfy his thirst, lust, or animal desires. Since a physical attraction between men and women is implanted in their nature, becoming bored with one’s spouse is a very dangerous condition. One should “drink waters out of thine own cistern,” ie, out of one’s own married life.

Prov. 5:16 Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of waters in the streets.

Comment: The Revised Standard and the New International versions have this verse in a question form: “Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets?”

Reply: Yes, this verse should be considered as a question that would be answered in the negative.

Prov. 5:17 Let them be only thine own, and not strangers’ with thee.

In society today, adultery and fornication are commonplace, whereas in the old days extramarital affairs were considered scandalous, and properly so.

Prov. 5:18 Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth.

As time goes on in the married relationship, the husband may look elsewhere for satisfaction instead of rejoicing with the “wife of thy youth.” The wife too may look elsewhere. The advice is to “let thy fountain [at home] be blessed”; ie, let the physical aspect be confined to the marital relationship. Avoid extracurricular activities. Be faithful to the marriage vows.

Comment: Ecclesiastes 12:1 states, “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.” In our youth we see more of the purity of the Lord, but as time goes on, we can get distracted. We need to return to our first covenant, our first commitment.

Reply: Yes, that would be the secondary application, for the physical application has done more damage to the true Church. Both need watch-care, however.

Prov. 5:19 Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love.

“Let her [the wife of one’s youth] be as the loving hind and pleasant roe.... be thou ravished always with her love [and do not look elsewhere].”

Prov. 5:20 And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger?

This verse is also a question to be answered in the negative.

Prov. 5:21 For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings.

Comment: The New International Version ends with “he examines all his paths.”

Comment: Leeser says, “And all his tracks doth he weigh in the balance.”

This verse refers to the consecrated because their experiences are especially scrutinized in the present age. The unconsecrated will be taken care of in other ways; for example, “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, *Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord*” (Rom. 12:19). Because of the genetic factor, the Lord does not have to record each dastardly deed done by a worldly person. Not only are a person’s deeds recorded in his own mind, but how each deed affects others is also recorded in his mind. Therefore, the Lord does not have to personally behold each evil act, for doing so continually would have a degrading effect, even for the Heavenly Father.

For His children, who are the “apple” of His eye, God has set guardian angels. For problems too difficult for the guardian angels to handle, they can go to Jesus or the Father. But if a consecrated individual truly abandons himself to the ways of evil, he is just forsaken. One who begins to love evil is in a dangerous condition.

Verse 21 is telling that deeds supposedly done in secret are not secret to God.

Prov. 5:22 His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins.

Verse 22 is saying: Sow a thought; reap a deed. Sow a deed; reap a habit. Sow a habit; reap a character. Sow a character; reap a destiny. The further one plunges into sin, the weaker he gets and the closer he comes to incorrigibility. If one is immersed as deeply as possible in spiritual and constructive thinking, he is strengthened spiritually.

Comment: The NIV says, “The evil deeds of a wicked man ensnare him; the cords of the sin hold him fast.” This translation gives the thought of an animal being caught in a trap.

Comment: James 1:14,15 applies: “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”

Prov. 5:23 He shall die without instruction; and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.

When this verse is applied to the new creature, it refers to Second Death.

Comment: The RSV has “He dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great folly he is lost.” This puts the responsibility more on the individual for not resisting the temptation.

Reply: In other words, “he shall die without heeding instruction.” The Lord gives the instruction, but when it is not heeded, the result is disaster for the individual.

Comment: Nabal is an example of being infatuated with “the greatness of his folly.” He refused to give food provisions to David and his army, even though they had protected his temporal goods. The next night Nabal was drunk at a banquet he had prepared with plenty of food. His character was evil, and his folly was to hold a big banquet after having

just refused food to David. Nabal died that day “without instruction” and “in the greatness of his folly” (see 1 Samuel 25).

Evidently Bathsheba was a better woman than may at first appear to be the case. Since complimentary things are said about her, she was not the enticer. She seemed to have a love for righteousness.

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

Proverbs 6

Prov. 6:1 My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, if thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger,

Verses 1–5 pertain to not being surety for a friend, stranger, or neighbor, for there are inherent dangers. Promissory notes, affidavits, and cosigning a bank loan are examples of *financial* surety. Being surety for one who is unstable in financial dealings can be like a blank check arrangement because it confirms the person in irresponsibility. Not only is the party encouraged to spend more and borrow more, but the one who provides the surety incurs financial liability and uncertainty.

Comment: One remedy is to give a gift of a certain amount of money without expecting the party to pay it back.

Comment: If someone asks for a loan, we should loan only an amount that we could afford to be without if it is not repaid. Hence it is really a gift. And there is another point: if the amount is clearly a loan and the brother defaults, or even if the money is a gift, he would probably be too ashamed to request additional money in the future.

Comment: An example of the principle of being surety is 1 Timothy 5:22, “Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men’s sins: keep thyself pure.” If we too hastily recommend a brother, we are responsible for our recommendation.

Reply: Many are too quick with their words, but a written recommendation incurs even more responsibility. If we really do not know the person’s character but endorse him anyway, then if gross error in either doctrine or conduct becomes apparent, we bear some of the blame. It is natural to want to encourage brethren, so an endorsement can be the result of good intentions, but on the other hand, we must not be naive in our benevolence.

Another way of being surety would be accepting an invitation to a social function, which, upon reflection, would be an immoral, risqué, or questionable situation that you would want to avoid as a new creature. It is humbling to retract an invitation, but say, for example, “I promised to attend, but now I am having second thoughts.” Thus there are times when we give our word for something that isn’t financial or endorsing someone doctrinally. (That does not mean we cannot attend a wedding or a funeral service in an environment we might not thoroughly approve, such as the Roman Catholic Church. We attend out of respect for the friend but can then exit immediately afterwards.)

Comment: Still another example of being surety is to either hire a brother yourself or to recommend that others hire him. Such an arrangement can cause problems.

Comment: Agreeing to sponsor someone who is coming to the United States from a foreign country is also surety. This might be done for a stranger or even for brethren whom we do not know well. Problems can result.

Prov. 6:2 Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, thou art taken with the words of thy mouth.

Prov. 6:3 Do this now, my son, and deliver thyself, when thou art come into the hand of thy friend; go, humble thyself, and make sure thy friend.

Prov. 6:4 Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eyelids.

Prov. 6:5 Deliver thyself as a roe from the hand of the hunter, and as a bird from the hand of the fowler.

Verses 3–5 are saying that if you were unwise enough to become surety for another, try to undo the matter as fast as possible. If necessary, humble and debase yourself, even if it is shameful for you. Otherwise, the surety will hang over your head like the sword of Damocles.

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

This verse is telling the sluggard: “Consider the ways of the ant.” “Sluggard” is “lazy one” in some translations. Other chapters of Proverbs mention a sluggard or slothfulness, as follows:

(Prov. 10:26) “As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him.” Vinegar and smoke are distasteful and irritating. And so a sluggard is distasteful when he is sent on an errand because he procrastinates.

(Prov. 13:4) “The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.” The sluggard desires things but does not want to work for them.

(Prov. 20:4) “The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing.” The sluggard does not want to endure any hardness or anything that costs him.

(Prov. 24:30–34) “I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man.” These verses describe the field or vineyard of a slothful man “void of understanding.” Due to negligence, carelessness, and inattentiveness, the vineyard did not bear fruit but was overgrown with thorns and nettles, and the protective wall around the vineyard was broken down. Spiritually, the vineyard represents the garden of the heart of the new creature. Christians have the hope of the high calling, but

what do they do about this desire? If they are not diligent in pulling out the weeds, watering the vineyard, etc., it will not produce choice fruit. Hence these verses pertain to the slothful Christian, who does not realize that the high heavenly calling means business. One must be active. Faith without works is dead (James 2:17).

(Prov. 26:13) “The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets.” The slothful man who says there is a lion in the streets is making a lame excuse. Rather than go out and work, he stays home with the excuse that danger lurks in the streets.

(Prov. 26:14) “As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed.” A slothful man turns in his bed the way a door turns on its hinges. In other words, just as the door never gets anywhere but grinds in place, so the slothful man is active but accomplishes nothing. The purpose of going in and out a door is for productive activity—whether a woman goes from room to room to clean, for example, or a man goes out to work in a field.

(Prov. 26:15) “The slothful hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth.” When a slothful man is hungry, he hides his hand instead of bringing it to his mouth. Spiritually, one may pray for wisdom but does not exercise himself to acquire that wisdom. He does not try to discern truth. The slothful one is not diligent in feeding himself from the Word of God because he is not sufficiently hungry. The food is on the table, but he keeps his hand in his bosom and does not feed himself. Figuratively, the hiding of the hand would picture one who is satisfied with his present understanding of truth and does not desire to understand the Bible in any more depth. In other words, the criticism is against indolence in acquiring spiritual food.

(Prov. 26:16) “The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason.” The sluggard will not take instruction. Spiritually also, he does not desire dispensational truth from the seven messengers.

Prov. 6:7 Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler,

Prov. 6:8 Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.

There is a saying that the ant is busier than the proverbial bee. The ant is self-motivated, needing no overseer or ruler. And so the faithful Christian does not need an overseer to keep prompting or prodding him, for he serves the Lord of his own initiative. He sees the necessity for doing certain things and then goes ahead and does them. He provides “meat” (spiritual food) for himself both in the summer and in the harvest; ie, he desires and seeks truth that has applied throughout the Christian age as well as dispensational truth. In other words, as the ant observes the literal seasons, so the Christian discerns spiritual seasons.

Whether or not an ant stores food is a controversy with some authorities. One writer says that the Bible is inaccurate on this point, that the ant does not store food. However, depending on what region and what kind of ant, the insect does store food. In the United States such ants are called “harvesting ants.” Providing food in the summer and storing food in the harvest indicates a twofold work. The ant hibernates in the winter.

There are several peculiarities with regard to the ant. (1) "The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer" (Prov. 30:25). From man's perspective the ant is not strong; in fact, it is so insignificant we step on it. But actually the ant carries burdens two and three times its body size. (2) Some anthills contain a lot of seeds—and sometimes very valuable seeds. The odd thing is that when the ant gathers seeds, they are somehow preserved so that they do not ferment. According to a law in the Mishnah, when an anthill containing valuable seeds is found before the reaping of the harvest, it belongs to the owner of the property on which it is found, but if the anthill is found after reaping, it belongs to the poor. An eyewitness account says that a person took a bushel of wheat and poured it into a hill near an anthill. As soon as the ants found the wheat hill, it diminished with amazing speed. The ants marched in columns back and forth to their anthill—so fast, in fact, that it looked as if the seeds were walking and had legs because the seeds were bigger than the ants. If a farmer finds an anthill near his crops, he tries to destroy it as soon as possible lest the ants destroy the crops.

The little ant is very industrious and it plans for the future. In this sense, it has been said that the ant is more advanced than any other "animal." For instance, an anthill may have five stories with chambers, rooms, and hallways. What the ants build is actually a house. The lesson for the new creature is that in order to develop, we must think of the future and provide not only materially (with moderation of course) but especially spiritually, for we are to lay up treasures in heaven.

Prov. 6:9 How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?

Hypothetically, the sluggard will not arise out of his sleep, for he has all kinds of reasons and excuses for remaining inactive.

Prov. 6:10 Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep:

The sluggard is inactive all day; this is his manner of life.

Prov. 6:11 So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.

This verse is repeated in Proverbs 24:34, quoted earlier. The Hebrew for "traveling" means "walking with energy." An even better translation would be "stalker," one who is stalking and watching for the opportune moment, such as the lion that stalks the baby gazelle and waits for the right moment to pounce. Spiritually speaking, Satan and other enemies of the new creature are waiting for the opportune moment to surprise the victim. Destruction comes suddenly, as by "an armed man" who watches for a person to rob. The stalker (the Devil and his agents, and others through greed and selfishness) is right on the heels of the Christian. Thus the new creature must be constantly on guard. The sluggard is ill-prepared, derelict, and careless regarding any contingency that might arise with his food or possessions. Consequently, it is just a matter of time until he becomes a victim of his own carelessness.

Comment: In the Song of Solomon, the Great Company makes excuses and is too drowsy to get out of bed. Also, Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 5:5,6 that we should be children of the light and of the day and not sleep. Especially in times of peril and danger, the new creature should be even more watchful. "Watch and pray," Jesus told us.

Prov. 6:12 A naughty person, a wicked man, walketh with a froward mouth.

Prov. 6:13 He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers;

“He winketh with his eyes.” If a person who is devising mischief is with people who know his ways and character, a wink or a look would be very meaningful. It is a “you know what I mean” look.

“He speaketh with his feet, ... [and] teacheth with his fingers.” This would be body language.

Prov. 6:14 Frowardness is in his heart, he deviseth mischief continually; he soweth discord.

This “naughty person” (verse 12) is a *wicked* person, a scoundrel and a villain, one who goes into Second Death (verse 15). He walks “with a froward mouth,” devises “mischief continually,” and sows “discord.” People with a sadistic strain get satisfaction out of causing problems. Sowing discord is pleasure and sport to them, a form of recreation.

Walking “with a froward mouth” can be teasing, raising a provocative question unnecessarily, playing the devil’s advocate, etc. (On the other hand, it is wrong for brethren to always avoid controversial subjects, for sometimes these need airing. Earnest discussion is in order, as long as it does not lead to bitterness.) The person with the forward mouth stirs up a lot of trouble.

Prov. 6:15 Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly; suddenly shall he be broken without remedy.

This incorrigible individual is broken suddenly without hope or remedy; ie, he goes into Second Death. Stirring up trouble is his continual nature. In certain cases it is necessary to bring up a sensitive issue as a principle, but when sowing discord is a way of life, the individual is a thorn, a briar, a thistle.

Prov. 6:16 These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him:

Why is this unique method used instead of just saying, “Seven things are an abomination unto the Lord”? Why state “six” first and then change it to “seven”?

Comment: This same method is used in Proverbs 30:15,16, “The horseleach hath two daughters, crying, Give, give. There are *three things* that are never satisfied, yea, *four things* say not, It is enough: The grave; and the barren womb; the earth that is not filled with water; and the fire that saith not, It is enough.”

“Seven” is a sacred number, generally speaking. Sometimes “seven” means completion, but even then it is usually completion regarding *religious* things. “Ten” generally means *secular* completion.

Since the number seven is sacred and Proverbs 6:16 is introducing seven abominations, the verse did not mention “seven” immediately but used a clutch, as it were: six, and then

seven. If the Lord had approved of the seven, if they were things the Lord loves, the verse probably would have stated directly, "These seven things doth the LORD love." The principle is the same in Proverbs 30:15, as the number four pertains to the four attributes of God as the Creator.

Comment: In the King James margin, the last phrase "unto him" is "of his soul" in the Hebrew. We do not often take time to think of the Heavenly Father as having a soul.

Prov. 6:17 A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,

Verses 17–19 list the seven things the Lord hates: (1) a proud look, (2) a lying tongue, (3) hands that shed innocent blood, (4) a heart that devises wicked imaginations, (5) feet that are swift in running to mischief, (6) a false witness that speaks lies, and (7) one who sows discord among brethren.

A proud look is a form of body language, a characteristic pose of the individual. The chin is up and a stiffness indicates superiority. Of course we must be careful not to misinterpret a genuinely stately, erect bearing as pride. There is true nobility and there is false nobility. True nobility of stature, demeanor, behavior, or dress is certainly not out of order.

Comment: The first three categories are thought, word, and deed. One must *think* proud thoughts in order to have a proud look. One *speaks* with a lying tongue. One *acts* to shed innocent blood. It seems to be a progression in these evil abominations.

Reply: Yes, and it is difficult to control the tongue. The Apostle James said we would have to be perfect to be able to control the tongue on all occasions. The tongue is likened to the tiny rudder that can steer a mighty ship. The tongue is also likened to a little match that can start a forest fire.

What about a lying tongue? There is a tendency to exaggerate and to fabricate, but just like the proud look, the "lying tongue" in this context is a manner of life, the normal behavior of the individual.

All of these abominations must be kept in mind lest we, as new creatures, go down these avenues, which can easily be entered.

"Hands that shed innocent blood" would be deeds, actions. The key word is "innocent." A prison executioner would be guiltless because any deaths he caused would be following judicial trial and a conviction through due process of law; this would not be innocent blood but condemned blood. Hence there are certain occasions where blood can be shed without incurring special culpability.

Murder is an obvious example of shedding innocent blood, but sometimes this occurs in a more subtle way.

Q: Does the shedding of blood have to be literal, or could it also be a disposition to oppose truth, thus causing another to suffer?

A: That is true. It could also be commiserating or agreeing with others against an innocent person, who may be literally slain as a result or whose character may be assassinated.

This verse is a warning to Christians in the nominal system not to participate in the persecution of true Christians under the label of “heretic.” Some have put true Christians to death as heretics and even thanked God for the privilege of doing so. One should go out of his way to try to get the facts straight before countenancing judgments against another.

This advice has been helpful to Christians down through the Gospel Age. It is a warning to watch out for a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood. In other words, we must distinguish between truth and rumors that can be, and often are, false. We should try to go to the source or to at least obtain a creditable confirmation. Care should be exercised lest we shed innocent blood, literal or figurative.

Comment: We could be guilty of shedding innocent blood if we cause someone to leave the truth.

Prov. 6:18 **An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief,**

“An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations” would be a mind that plans evil against others. Of course unclean, unwanted thoughts and suggestions may go through our minds and we must fight them, but this is a conscious effort to cultivate such thoughts. All seven of these abominations have an adverse reaction on *others*. The proud look may seem to be the least repercussive in its effect, but it is harmful. Some people look for a leader who thinks, speaks, and acts like a leader without analyzing the *substance* of that leader, without examining what he stands for and his effect. Many follow a leader because of his charisma and actually like the proud look. In other words, the lying tongue affects others, the shedding of innocent blood, wicked imaginations, feet that run to mischief, sowing discord, bearing false witness, and a proud look cause injury to others who are *innocent*.

“Feet that be swift in running to [do] mischief.” Such a person is readily given to doing mischief.

Prov. 6:19 **A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.**

“A false witness that speaketh lies.” A false witness is a lying tongue on a specific occasion, as opposed to a *habitual* lying tongue. Giving false witness in a trial is an abomination because it helps to condemn an innocent person. In the court setting this is done under oath, but one can also be a false witness in everyday life. If we hear someone else give a false witness, we should counteract it. Therefore, (1) we must guard lest we ourselves be a false witness, and (2) we must defend one who is being victimized through the false witness of another person.

“He that soweth discord among brethren.” Such characters have no intrinsic good; they are thorns and thistles. Not constructive, they are always criticizing. They have no fruit, no food, no inspirational value along holier and loftier lines.

All seven abominations are *habits* of life, and possibly the seven are listed in ascending order, with one abomination leading to the next. It can be hard to ascertain a proud look

unless we have some background or personal information about the individual. Since a lying tongue professes to speak truth, we need to analyze the words spoken, and this is also sometimes difficult to do. As the list of seven progresses, the acts become more outward and thus are more easily discernible. For the seven to be an ascending order of abomination, the shedding of innocent blood would have to be figurative.

We should be able to recognize when someone is sowing discord among brethren. Such a person is looking for trouble.

The Song of Solomon was probably written when Solomon was younger (in his forties) and most in harmony with the Lord. The Book of Proverbs was written next and Ecclesiastes in his old age.

Q: Do verses 16–19 relate back to verses 12–15? There are seven sins in each case. First, we are told about seven characteristics of a wicked person who goes into Second Death, and then the seven are reiterated as being habitual traits the Lord hates.

A: Yes, the verses are related. The destiny of such individuals is permanent extinction.

Comment: In both listings, sowing discord is the seventh, and apparently the worst, abomination of a wicked person.

Prov. 6:20 My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother:

The "father" would be the Heavenly Father; the "mother," the Sarah Covenant. In the language of the Book of Proverbs, the "mother" is true wisdom, but the consecrated are under the rules and regulations of the Grace or Sarah Covenant, for Sarah, the new Jerusalem, the mother of Isaac, is "the mother of us all." (The old Jerusalem, the old Law Covenant, is pictured by Hagar, the mother of Ishmael.)

Prov. 6:21 Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck.

This thought is similar to Proverbs 3:3.

Prov. 6:22 When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee.

"When thou goest, it shall lead thee." As far as possible, we should be thinking about the truth, God's Word, for in proportion as we are immersed in the truth, it will be a form of protection to us or at least it will retard intrusion into our time and thinking.

"When thou sleepest, it shall keep thee." If we pray at night, asking forgiveness for the day's transgressions and expressing reverence, thanks, and appreciation for God's mercies and blessings, the effect will be conducive to our repose at night. It is also profitable to read Scripture just before ending the day's activities.

"When thou awakest, it shall talk with thee." When we go to sleep with truth thoughts in our mind, we are more apt to wake up also thinking about the Lord and His Word.

Comment: Verse 22 is nicely worded in the NIV: “When you walk, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; when you awake, they will speak to you.”

Comment: The Book of Deuteronomy commands the Jewish people to put Scriptures on their foreheads, on door posts, on garments, on their fingers, around their necks, etc.

Reply: In a sense Catholics are following the Law when they wear scapulas, but instead of keeping Scripture as a memento, they substitute human beings such as St. Joseph. Day and night the Christian is to *figuratively* bind Scriptures about his neck and hold them close to his heart.

Prov. 6:23 For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life:

The “commandment” would be the Word of God, our lamp. “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet” (Psa. 119:105). “The commandment is a lamp; and the law is [lamp] light.” The lamp gives or produces light; the light is a result of the lamp. If the “commandment” is the Word of God, then *enlightenment* (teaching or instruction) comes from that lamp. God’s Word is the source of our instruction through the Holy Spirit.

(Psa. 19:8) “The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.” The lamp of God enlightens our eyes and the path before us.

“Reproofs of instruction [God’s providences] are the way of life.” For example, His providence may remove all of our temporal goods overnight. As a general rule, nothing can happen to the Lord’s people unless He permits the experience. An exception would be where our own foolishness is detrimental. Thus there are two kinds of reproof or discipline: for wrongdoing and for right doing.

Prov. 6:24 To keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman.

This verse is tied in with verse 23. The purpose of the enlightenment, instruction, and guidance of the Lord is to protect one from being overcome and trapped by the “evil woman” and from her flattery. Those who are given to types and symbolism usually interpret the strange or evil woman metaphorically to depict heretical doctrine emanating from a false religious system. However, based on the whole Book of Proverbs and the frequency with which this subject is discussed, the primary emphasis is on the literal and not the symbolic. Most Christians who fall succumb along the lines of the flesh and lust. Satan has capitalized on this temptation all down the Gospel Age, and he has been successful with many Christians, no matter how educated or uneducated they are. The instruction coming from God through His Word is a safeguard *if we heed it*. The battle begins in the mind with the attraction of an “evil woman.” God warns us what to do and what not to do. The response to the temptation is up to us.

Flattery is dangerous because it tends to soften up an individual for the kill. To ingratiate himself and receive favor, the lawyer who opposed Paul at a certain hearing addressed the governor “Most noble Felix” (Acts 24:3).

Comment: Much of the problem in the world today seems to be women leading the men astray.

Reply: It works both ways, but of course if women walk around in seductive clothing, they arouse the baser instincts of men and should not wonder why they are harassed.

Prov. 6:25 Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids.

The implication is that the strange woman is presenting herself in an enticing fashion and that her eyes act as bait (sometimes called a “come hither” look).

Comment: The New Testament cautions against lusting after a woman: “Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matt. 5:28).

Reply: Such thoughts, if harbored, lead to an act.

Prov. 6:26 For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread: and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life.

By means of a whore, “a man is brought to a piece of bread.” “For by means of a harlot, one is brought down to the last loaf of bread” (Leeser’s). The man is reduced to such a low situation that he has difficulty getting even a loaf of bread. Whatever his state previously, he is down to the barest sustenance of life, but that is only half of the story. The verse continues, “And the adulteress will hunt for the precious life.”

The adulteress is a designing woman—she is not satisfied but wants the loaf of bread too, the very necessity of life itself.

(Prov. 29:3) “Whoso loveth wisdom rejoiceth his father: but he that keepeth company with harlots spendeth his substance [down to his very soul].” For one who is consecrated to commit such a sin would be an example of selling the Holy Spirit.

Prov. 6:27 Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?

No!

Prov. 6:28 Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?

“Can one *walk barefoot* upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?” No!

Satan tries to countermand many of the laws of God, and this is one. Some people have walked over burning coals without burning their feet by first getting into a euphoric state induced by the fallen angels whereby an air cushion is put in between the feet and the hot coals. However, verse 28 is a general maxim.

Comment: Usually when a person walks on hot coals, it is a very brief, fast, short walk. Leeser says, “Can a man walk along [casually] upon hot coals?”

Comment: In proclaiming his innocence, Job described adultery as a “heinous crime”: “I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid? ... If mine heart

have been deceived by a woman, or if I have laid wait at my neighbour's door ... this is an *heinous crime*; yea, it is an *iniquity to be punished* by the judges. For it is a *fire that consumeth to destruction*" (Job 31:1,9,11,12).

Prov. 6:29 So he that goeth in to his neighbour's wife; whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent.

Just as fire in the bosom and walking on hot coals causes burns, so does going in to a neighbor's wife. (The "strange woman" is a married woman.) One who plays with fire gets burned, and a man who has an affair with a married woman is guilty.

Prov. 6:30 Men do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry;

RSV: "Do not men despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his appetite when he is hungry?" The question form is correct.

Prov. 6:31 But if he be found, he shall restore sevenfold; he shall give all the substance of his house.

If the thief is apprehended, he must "restore sevenfold," even if that means giving all of his substance. Under the Law, when a thief was found, he had to restore twofold, fourfold, or fivefold depending upon the circumstances, but the Law did not specify "sevenfold" (Exod. 22:1,2). "Sevenfold" is a Hebraism meaning "manifold." The thief will be punished "*many-fold*."

Prov. 6:32 But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul.

Under the Law, the penalty for adultery was death. Verse 32 is emphasizing that adultery is a *very severe* sin. For any of the consecrated to commit such a sin would mean Second Death unless the proper steps of repentance are taken. Even then, the highest reward one could get would be Great Company.

One who commits adultery lacks understanding. Some of the consecrated think that ignorance is bliss, and they shy away from intense Bible study. They follow the fallacy of "hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil." Under the Law, sins of ignorance were forgiven only if the perpetrator (1) repented and (2) paid the penalty set by the priest. For sins against knowledge, the penalty was an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, etc. In other words, stripes were necessary. Sins against the Holy Spirit cannot be forgiven but must be expiated or requited by stripes. Stated another way, the sin a person commits will be inflicted upon him. Restitution in the next age will not be a *carte blanche* clean slate. Adamic sin can be forgiven *if forgiveness is asked*. Willful sin must be expiated according to the extent of wilfulness.

Prov. 6:33 A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away.

Leeser's: "A plague and disgrace will he meet with; and his reproach will not be blotted out."

Prov. 6:34 For jealousy is the rage of a man: therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance.

Prov. 6:35 He will not regard any ransom; neither will he rest content, though thou givest many gifts.

Monetary compensation would be meaningless in the case of adultery—unless, of course, the man himself were a scoundrel. Any sensible, upright person would want the full penalty inflicted.

Spiritually speaking, the man would be Jesus and the woman would be a consecrated individual, ie, one who is espoused to Christ. If either a consecrated brother or a consecrated sister commits adultery, the sin is most grievous, for it is crucifying Christ afresh. “Whoso shall offend [stumble] one of these little ones, ... it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matt. 18:6). At least there would be a resuscitation from a millstone death.

In Scripture, sins of the flesh are usually presented from the woman’s standpoint, but the man who seduces is equally guilty. The responsibility is put on the woman because she is a type of the Church, which is fallible. The man, picturing Jesus, is infallible. However, the penalties ascribed to the woman also apply to a brother who commits such sin.

Leeser ends verse 35 with “though thou give ever so many bribes.”

Comment: The individual in 1 Corinthians 5 who took his father’s wife was disfellowshipped, but he was also restored.

Reply: Yes, but he had to go through certain steps, and the ecclesia had a responsibility regarding the sin. Even with repentance, the most that individual could get would be everlasting life on the Great Company plane. Regarding the ecclesia, those who wink the eye at grievous sin and keep quiet could be as guilty as the one who actually commits the sin. The “love” the ecclesia manifested for the unrepentant sinning individual was contemptible in God’s sight.

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

Proverbs 30

Prov. 30:1 The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, even the prophecy: the man spake unto Ithiel, even unto Ithiel and Ucal,

The Masoretic uses “burden” instead of “prophecy”; both are correct.

Agur was the son of Jakeh. Hence they were two individuals, but Ithiel and Ucal were not. The heading of many Psalms is small print with such words as “To the chief musician.” Sometimes the name of a particular musician, singer, or instrument was also suggested by David. In a similar manner, “The words of Agur, the son of Jakeh, the prophecy,” is a superscription or heading for Proverbs 30. (The word “even” is supplied.)

Elsewhere in the Book of Proverbs, the statement at the beginning of a proverb is “The proverbs of Solomon, the son of David.” It is proper to identify the author, and that is

how Proverbs 30 begins. Agur was the author, and Solomon recognized Agur's sayings as being wise enough to use as an addendum for his own proverbs. The fact that Agur's words have a different cadence than Solomon's proverbs proves different authorship. The point is that Agur was a literal individual, and he lived in the days of Solomon. Proverbs 30 is the burden, prophecy, or proclamation of Agur. Just like Solomon, he was telling about his own experiences and observations in life.

"The man spake unto ... Ithiel and Ucal." The logical conclusion would be that Agur was talking to these two scholars, disciples, or friends, but based on the context, that is not the case. "Ithiel" means "God is with us." "Ucal" means "I am strong." In other words, Agur is saying, "God is with me, and I am speaking in His strength." The superscription or heading indicates that Agur is giving an important message: a prophecy, a burden. "God is with me, and I am strong because of that. Therefore, the message is not mine but God's."

The account of Balaam in Numbers 24:3-5 is similar. "And he [Balaam] took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said: He hath said, which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open: How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!" Balaam calls this a parable, and Agur calls his message a prophecy. Try to think of Balaam's and Agur's words from the standpoint of a Jew or an Asian, not an American. Balaam was a prophet of God but not a Jewish prophet. Nevertheless, God occasionally spoke through Balaam, and that is why King Balak summoned him and wanted his assistance. When Balaam was hired to curse Israel, the words that came out of his mouth were overruled to be a blessing. He was on a mountain looking down on the camp of Israel on the plain below in the desert. With his eyes open he started to speak, and out of his mouth came a prophecy. Notice the repetition in the account: "And *he* took up his parable, and *said*, Balaam the son of Beor hath *said*, and *the man* whose eyes are open hath *said*: He hath *said*." Four times we are told Balaam "said." Notice the last: "the man ... said." Balaam was referring to himself, but it was as if he were detaching himself. Proverbs 30:1 uses the same technique: "*the man* [Agur] *spake*." Balaam is saying that when he was about to pronounce a curse upon Israel, he was put in a trance, and power from on high came upon him so that he heard the words of God, saw a vision, and spoke God's message. He became the mouthpiece of a blessing instead of a curse. Balaam was *forced* to speak God's words almost like the ass earlier. In other words, the power of God came upon him as it had come upon the ass.

Of course Agur's motive was completely different from Balaam's. Since God had revealed a message to him, Agur felt a sense of responsibility to proclaim it. Obviously the message impressed Solomon.

Prov. 30:2 Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man.

Prov. 30:3 I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy.

Before uttering the message, Agur said, "This message is not of me." This reminds us of the Apostle Peter's words: "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. 1:20,21). Agur continues,

“This message is not the product of my own capability. In fact, I am not an educated person.”

Incidentally, despite the various translations, Agur was not saying he was ignorant. To the contrary, he was profound. In fact, a farmer may be as wise as any other man, but he just lacks erudition and the degrees. The world is impressed by PhD’s, and instead of analyzing the sense of what is being said, they ask, “What is your educational background?” Sometimes humble people have a tremendous amount of wisdom without the formal training and schooling. And that is exactly what Agur was saying. “If you judge me by other men, I am not much.” Agur’s humility reminds us of Amos, the shepherd. “Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah [the priest], I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet’s son; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit: And the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel” (Amos 7:14, 15). Amos was saying, “I have no credentials and no ulterior motives. I am just a herdsman, an ordinary person. While I was following the flock, God told me to deliver this message for Him, and I am trying to obey.”

Agur said, “I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy [the Holy One—RSV, NIV].” “The holy” is in the plural, signifying the *majesty* of God. The statement in Genesis “Let *us* make man in *our* image” is also the plural majesty of *God alone*; ie, Jesus is not being referred to.

Proverbs 9:10 also uses “holy” in the plural for the Holy One: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning [principle part] of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy [the Holy One] is understanding.”

Agur was saying, “What I am telling you is of God, not of me. I want you to know that I have been charged with the responsibility of giving this message, for I am nothing. I do not have the credentials that normally command respect.”

Prov. 30:4 Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his son’s name, if thou canst tell?

Agur is pursuing a line of reasoning. He said first, “I am just a humble man.” Now he is saying something a little different. “Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended?” The answer, of course, is no man except Jesus—and that would be years later. Therefore, no man has firsthand knowledge of what is happening in heaven.

Moses used similar logic in Deuteronomy 30:11–14. “For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, [it is] in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.” Moses spoke these words just before he died. He was saying: “With all your efforts to know about God—who He is and where He is—the book is right in front of you. Can’t you discern that God has spoken to you? His commandment and Word are right there in your midst. If you are still searching in other avenues, there is something wrong with you.”

Some people speculate about the future without any solid basis for their thinking. Agur was uneducated but a profound thinker. The Deuteronomy text probably influenced him in his reasoning in verse 4. He was saying, “How can anyone tell about what is happening in heaven if he has not been there himself? Whatever is said is pure speculation and should be viewed in that light.”

Moses went up into Mount Sinai, the “mountain of the moon,” and there he saw, as it were, God. The contact he had with the Logos, who was representing God, shone on his face when he descended the mount. Paul gives clues as to the meaning. Moses’ going up into the mount pictured Christ at his First Advent. Compare Jesus’ going up into the Mount of Transfiguration and Moses’ going up into Mount Sinai. The light on Moses’ face was *reflected* light, but it was so bright that the people could not look at him and he had to veil his face. The light of the gospel is as the sun, in contradistinction to the moon. The glory of God was seen in Jesus. The apostle John said of Jesus, “He acted like the Son of God, he spoke like the Son of God, and he had the characteristics of God. It is evident that he truly is the Son of God.” The glory of the Father that shone from Jesus’ face was not reflected light, for Jesus was the *channel* of God’s light.

We say that the Tabernacle is the shadow and the fulfillment or antitype is the reality. We say the New Testament is reflected in the Old Testament, but from God’s standpoint, the opposite is true. The Tabernacle, the shadow, the Old Testament, came *first*. God knows the end from the beginning; He sees in reverse fashion. There are no surprises or emergencies with God, for He knows long in advance about whatever happens.

“Who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth?” These questions sound like Chapters 38–40 in the Book of Job where *God* speaks. In that respect, Job is the most remarkable book in the Bible.

“What is his name, and what is his son’s name, if thou canst tell?” Agur was trying to show that man, in his *own* wisdom, attempts to explain God. For example, according to the Big Bang theory, the universe started with a big explosion. This a *dumb* theory, and yet many scientists accept it. It is more reasonable to think that the universe is oscillating, developing, breathing—ie, expanding and contracting.

Q: Did Agur know that God had a Son?

A: No, it is a rhetorical question, and Agur was speaking under the influence of the Holy Spirit. He had just given his “credentials,” and now he was giving pragmatic reasoning (reasoning that makes sense).

Comment: The question “What is his name, and what is his son’s name?” is startling because the Jews did not consider that God would have a Son. Jesus was called a blasphemer for saying he was the Son of God. The Holy Spirit overruled that this question would be included to show that God does have a Son. It was as if Agur was saying, “Who are you? You do not even know his name.”

Reply: We thought this point was obvious and purposely did not prolong the explanation, for dissecting or magnifying the detail too much causes us to lose the overall

message. Agur spoke much like Job, and in the Book of Job there are similar miraculous expressions.

Prov. 30:5 Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.

Agur was reasoning to himself: “Where does true information come from? The Word of God, and that Word is readily available. It is before us. There is no need to look elsewhere.” The same lesson applies to us. We should study the Bible more.

Prov. 30:6 Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.

Agur continued: “Not only is the Word of God pure, coming from the Holy One, but it is a shield unto those who trust Him. Do not add unto those words, lest He reprove you, and you be found a liar.” All the information he needed was in front of him. God’s Word is here, and it is packed with information—like silver refined seven times.

Proof that Agur was speaking to himself is verse 1, where he referred to himself as “the man.”

Prov. 30:7 Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die:

Agur now did almost what Pentecostals do. He was getting into a prayer mode. First, he said, “The Word of God is pure; God is a shield,” and the next minute he was praying. Here in verse 7 he was talking to God: “Two things I ask of thee; do not deny me before I die.”

Prov. 30:8 Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me:

Agur’s prayer continues in verse 8 and is very instructive. “Remove far from me vanity and lies.” Vanity (self-importance, pride) is a problem for all of us, and we must fight it every day. Agur was saying, “I am a humble man and God has blessed me with information, but I am frightened lest I experience an untimely death and still have vanity and lies.” David said, “Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins” (Psa. 19:13). He knew that he had secret faults and that God was aware of them, but he did not want a secret fault to become a presumptuous sin, which would be the point of no return to God’s favor.

In regard to Agur’s prayer for God to “remove far from me vanity and lies,” lies take many forms, and he did not want to succumb. “Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines” is the principle (Song 2:15).

We should neither undervalue nor overvalue ourselves. In other words, we should examine ourselves honestly.

“Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me.” In other words, “Give us this day our daily bread,” temporal and spiritual. With the higher standard of living here at the end of the age, our prayer should be for the proper *spiritual* food.

Comment: Jesus taught us to pray for our daily bread.

Comment: The New International Version actually uses that term: “Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me *only my daily bread*.”

Prov. 30:9 Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.

“Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD?” What do “fullness of bread” and wealth bring? Pride (Ezek. 16:49). Denial of the Lord comes gradually. For instance, one who comes less and less to meetings and fellowship is slipping and gliding away, so that in time, if that tendency is not stopped, it can lead to entire separation from the Lord and to coolness. And coolness can be outright opposition, for if “the light that is in thee be[come] darkness, how great is that darkness!” (Matt. 6:23). It is a greater darkness than that of those in the world who never consecrated.

“Or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.” Agur was saying, “I do not want riches or poverty, but a middle ground and the food that will build me up.” Matthew 19:23,24 tells that it is a miracle, even initially, for a rich man to respond with full consecration. “Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.... It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.” When one becomes increased with this world’s good, his heart can be weaned away. And those who are stricken with poverty can start to blame providence. Later, instead of blaming providence, they blame God. The New International Version reads: “Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, ‘Who is the LORD?’ Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.”

This prayer of Agur affords us a look into his inner heart. Similarly we can see into David’s heart when we read the Psalms.

Comment: Moses cautioned the Israelites not to forget the Lord when they entered the Promised Land and built their homes and were full.

Reply: One’s first love of truth—the zeal and enthusiasm when blind eyes are opened—is very difficult to retain through life.

Prov. 30:10 Accuse not a servant unto his master, lest he curse thee, and thou be found guilty.

Comment: The RSV and the NIV read, “Do not *slander* a servant to his master.” However, if a servant treats his master unjustly, the matter should be reported. This would also apply to the employee-employer relationship.

Reply: Yes, verse 10 is a *general* rule, and it does not mean that we should never, under any circumstance, speak of a wrongdoing. If a servant does something seriously wrong, the master should be informed, whereas a false accusation of a more serious nature incurs guilt.

Comment: “Lest ... thou be found guilty” implies slander and thus guilt on the part of the informer. In this case the servant is innocent. If the report is needful because of wrongdoing, the informer would not be guilty.

The next four verses (verses 11–14) all start with “there is a generation.”

Prov. 30:11 **There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother.**

Comment: The word “generation” reminds us of 2 Timothy 3:1–5, “This know also, that *in the last days* perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, *proud*, blasphemers, *disobedient to parents*, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, *highminded*, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”

Reply: Yes, God foresaw that these warnings would be necessary for Christians in the last days.

Q: Wouldn't the characteristics of verses 11–14 apply to the generation of Jews that went into Babylonian captivity?

A: Yes, and there was a marked change in the Jews who returned to Israel from Babylon 70 years later in 536 BC. One reason is that their decision to forsake established, comfortable homes in Babylon was a proper step. In the Diaspora, with all the suffering, came a noticeable devotion to family, especially among the Orthodox.

Prov. 30:12 **There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.**

Comment: This sounds like the element in Jude that is not spirit-begotten. They are not consecrated but are among the consecrated, posing as such.

This element does not see the reality that we are all born in sin and shapen in iniquity. None are righteous in and of themselves. Christians who think it is necessary to keep the Law and feel they will get life based on the works of the Law would be “pure in their own eyes” while not being “washed from their filthiness.”

Comment: A cross reference is Luke 18:11, “The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.” This Pharisee was pure in his own eyes.

Prov. 30:13 **There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up.**

The NIV reads, “There are ... those whose eyes are ever so haughty, whose glances are so disdainful.” And that is the real thought. In other words, because of their mannerisms the haughtiness of some is apparent without their even having to say a word.

A sister testified that when she heard the Pastor give a lecture in Detroit, he demonstrated three different attitudes: (1) He walked across the stage like a downtrodden person with

no self-esteem. (2) He walked across the stage like a proud person with too much self-esteem. (3) He walked across the stage as we are supposed to walk.

Prov. 30:14 There is a generation, whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.

Comment: Wouldn't all four categories be a manifestation of pride? Even the children who curse father and mother manifest pride in not taking their advice and counsel. Also, pride is a factor in not showing compassion to the poor.

Reply: The scribes and Pharisees do not enter the Kingdom of God themselves or suffer others to enter. When Jesus was criticized, he said the Physician cannot heal those who are too proud to acknowledge they are sick members of the fallen human race and in need of redemption and salvation.

What about their "teeth ... [being] as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor"?

Comment: This is strong language. The teeth are real weapons.

Reply: Yes, the net effect of the front teeth (the biters) and the back teeth (the grinders) is complete mastication.

Spiritually, the continual dunning for money by the nominal churches is a form of devouring the poor. It is wrong to try to manipulate the consciences of others, making them feel duty-bound to contribute, and this can be done from the pulpit. An example of another improper approach would be to preach evangelism as the only type of service that is worthwhile, and even to embarrass others into selling more books. There are *many* types of needful service.

The fact that there are *four* statements beginning "There is a generation" is characteristic of Agur. He is given to quatrains, ie, groups of four. He may say, "There are three things" but then amends the number to four. It is interesting that to a certain extent, when the prophet Amos came along later, he also used quatrains (Amos 1:6,9,11,13).

Prov. 30:15 The horseleach hath two daughters, crying, Give, give. There are three things that are never satisfied, yea, four things say not, It is enough:

Comment: Leeser's reads, "Insatiability hath two daughters. Give, give. There are three things which are never satisfied, yea, four things never say, Enough."

The word "horseleach" is correct. Does anyone have any thoughts on the horseleach?

Comment: It has been suggested that the horseleach is Satan and that the two daughters are Sin and Death.

Comment: This would be a leech that is attached on the inside, not on the outside. It would be more like a parasite sucking the nutrients.

Reply: The horseleach is a bloodsucker that is peculiar to horses. These parasites float on stagnant water. When horses drink, they submerge their noses in the water, and the

horseleach attaches itself to the sensitive membranes in the nostrils. The parasite drinks more and more blood from the horse until it is so full that it can no longer remain attached to the membrane. Meanwhile the horse suffers untold agony. When finally full, the horseleach drops off. However, the horse still does not get any relief because the leech keeps multiplying. For every leech that drops off, two more appear. Eventually the horse (the victim) gets emaciated.

“The horseleach hath two daughters, crying, Give, give.” In other words, the two daughters are never satisfied. For every leech that leaves, there are two replacements.

Q: Could the horseleach be defined as Satan?

A: Yes, in the sense that he is never satisfied. He wanted to be like Jesus.

Q: If the horseleach is interpreted as Satan, would the two daughters be Sin and Death?

A: That application would fit in principle. Satan wants more and more and never feels he has enough.

Comment: He is also behind the dissatisfaction of man. Satan promotes the multiple distractions.

Reply: And with the distractions, Satan makes the people more and more his own personal slaves and servants. It is miraculous indeed that without affecting the free moral agency of man, and just by the power of suggestion, God can miraculously transform an individual into Christlikeness. The more noble worldly minded people say, “Before I die, I want to become a great musician or a great scientist or make a great discovery that will benefit mankind.” They want to leave a significant contribution behind and will sacrifice much time, money, and effort toward that end. If only their efforts were devoted to the Lord, they would get the greatest reward: the permanent reward of the prize of the high calling. We should appreciate that God has called us with that hope.

Prov. 30:16 **The grave; and the barren womb; the earth that is not filled with water; and the fire that saith not, It is enough.**

Again there is a quatrain, and a moral is usually inserted in these quatrains.

(1) No matter how the population increases, the *grave* is never satisfied. Increasing numbers of people continue to die, and there is enough room to bury them.

(2) In regard to the *barren womb*, in Old Testament times the women hoped to be of the promised seed to bring forth Messiah. Hence they hoped not merely for a child but for a male child. The inherent desire to have progeny as a namesake has permeated other cultures and religions as well.

(3) “The *earth that is not filled with water*” refers to the cycle of rain and evaporation. Rivers empty the rains into the oceans, water is evaporated from the oceans, clouds form, rain falls, etc., etc. Even when floods occur, terrible as they are with their destruction, the water subsides in due time, empties into the ocean, evaporates, and falls again as rain.

(4) *Fire* too is never satisfied. As long as fuel is supplied, the fire keeps burning.

These four subjects may seem to be simple, but when they are considered with some depth, lessons are forthcoming. Common to all four subjects is the observation "It is not enough." The grave is seemingly unending. Regarding the barren womb, the desire of women to have children has been basic to life and security. (Current values are askew and are peculiar to our day where women want to pursue careers, couples decline to have children under the guise they cannot afford them, etc.) The lesson for the Christian regarding *insatiable* desire is summed up with the Scripture "*Godliness with contentment is great gain*" (1 Tim. 6:6).

This proverb of Agur, Proverbs 30, is properly called a "burden." Today's society is plagued with discontent. The attempts of people to drown themselves in such things as rock music, sports, sex, money, and gambling are all forms of discontent. People will try everything except to go to God, the giver of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17).

Prov. 30:17 **The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.**

This verse ties in with the first quatrain pertaining to pride. The destiny of those who have a mocking eye is Second Death. NIV: "The eye that mocks a father and scorns to obey a mother will be picked out by the ravens of the valley and eaten by the vultures."

Comment: The principle is "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7).

When vultures attack a carcass, the eye is a juicy morsel. It is like the pearl of the oyster, the real prize. The raven and the eagle are both birds of prey.

Prov. 30:18 **There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not:**

Verse 18 introduces another quatrain. Each of the four observations in this grouping begins with "the way."

Prov. 30:19 **The way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with a maid.**

The four are "the way" of an eagle, a serpent, a ship, and a man.

"The way of an eagle in the air." What are the characteristics of an eagle? It is a heavy bird with relatively small wings, but its strength compensates for the weight. In a hurricane or other tempestuous weather, the eagle continues to fly, which is unusual. An eagle is a bird of prey, but it differs from vultures in that it prefers to eat live prey. Vultures circle above a dying animal, often in groups, whereas the eagle does not. An eagle is known for its swiftness of flight. The way the eagle pounces on its prey is distinctive. With keen eyesight, the eagle can see prey two or three miles away. Once an eagle starts toward its prey, it proceeds in one glide to the target. Just before the unsuspecting animal is seized, the eagle opens its wings for a twofold effect: (1) The open wings slow the eagle down lest it hit the ground and get injured. (2) A shadow is created. On a sunny day the eagle flies in

the sunbeam to obscure its flight. As a result, little animals on the ground looking toward the sun are not able to see the eagle.

Comment: The eagle has tunnel vision and hence can see only a narrow band of degrees straight ahead. Without peripheral vision, the eagle must turn its head in order to see to the side. In fact, that is why it can rotate its head almost 180 degrees.

Reply: This characteristic will become important later in the study.

“The way of a serpent upon a rock.” The snake’s method of locomotion is unusual. How a serpent can travel without feet is a marvel, particularly on rock. The sidewinder snake can move at tremendous speeds on sand by rippling its body, but the illustration here in Proverbs 30 would be of the species that moves on rock with assumed fair rapidity.

Agur observed these phenomena in nature. Remember, he said in the beginning of the proverb that he was not an educated man, but one does not have to be educated to be wise.

“The way of a ship in the midst [or heart] of the sea.” Think of a ship in Agur’s day. Sails were the primary means of locomotion along with a rudder and a tiller. In a strong sea, the rudder and the keel were not adequate, so the setting of the sail was very important. Bro. Roy Mitchell, Sr., gave an impromptu talk in Paterson many years ago that included a poem about the sails of a ship. The direction of the wind and the gale that blew did not deter the vessel from its goal, for its course depended on the set of the sails. The curve of properly set sails could thrust the wind in such a way that the ship would go forward in the intended direction even against the strong wind of a storm.

It isn’t the gale,
But the set of the sail,
That determines
The path to the goal.

Of course the navigator had to be skilled.

“The way of a man with a maid.” The Hebrew word *almah* translated “maid” implies a virgin. There is another word in the Hebrew (*bethulah*) that actually means “virgin,” but because a virgin can be of any age, old or young, that word would not have been correct to use here. In the Old English, “young maiden” was the translation, and years ago this meant a *young*, naive, innocent virgin. Therefore, Isaiah 7:14, which reads, “The LORD himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin [*almah*—young maiden] shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel,” indicates that the Virgin Mary was very young and Joseph was very old. The point is that the proper translation here in verse 19 is “the way of a man with a young maiden.”

Comment: Wouldn’t the marvelous thing about a man and a maiden be child bearing?

Reply: The mystery of procreation is one of about four interpretations. To have beings come forth with capabilities of reasoning, reverence, etc., is truly a miracle. But the thought here seems to be otherwise.

When we consider all four things—the eagle, the serpent, the ship, and the man—what do they have in common? All are impressive, but in what way? In verse 18 Agur said

they were too “wonderful” for him to understand. But what did he mean by the word “wonderful”? The eagle is an unclean bird, and yet it can be considered favorably. The serpent usually has an evil connotation, but on the other hand, Jesus said to be wise as serpents. A man with a maid can be either sinful or innocent. The dilemma is to determine whether a favorable or an unfavorable context is intended with the four. One thing common to all four is “the way.” Now consider verse 20, which has an unfavorable connotation: “Such is the way of an adulterous woman.”

Prov. 30:20 Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness.

At the very least, verse 20 is related to the man with a maid. Actually verse 20 applies to all four: the eagle, the serpent, the ship, and the man. The statement “the way” is important. “Such is *the way* of an adulterous woman,” etc. The common theme is the prey—how the prey is regarded and/or treated. From afar, the eagle’s entire focus of attention is on the intended victim. Its power of concentration and lack of deviation are noteworthy. With the serpent its prey is also the center of attention. Generally speaking, the prey of a snake is much more fleet, but the snake is stealthy and has a hypnotic gaze. When it focuses its eyes on the victim, the penetrating gaze is mesmerizing. Meanwhile, the snake slides along, shortening the distance to the victim, until it can uncoil and strike. Thus both the eagle and the serpent have a remarkable power of concentration. With the ship, the navigator’s focus of attention is getting the vessel to its destination whether there is no wind or much wind, whether there is calm or storm or favoring gale. How the ship could be made to go to different ports was a marvel to Agur. The man with a young maiden, a young virgin, had an ulterior motive. Some men want only virgins; they delight to despoil a young woman. Hence the innocent maiden is the victim. These conclusions are further buttressed by verse 20: “Such is the way of an adulterous woman.” She fixes her gaze on the unsuspecting victim and has intercourse in mind. She has a way of attracting her victim to within striking distance, and there he loses control because of the weakness of the flesh. Having just had an illicit relationship, “she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness.” She feels no guilt, has no remorse.

The eagle, the serpent, the ship, the man, and the adulterous woman all have a purpose in mind in regard to their victim, and thus they focus their attention on that victim or purpose. What do all five (four in the quatrain plus the adulterous woman as the fifth) have in common as “the way”? When an eagle strikes its victim, no one can trace the path it traversed in getting its prey. When a serpent goes after prey, it does not take an established route. When a ship reaches port, one cannot exactly or accurately trace its route. “The way” of this man is that he has had much experience, and he suits his way of seducing young virgins according to the circumstances of each situation. He focuses his attention on the innocent young maiden and studies her weaknesses so that he can victimize her. One technique is flattery. When he has accomplished his purpose of despoiling the young maid, one cannot trace the nebulous method(s) he used. In other words, there is no one established procedure or technique. Feeling no guilt, the adulterous woman continues on as though nothing has happened—especially if the acts are done secretly.

What about the word “wonderful” in verse 18? In perhaps 95 percent of the cases, the word has a favorable connotation, but not always. Consider the following unfavorable uses:

“And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these *wonders*?” (Dan. 12:6). The “wonders” were the persecutions of faithful Christians by Papacy for 1,260 years.

“And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my *wonders* which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go” (Exod. 3:20). The “wonders” were all plagues.

“Then the LORD will make thy plagues *wonderful*, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance” (Deut. 28:59). The plagues in the Book of Revelation are presented from the standpoint of those upon whom they are inflicted.

“And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy *wonderfully*, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people” (Dan. 8:24). This is a reference to Papacy.

“And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak *marvellous* things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done” (Dan. 11:36). This is a reference to Napoleon, who tried to exalt himself above God. He humiliated the pope by removing the papal crown and putting it on his own head.

Therefore, all five observations of Agur are “wonders,” peculiarities. Nuances are displayed in nature and by man in various ways that are difficult to trace, but they are a “way” of accomplishing something.

Prov. 30:21 For three things the earth is disquieted, and for four which it cannot bear:

Here is another quatrain. The Hebrew word for “is disquieted” means “quakes”: “For three things the earth quakes.” This is a tongue-in-cheek expression, for the earth does not literally shake when a servant reigns, etc. We use similar meaningful expressions, such as “If so-and-so heard what you just said, he would turn over in his grave.”

Prov. 30:22 For a servant when he reigneth; and a fool when he is filled with meat;

The earth is disquieted “for a servant when he reigneth.”

Comment: When the oppressed, the common people, get the reins of power, there is a tendency for them to become crueler than the ones they are replacing. Communism and the French Revolution are good examples.

Reply: That is true of a servant who gets power he is unaccustomed to having. He can become very oppressive.

The servant lacks the necessary qualifications, training, breeding, contacts, etc. Of course today’s standards and conditions are different from what they were for thousands of years. The scandal with the royal family in England would not have occurred in the past. An incident earlier in this century was the love of an heir to the English throne for the

Simpson woman, who was a divorcée, but because there was a proper sensitivity and decorum, the heir did the right thing by voluntarily abdicating the throne and marrying her. Superficial righteousness is better than blatant unrighteousness. Some sense of shame at least leads to discretion.

The next disquieting occurrence is “a fool when he is filled with meat.” Imagine a fool who has just eaten a big dinner.

Comment: He is energized to act the fool even more.

Reply: In addition to being energized, he feels that a measure of approbation has been extended to him by the host and that the host is encouraging him to speak his mind. The food would embolden him to prattle more and express his views. Thus it is unwise to recognize a fool in an official capacity.

Comment: The common denominator for this quatrain seems to be the acquisition of power, honor, and/or recognition and the fact that the party cannot handle it well.

Prov. 30:23 For an odious woman when she is married; and an handmaid that is heir to her mistress.

Next is “an odious woman when she is married.” The Revised Standard Version has “an unloved woman when she gets a husband.” Literally the Hebrew word for “odious” is “hated,” which is the meaning in most Scriptures, but there are times when the word is to be used in an accommodated or modified sense. An example is Esau. “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated” (Rom. 9:13). Instead of the word “hated,” “loved less” should be used. A distinction was being made between two parties, and the one with the lesser honor was very sensitive to being slighted. Leah and Rachel are another example. Jacob loved Rachel but was fraudulently given Leah by Laban.

Comment: A New Testament example of the same principle is Luke 14:26, “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.”

Q: How was the “odious” quality disquieting?

A: With Hagar, the household was so disquieted or disrupted that Sarah wanted her to be thrust out. Abraham, seeing the logic, agreed to Sarah’s request.

Q: This third example does not necessarily mean another woman was involved, does it?

A: No, but it can refer to such a situation. A feeling of enmity or being slighted could occur if there were more than one wife. In fact, the word “slighted” can be inserted: “For a slighted woman when she is married.”

The fourth example in the quatrain is “an handmaid that is heir to her mistress.”

Comment: The NIV suggests rivalry and ulterior motives: “a maid when she succeeds her mistress.”

Comment: It is like a servant who becomes a king.

The word “heir” can also be taken literally in connection with the death of the mistress, and this would seem to be more the thought.

When the quatrain is considered as a whole, what are some obvious observations? (1) People at the bottom of society receive positions of honor. (2) Two are males and two are females, showing that this principle operates in both man and woman.

Comment: Ecclesiastes 10:5–7 is an interesting cross reference: “There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, as an error which proceedeth from the ruler: Folly is set in great dignity, and the rich sit in low place. I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth.”

Reply: Yes, that is the principle of those on the bottom suddenly being put on top. Those who gain sudden riches are not like those who are born into wealth. The latter tend to be more philanthropic. An example of the former would be black athletes who receive millions of dollars but basically squander the money and do not contribute much, if anything, to people and causes of their own race.

Prov. 30:24 **There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise:**

The next quatrain pertains to ants, conies, locusts, and spiders.

Prov. 30:25 **The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer;**

Ants prepare ahead for future necessities, and they are industrious: “Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise” (Prov. 6:6).

From the ant’s perspective, the insect is exceedingly strong, lifting many times its own weight. But from the human standpoint, the pragmatic viewpoint, the ant is insignificant and weak; we can step on it or squash it with a finger.

Prov. 30:26 **The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks;**

The “cony” is the rock badger, which makes its home like a fortress in the rocks. This animal is feeble in the sense that it lacks weapons of offense, but the rock badger’s fortress-like rock home counteracts its helpless condition.

Comment: The wisdom of the rock badger is that it has a permanent home in the rocks, as opposed to a temporary hole in the ground or a nest.

Prov. 30:27 **The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands;**

Locusts have no leader, yet they go forth in formidable swarms. From the locusts’ standpoint, they have awesome mandibles, yet a human can squash a locust in his hands. For their size their legs have great strength.

Comment: The wisdom of the locusts would be that despite their great numbers, they do not fly into each other.

Reply: They are in battle array, as it were. They have ranks and order in the air even though there is no commander or leader. If a locust plague is awesome, imagine what it would be with a king or leader.

Prov. 30:28 **The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces.**

Leeser reads, "The spider thou canst catch with thy hands, and yet she is in the palaces of a king." Most spiders can be held with the hands.

The spider lives in "king's palaces" in the sense of dwelling in an elaborate, intricate web. In other words, its web is likened to the palace of a king.

Comment: A spider's web is remarkable and awesome, especially when the light shines on it in a certain way.

Reply: As with the snowflake, there is complexity and diversity in the spider's web. The spider dwells in a web, the rock badger lives in rocks, the ant's home is a storehouse for food, and locusts go forth in bands to obtain food.

Comment: The spider's tiny brain has been genetically coded to make intricately patterned webs.

Though *little*, all four—the ant, the rock badger, the locust, and the spider—give lessons in wisdom. Mankind can benefit from watching them.

There are seven quatrains in this chapter. Six are negative, and this one seems to be the exception. Everything is instructive and constructive in this quatrain.

Q: Would this quatrain be related to the previous quatrain about the servant, the fool, the odious or slighted woman, and the maid? (1) The ant prepares its food for winter, but the fool who is filled with food doesn't think about the next day. (2) The cony has a safe house in the rocks, but the odious woman, in being slighted or hated, does not have a quiet home. (3) The locusts have no king, but they cooperate and have order. The servant, when he becomes a king, has no order. (4) The spider lives in the king's house and minds its own business, whereas the heir to the mistress has ulterior motives and is plotting mischief.

A: That is a novel comparison, and it fits to a certain extent.

Prov. 30:29 **There be three things which go well, yea, four are comely in going:**

"Comely in going" would mean "comely in their walk or way."

NIV: "There are three things that are stately in their stride; four that move with stately bearing."

Prov. 30:30 **A lion which is strongest among beasts, and turneth not away for any;**

A lion is *strong* among beasts, but not the strongest.

Prov. 30:31 A greyhound; an he goat also; and a king, against whom there is no rising up.

“Greyhound” should be (war) horse. The war horse is disciplined and does not fear anything (Job 39:19–25). When well trained, it will obey just the knee movements of its rider. The war horse manifests confidence and is even delighted at the prospect of a battle. In fact, stateliness, anxiety, and pleasure are all manifested in the attitude of the animal facing battle. Horses in the cavalry are chosen for strength of limb.

The “he goat” is the wild mountain goat. The stateliness of its stance suggests confidence.

Comment: Daniel 8:5–8 mentions the he goat from a spiritual standpoint as being Alexander of Greece, who defeated the ram of Media Persia and smashed its horns, so the he goat must be powerful.

“A king, against whom there is no rising” is a king secure against revolt. In other words, the army following behind is united in purpose with the king, supporting him 100 percent. The king manifests great confidence because he knows the soldiers will fight to the death for him. An enemy who would see them approaching would be in awe and fear, especially if the enemy had an undisciplined army.

Q: Would a lesson for this quatrain be that a feeling of invincibility leads to pride? The Scripture comes to mind “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God” (Matt. 4:7). We could feel that we are so protected under the Lord’s watch-care that we act recklessly.

A: Yes, pride and self-confidence are the dangers.

Prov. 30:32 If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or if thou hast thought evil, lay thine hand upon thy mouth.

Prov. 30:33 Surely the churning of milk bringeth forth butter, and the wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood: so the forcing of wrath bringeth forth strife.

Verses 32 and 33 are also a quatrain: laying the hand upon the mouth, churning milk, wringing the nose, and forcing wrath. “Forcing of wrath” means to aggravate or stir up wrath, to produce wrath.

Verse 32 is saying to think twice before criticizing. An evil thought should be nipped in the bud. If entertained, it will lead to something detrimental to self as well as to others. When an evil thought enters the mind, clamp the hand on the mouth lest it be uttered and stir up strife.

“If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, ... lay thine hand upon thy mouth.” Sometimes we can nip something in the bud; this is preferable lest it produce untoward results. Other times something is foolishly said or done that we regret. The instant the unwisdom is recognized, it should be stopped and retracted as soon as possible.

The whole chapter, with its seven examples of advice, can be considered from the standpoint of the new creature. The chapter “Foes and Besetments of the New Creature”

in the *Sixth Volume* tells about different problems in the family, in the ecclesia, etc. Although Proverbs 31 is not all foes and besetments, it gives many lessons for the new creature to consider regarding spiritual welfare and development. For example, “the horseleach hath two daughters, crying, Give, give” (verse 15). This verse refers to the literal bloodsucker, particularly the one that affects horses. But the expression “Give, give” should be “Wealth, wealth,” which does not seem to make sense at first. Four things never say, “It is enough.” While we went through the natural detail, the lesson for the Christian is that certain dangers beset him. Of course the adulterous woman is one danger. A further lesson is that the love of money is the root of much evil; in addition, the love of popularity, of power, of influence, etc., is a danger. The expression “love of mammon” embraces these other thoughts and would include worldly desires that are ingrained in the fallen human nature and that can be detrimental to the new creature: a larger home, a bigger car, better clothes, etc. Those who desire these things are never satisfied; they never say, “I am wealthy.” On the other hand, one who is in poverty and then suddenly wins a million dollars is usually content and does not look for another million. And he usually tries to benefit others with some of the money. But a miser is never satisfied; he keeps saving and accumulating. Sometimes a miser even lives in spartan conditions just so he can keep on saving.

The point is that each of the quatrains should be considered either in a destructive or a constructive sense for the new creature. Spiritual lesson upon spiritual lesson can be drawn. A study of the Book of Proverbs is very beneficial for the new creature. Other religions have wise sayings, such as Confucianism, but the sayings in the Book of Proverbs were included in Holy Writ because of their benefit for the new creature. Anyone who pants after God’s Word as the hart pants for water brooks does not need to be told to study Proverbs, for he will do so of his own initiative. In fact, he will study the *whole* Word as best he can under his given circumstances and as opportunity affords. The faithful Christian will search the Scriptures daily, not just the *Volumes*.

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

Proverbs 31

Prov. 31:1 The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him.

Verses 1–9 tell the duties of a responsible king and what should be expected of a monarch in dealing with his subjects. Despite what a *Reprint* article says, this proverb is part of the inspired Word of God. Bro. Frank knows of no manuscript that deletes it.

First, who is “king Lemuel”? In the previous chapter, we can be sure Agur is a personal name because he is identified as “the son of Jakeh.” Here, however, not only is Lemuel’s lineage not given, but this is the only place in Scripture where he is mentioned. Therefore, his existence cannot be verified in the Bible.

Before identifying “king Lemuel,” Bro. Frank wants to prepare some ground for his thinking.

Proverbs 1:1 names the author as “Solomon the son of David, king of Israel.” Thus the fathers of both Solomon and Agur are given in Proverbs. Ecclesiastes 1:1 reads, “The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem,” ie, Solomon. However, Proverbs 31 mentions neither the name of King Lemuel’s father nor whom he reigned over—two significant omissions.

Some translations, such as the Revised Standard Version, read, “The words of Lemuel, king of Massa ...” But the translators took unjustifiable liberty in trying to give the reader the proper thought. The word “Massa” is not in the Hebrew. Bro. Frank’s explanation of “Lemuel” will be based on the word itself and not on suppositions.

Remember, the ancient manuscripts have neither punctuation nor spaces between words. For the most part, one familiar with Hebrew can read the words correctly, but in some cases there are multiple ways of reading the copy depending on how the letters are broken up. The word “Lemuel” is one of these cases. For instance, “Le” is a preposition that can mean “to,” “of,” etc. “Lemo” is also a preposition with various meanings. Therefore, the two possibilities are “Le muel” and “Lemo El.” Normally, the word “El” means “mighty One,” but it has several other meanings as well, such as “according to.” *The point is that “Lemuel” does not refer to a specific literal personage.*

As said earlier, verses 1–9 show who is a just, wise king fit for office. For example, he should help the poor and judge righteously. As with other proverbs, this one has a subtle spiritual significance. “Lemuel” can be defined as both “dedicated to God king” and “according to the lifting up.” Nehemiah 8:6 is the only other place in Scripture to use “lifting up.” When the Book of the Law was found, Ezra read it to the people in exile for six hours. The people then showed their appreciation and approval by saying, “Amen!” “Amen!” and lifting up their hands.

The expression translated “king Lemuel” refers to those who are called to kingship in the Gospel Age. All of the very elect will reign as kings with Jesus in the next age. They will be kings, priests, teachers, and prophets with Jesus as their head. It is interesting that the Hebrew word translated “king” in Proverbs 31:1 can also be “queen,” and of course the call applies to both genders.

Verses 1–9 are a *spiritual* picture of the ones God will raise up as qualified ministers of the New Covenant. Those who are fit, by His mercy, to be kings over the world in the next age will have the qualities enumerated. Stated another way, the various qualities given in this chapter are prerequisites for those who will meet with God’s approval to be associates with Jesus in his Kingdom, and when in office, they will actually behave in such a manner.

If we were asked, “Do you want to be President of the United States?” the answer would be “no,” for we would feel thoroughly unqualified for such an office. Even if we develop the Christlike character that is necessary for being a member of the Little Flock, we still have many infirmities and imperfections in the present life that cause us to say and do improper things. However, despite our imperfect bodies, our wills and intent can be perfect. If a perfect will were put into a perfect spiritual (and divine) body, then we could think, speak, and act with perfection, for our Adamic weaknesses would be removed. Moreover, those who have been raised with spirit bodies since 1878 are being schooled and oriented beyond the veil in earth’s atmosphere for future rulership over earth. And

they are being instructed and informed as to where their understanding was wrong in their former life down here. Then when they receive the divine nature at the wedding, they will enter into glorious perfection from all standpoints. At that time they will want to rule, for they will feel they can do so perfectly and be a blessing. They will be under Christ, so any matter that is too difficult can be taken directly to him, and Jesus can, in turn, refer any matter to God. Perfect spirit beings will know their limitations—and hence they will know when to seek help from Jesus. To reign under these conditions would be a pleasure!

In summary, the qualifications listed here should be considered by the Christian because they depict an attitude. Of course life is too complex to include every aspect, but these qualifications are like an outline of what the Lord is looking for in His people. This hypothetical king is actually those who desire to be lifted up and approved of God as being fit for kingship. These are the responsibilities they must *think about* in the present life. In the next life those who are chosen will *exercise* these responsibilities.

In the present life, it behooves us to keep growing, to know more and more of God's Word. Our hearts must be right and obedience to the Lord's Word is all important, but we must keep growing in knowledge as well.

"The prophecy [or burden] that his mother taught him." Who would the "mother" be? The Sarah Covenant. The word "of" should be "to": "The words to King Lemuel." The mother is giving advice to the Church of Christ, to those who hope to be uplifted to kingship in the next age.

Prov. 31:2 What, my son? and what, the son of my womb? and what, the son of my vows?

"What" implies "What shall I say?" Advice will follow.

"The son of my womb." Since women can represent covenants in Scripture, it is logical for the mother to be the Sarah Covenant. (Hagar and Keturah are other examples of women picturing covenants; see Gal. 4:22–24.) The Sarah (or Grace) Covenant gives birth to the Church class. In other words, we are the children of Sarah at present. But what happens to the Sarah Covenant? It dies. (In contrast, the Law Covenant does not die but will merge into the New Covenant. The Jew today who has not accepted Christ is still under the Old Law Covenant. The two covenants are basically the same with certain modifications, elaborations, and new conditions in the New Covenant.) The Rachel Covenant will also die because Rachel died in giving birth to Benjamin.

"The son of my vows." What suggestion is there that Sarah made any vows?

Comment: She made a marriage vow to Abraham her husband.

Reply: Yes, she was the legal wife.

As beautiful and as happily married as Sarah was, she felt she was missing something—a child. An indication of this is the arrangement she suggested to have Abraham bear a child through Hagar.

Comment: Her laugh when the angel told her she would have a child in her old age shows she was thinking along these lines.

Reply: She is listed as an Ancient Worthy in Hebrews 11 because when she was told she would have a child, she *believed*. “Through *faith* also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised” (Heb. 11:11). Her laugh was a happy laugh. Her faith was very strong.

We are reminded of Mary, whose faith was also strong. The angel commended her for her attitude and belief when she was told that the Holy Spirit would overcome and impregnate her. She asked, “How can this be since I have no husband?” and then believed the angel’s answer. (Her question implies that Joseph was quite old.) Thus there is a relationship between the Virgin Mary and Sarah.

With Elizabeth, who was barren, her husband was struck dumb until John’s birth because he did not believe at first that she would have a child (Luke 1:18–20).

Isaiah 54:1 talks of barren Sarah: “Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD.” When Sarah did not have a child for years, she grieved and felt forsaken along this line. Nevertheless, going through this experience multiplied her joy when she did have a child. (Women in those times hoped to be the mother of Messiah and thus put a special premium on bearing a male child.) Although Sarah was barren for many years, she did eventually bring forth Isaac, and the seed of Isaac was to be great. In fact, Abraham’s seed is said to be so great that it will bless all the families of the earth. Even of Ishmael, through whom earlier it was thought the progeny would come, it was prophesied that he would have 12 tribes. But the great seed that will multiply and fill the earth will come through Sarah. Hence “more are the children” of Sarah than of Hagar (Isa. 54:1; Gal. 4:27). Spiritually speaking, the children of Sarah will be greater in number.

It was the child of Abraham and Sarah through whom the promise was to be seen. The Apostle Paul shows that Isaac represents The Christ (Gal. 3:29). Thus the Church class are of the Isaac seed. And it is with the next generation, through Isaac, that the seed goes into operation as regards blessing all the families of the earth. Sarah had only one child, but through him was to come the miraculous multiplication of seed. If Sarah represents the Grace Covenant in this allegory, then Abraham represents God, and since the promise comes through the next generation, “king Lemuel” is their son, Isaac, a multitudinous seed. The Isaac class are destined to be kings, with Jesus as the head, the chief one.

Continuing with the thought of “the son of my vows,” we think also of barren Hannah. Peninnah, the secondary wife, had several children, whereas Hannah, whom Elkanah really loved, was barren (1 Sam. 1:2). It is touching how Elkanah, her husband, tried to comfort her: “Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? *am not I better to thee than ten sons?*” (1 Sam. 1:8). But in the final analysis, she got a better blessing than Peninnah, who seemed to be prospering at the time. The child Samuel was dedicated to the Lord by Hannah, who instructed him, the promised seed, of God’s providential, miraculous care of him when he went away to live with Eli. Similarly, the Sarah Covenant instructs us; for example, “Be thou faithful unto death,

and I will give thee the crown of life." If we obey now to the best of our ability, then by God's grace, our hopes will come to fruition in the Kingdom Age. It is a miracle that we are called out of darkness into God's marvelous light, but to the world we are nobodies and even peculiar people who entertain a pipe dream.

Thus far in the study of Proverbs 31, we have merely tried to identify King Lemuel and his mysterious mother. "King Lemuel" is the class who are called to kingship and queenship. This class will also be the Second Eve or mother of the next age. "And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, Thou art our sister, *be thou the mother of thousands of millions*, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them" (Gen. 24:60). Many fruitful thoughts and lessons result from a study of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their wives.

Q: If the Hebrew word translated "king" in the first verse can also be "queen," what about the word "son"? Can that word also be translated "daughter"?

A: Yes. In both Chapter 30 and Chapter 31, painstaking care was given to show the blessing will come on both male and female. First, the male son is discussed; then attention will be given to the "virtuous woman" (Proverbs 31:10–31). In Chapters 1–29 of Proverbs, any reference to a woman was usually negative. She was an adulterous woman, a nagging wife, etc. But now, at the close of the book, the virtuous woman will be discussed as a fitting climax. Chapters 30 and 31 beautifully supplement and complete the Book of Proverbs as a broad story or theme.

Q: The name "Lemuel" sounds a lot like "Samuel." Can "Samuel" be broken down the same way into more than one word and also be a type?

A: There is a subtle analogy, but to substantively demonstrate it would be difficult.

Prov. 31:3 Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings.

This verse seems to be one complete thought: The ways that destroy kings are the giving of one's strength unto women. What is verse 3 talking about?

Comment: Repeatedly in the Book of Proverbs, a woman is pictured unfavorably.

Comment: When kings married heathen wives, the wives brought foreign gods into Israel with them.

Reply: That was especially true with King Solomon, who built altars and high places for some of his wives. Until New Testament times, there was no prohibition against having more than one wife, but there was a prohibition against taking foreign wives.

(1 Kings 11:1–13) "But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; Of the nations concerning which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. And he had seven

hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart."

The inadvisability of a king to have several wives, especially foreign wives, can be seen from a *natural* standpoint. However, the whole analogy is *spiritual*. Revelation 14:4 refers to sectarian systems as "women." "These are they which were not defiled with *women*; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb." Being associated with sectarian systems is a danger to the new creature because the attention of those who are aspiring to be kings is diverted. Sectarian systems distract from what should properly be the king's business: the gospel, the development of the new creature. Temporal and fleshly matters should be kept at a minimum.

Both genders of the Church class are mentioned in Proverbs 31. Verses 1–9 give advice to the male gender, and verses 10–31 pertain to the female gender. Elsewhere in Scripture both genders are included in the female term "daughter," and both genders are included in the male pronoun "him." "Hearken, O *daughter*, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house" (Psa. 45:10). "*He* that hath an ear, let *him* hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; *he* that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death" (Rev. 2:11).

The natural advice for Old Testament times was that too much time and attention given to the harem would destroy the very purpose or office of kingship, which was over the people. The same principle applies in the higher or spiritual realm. Getting too wed to organizations or a group spirit can be a hindrance to attaining the Little Flock.

Prov. 31:4 It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink:

The word "O" is not in the Hebrew. Remember, "Lemuel" was broken down into "Lemuel" (the uplifted one) and "Lemo El" (one dedicated to God). The thought is: "It is not for the class hoping to be kings to drink wine or strong drink."

From a *natural* standpoint, it is easy to overindulge in wine and strong drink, and the warning is not to do so. However, that is not the point of verse 4. This verse is saying that a king must have a sober mind in order to make proper decisions and judgments. The sin of Nadab and Abihu was their offering of "strange fire"; ie, they had been drinking and then went into the Holy under the influence of alcohol. They received the death penalty because of carelessness in connection with their public ministry.

Comment: Isaiah 28:7 warns of the dangers of strong drink: "But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment."

Reply: From the natural standpoint, the fruit of the vine was given for man, especially in Old Testament times, but *with moderation*. There is danger in crossing the line between moderation and self-indulgence, particularly with hard liquor. Wine can be helpful for one who is low in spirits and depressed. And Saint Bernard dogs who locate a lost person

in the Alps characteristically carry “strong drink” to revive the individual. Thus there is a place for strong drink.

Now let us raise the interpretation to the spiritual plane for the Christian. If wine is defined as wrong doctrine, Ephesians 5:18 is pertinent: “Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.”

“Nor for princes strong drink.” Notice the distinction between “kings” and “princes.” “Kings” have greater discernment of both the danger and the usefulness of wine and strong drink. Wine and strong drink are more dangerous for “princes,” who are less mature; it is harder for them to exercise moderation.

Prov. 31:5 Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted.

In the pursuit of deeper doctrine, one sometimes overlooks the propriety of the moral life of the Christian. For instance, there are certain standards of conduct for the Christian. The nominal view of a Christian is one who leads a good moral life, but the Scriptures show that more is needed to be a good Christian. Many judge a person to be a Christian by his or her demeanor and sweet disposition, but this trait may be the result of natural inherited good bearing, and not a Christlike spirit. On the other hand, those who understand deeper doctrine sometimes feel that those without this understanding and intellectual maturity are spiritually inferior, even though they are sincerely trying to do God’s will. “We have the truth” becomes their slogan, and they overlook the plain A,B,C’s of doctrine. That is the danger of strong drink for the Christian. Chronology, prophecy, the Tabernacle, etc., are all important doctrines, but the moral life must not be ignored. We need both doctrine and moral conduct. The milk, the water, the meat of the Word are all important.

From the natural standpoint, “the afflicted” are those who go to the king for advice, justice, deliverance, help, or aid because of their lack or want or need. The term “the afflicted” would include orphans, widows, the poor, etc., who go to the king for redress. A king who is inebriated lacks heart sympathy and the ability to fairly assess a matter.

Spiritually speaking, the Christian is to minister to the poor and “the afflicted” by condescending in thought and sympathy to feed, help, and succor those who are hungering for the truth. One purpose of witnessing is to share truth with others. Christians are to be practicing spiritual physicians. There is such great darkness in the world that one can feed others with even just the milk of the Word.

Drinking makes one “forget the law.” Incidentally, the Law admonishes not to regard the face of either the poor or the rich in matters of judgment. Judgment should not be perverted through improper sympathy for the poor or because of one’s money.

Prov. 31:6 Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts.

“Water” is a symbol of essential truth, but “wine” represents the *joys* of truth. At first glance, this verse seems puzzling, but it is proper advice. Along natural lines, a drink of liquor can help one who is literally “ready to perish” from the cold. That was the illustration of the Saint Bernard dog given earlier.

Comment: The king is not to drink wine himself, but he is to give strong drink to those who are perishing and to the heavy-hearted so that they forget their poverty and misery.

Reply: The purpose of the “strong drink” and “wine” is to break the chain of thinking.

Comment: Spiritually, the giving of “strong drink” to those who are ready to perish would be the principle set forth in Jude 23: “And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.” A drastic method—ie, strong doctrine—is needed to wake up a consecrated individual who has gone astray either directly or indirectly along moral lines. The purpose of the drastic method is to save one from Second Death.

Prov. 31:7 Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.

Imbibing strong doctrine, especially if the truth leads to consecration, helps one to forget past disappointments and sufferings and to go on with the new life.

Prov. 31:8 Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction.

“The dumb” would be those who are unable to defend themselves for various reasons: mental, physical, financial. The king must consider that a life is at stake; therefore, great care and concern should be given to that individual to try to rescue him. His cause should be advocated as far as possible; that is, without any violation of the law. We do hear of rare cases where an innocent individual ends up on Death Row in prison because of an incompetent lawyer.

Comment: Job said (29:15,16), “I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor: and the cause which I knew not I searched out.”

Comment: When verses 4 and 5 are compared with verses 6 and 7, first the “strong drink” has a negative connotation and later it has a positive connotation. This is often the pattern in the Book of Proverbs, where a couplet will be given one way and then switch over to the opposite way.

Prov. 31:9 Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy.

Prov. 31:10 Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.

Verses 10–31, the end of the chapter, pertain to the “virtuous woman.” “Her price is far above rubies” in that no amount of money can “find” or purchase such a woman. Her presence is providential, as it were. A “virtuous woman” is rare, and as with precious jewels, her value is based on scarcity.

Comment: Proverbs 19:14 emphasizes the providential aspect: “House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife is from the LORD.”

From the spiritual standpoint, this “virtuous woman” represents the virgin Church, who is espoused to Christ. Now the feminine gender is being used. In verses 2–9 the masculine gender was used. All of the qualities listed in subsequent verses have spiritual

applications. The principle is “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10); ie, faithfulness *throughout life* is urged.

Prov. 31:11 The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.

Having a virtuous wife removes the desire for further acquisitions because such a husband already has that which is more precious than rubies.

Prov. 31:12 She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.

Her character is consistent and constant; her work can be relied upon. “She will do him [Jesus] good ... all the days of her life.”

Prov. 31:13 She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands.

(Isa. 1:18) “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be [white] as *wool*.”

Wool comes from animals (sheep); flax comes from plants. Flax is a reed that can be used for baskets or made into strings or threads and woven into cloth. Fine linen, especially the premium Egyptian-style linen, is made with flax. The point is that *effort* is required to “seek” wool and flax, for sheep must be sheared to procure wool and flax plants must be harvested.

Comment: She “worketh willingly with her hands.” This shows a joy in service; she works of her own volition instead of being forced to sacrifice. The hymn based on Ecclesiastes 9:10 comes to mind: “Let us do with our might what our hands find to do.”

Reply: The Lord loves a cheerful giver. If one is not inclined in this direction, it is possible to develop joyful service from duty love or duty service.

Prov. 31:14 She is like the merchants’ ships; she bringeth her food from afar.

This verse also refers to industry but would mean going out of the way and exerting effort to obtain spiritual food that is needful for self and for others.

Q: With the spiritual food coming “from afar,” would one thought be that it comes from heaven?

A: That is a good thought. We labor for “angels’ food,” as it were, for heavenly manna (Psa. 78:25).

Prov. 31:15 She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.

She does witness work. The “night” would be the 2,000-year Gospel Age nighttime of darkness. While the whole world lies in darkness, the Church has been trying to witness and provide for others.

The more mature should try to help the less mature to grow and develop—to become more mature.

Comment: Romans 12:11–13 says, “Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.”

Q: What is the difference between “her household” and “her maidens”? Aren’t the maidens part of the household of faith?

A: Yes, but in a more personalized sense. The “household of faith” would include all of the consecrated. Handmaidens were closer to the mistress of the house; they were near at hand.

Q: Could the distinction be that general spiritual food is given to the household and choice portions to the maidens? Jesus illustrated this principle with his apostles; he particularly singled out Peter, James, and John to receive the choicest food.

A: Yes.

Prov. 31:16 **She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.**

This virtuous woman thinks about and plans for the future. She expands her efforts and is not satisfied with the status quo. She enlarges her own property so that she can provide more food. Spiritually, she tries to develop her own influence, talents, mode of service for the brotherhood, etc.

Comment: This would be increasing her pound and her talents according to opportunity and ability.

“With the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.” Planting a vineyard would be making preparation for a particular effort or work.

Prov. 31:17 **She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms.**

Verse 17 is saying that the Christian is expected to spiritually develop from a babe to a youth to a teenager to young adulthood and to maturity; that is, one must develop and be strengthened as a new creature. Many believers do not progress beyond the baby state, thinking that all one must do is believe in Jesus and that love covers everything. They *passively* allow the Lord to work in them, whereas Philippians 2:12 says that each should *actively* work out his own salvation with fear and trembling. “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong” (1 Cor. 16:13). In other words, *become strong like men*.

Prov. 31:18 **She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night.**

Comment: Her “merchandise” is wisdom and truth. The hymn goes, “Wisdom divine! Who tells the price of wisdom’s costly merchandise?”

Q: Could her “merchandise” be doctrine?

A: Yes, but in the sense of character development as well as dispensational truth.

Quality is more important than quantity. Many will ask in that day, "Haven't we done many wonderful works in thy name?" The Lord will reply that he cast them out as regards the high calling (Matt. 7:22,23). It is better to do less with quality than much without quality.

"Her candle goeth not out by night." As a wise virgin, she has enough oil in her lamp (Matt. 25:1-13). In the Tabernacle arrangement the light in the Holy kept burning all night.

Prov. 31:19 She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.

She is right there doing the work herself and not expecting others to work while she rests. In olden times, a woman held a spindle with thread on her arm. The thread was pulled off the spindle as needed and twisted into yarn and then made into a blanket, sweater, etc. It was personal hand work.

Prov. 31:20 She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.

She is generous; she actively and willingly helps those in literal need rather than wait for them to beg. She sees the need of the party without his having to broach the matter. Throughout the entire description, she is a perfect example.

"She stretcheth out her hand [singular] to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands [plural] to the needy." When she stretches out one hand, the person is not in quite as much need as when she extends two hands. There is greater depth of need with the "needy" than with the "poor."

Prov. 31:21 She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet.

Comment: The King James says, "All her household are clothed with double garments."

Reply: She is not afraid of the cold because she makes preparation for both an inner and an outer garment when an outer garment is needed.

Q: Would the double garments be the inner robe of Christ's righteousness plus the outer armor we are to put on?

A: Yes, in principle. The cold of the snow could be when the Adversary attacks. At that time there is a need for double garments, ie, the whole armor of God.

Comment: Dispensationally, she knows her flight should not be in winter (Matt. 24:20).

Prov. 31:22 She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple.

Comment: This verse reminds us of Psalm 45:13,14, which tells of the Bride's fine needlework or embroidering of character. "The king's daughter is all glorious within: her

clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework.”

Comment: The first part of verse 22 in the NIV reads: “She makes coverings for her bed.” This is a more limited thought but could indicate a doctrinal bed. The Bride prepares a beautiful and proper doctrinal bed.

Reply: That is an unusual thought, and it would be part of her responsibility—as long as it is not interpreted as a creedal bed that *others* should be forced into.

In the interlineary Hebrew, verse 22 reads: “She makes herself ornamental coverings and belts.”

Prov. 31:23 Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land.

Her espoused husband is Jesus.

Comment: She has chosen one who is wise to be her future husband.

Prov. 31:24 She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant.

This is a difficult verse to spiritualize, for we are told not to sell the truth. “Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old. *Buy the truth, and sell it not*; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding” (Prov. 23:22,23).

Comment: To sell the truth would be like Esau’s selling his birthright.

Reply: Yes. We buy the truth through consecration and obedience to God’s will and Word. “Selling” the truth, which would be forsaking it in one form or another, would be devastating to us as new creatures.

Another way to “sell” the truth would be to make money in proclaiming the gospel. We spend time, money, and effort in advertising and witnessing, but we must let others decide for themselves whether or not to “buy” the truth. There is nothing wrong in advertising the truth so that others may buy it for themselves.

Q: Is the “fine linen” the truth?

A: “Fine linen” is the righteousness of Christ. Part of our responsibility in the present life is to make attractive to the hearer the virtue and reasonableness of dedicating one’s life to Christ—that is, to make the truth attractive to others so that they can get the same blessings we have. Any reward we receive for witnessing is not along monetary or material lines but, if the Lord considers our service acceptable, would be treasures in heaven. *Motivation* is involved—having the proper motivation in “selling” (witnessing) the truth to others.

Prov. 31:25 Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.

Comment: The NIV and the RSV have the thought of laughing: “and she laughs at the time to come.” That will be a laughter of happiness, which would be similar to rejoicing.

“Strength and honour are her clothing” in the present life. As “ambassadors for Christ,” we try to have the dress and modesty that befit a Christian. We try to be good examples.

“She shall rejoice in time to come [throughout eternity].”

Prov. 31:26 She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.

“She openeth her mouth with wisdom.” Paul mentions that we do not speak the wisdom of this world but that which the Holy Spirit teaches (1 Cor. 2:12,13). The understanding we have of basic truth is remarkable; for example, the doctrine of the Ransom and what it means to be bought with a price.

“In her tongue is the law of kindness.” What attracts most people in witnessing? The largess of God in forgiving past sins and casting them over His back, as it were, except of course in those cases that involved willful serious injury to others.

Comment: In the book *Pilgrim’s Progress*, when Christian first starts out on his journey, he has such a heavy weight on his back that he can hardly walk. When he gets to a certain point and looks up and sees the Cross, the entire weight falls off his back.

Prov. 31:27 She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.

She is concerned for the household of faith and does with her might what her hands find to do. We should have concern for our brethren as well as for ourselves.

All those in the Scriptural “household of faith” are consecrated.

Prov. 31:28 Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.

“Her [spiritual] children ... call her blessed.” Her children are considered especially from the standpoint of the Sarah Covenant. Rebecca was told, “Be thou the mother of thousands of millions.”

“Her husband also ... praiseth her [when she finishes her course].” The purpose of the Church’s living and reigning with Christ in the Kingdom is to bless the families of the earth through the strange and unusual seed called “Isaac.” The mystery of “Christ in you, the hope of glory” will be revealed in the next age (Col. 1:27).

Prov. 31:29 Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.

All “daughters” are overcomers, but the Little Flock, who “excellest them all,” are more than overcomers. There are foolish virgins and there are wise virgins.

Comment: The King James margin says, "Many daughters have gotten riches, but thou excellest them all [in the riches laid up in heaven]." The Little Flock will lay up the most abundant treasures.

Prov. 31:30 Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.

Comment: The RSV uses the word "charm" instead of "favour." "Charm is deceitful."

Comment: The clause "a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised" is a reminder of Proverbs 1:7, which says that reverence ("fear") of the Lord is the *principal* part of wisdom and knowledge. Those who attain the Little Flock will have such reverence.

Reply: Yes, reverence in the deepest sense is a goal to be achieved later on in one's Christian walk.

Comment: Charm and beauty are superficial qualities that can dazzle others, but in the final analysis they do not count.

Reply: One's pleasing *outward* appearance is more favorably received by the many, but it is the development of the new creature within that is of primary importance.

Prov. 31:31 Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.

The "gates" are in heaven. They are the same gates where the husband sat in verse 23.

Comment: The NIV says, "Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gates."

Comment: Because she works out her salvation with fear and trembling, she will get the fruits of her reward.