

Eighth Part

The Wisdom Books of David and Solomon

Book II

The Book of Proverbs

Prologue

1. King Solomon, inspired by the Holy Ghost, wrote the Book of Proverbs during the first ten years of his reign, while he was yet a model of virtue, wisdom and prudence. This moral Book contains holy and wise maxims with which Divine Wisdom inspired Solomon's quill.

2. Divine Wisdom, in Essence, is God Triune Himself, Eternal Truth and Eternal Law. God's Wisdom is Infinite.

Christ as God is Wisdom Uncreated, and as Man is Wisdom Created. The Soul of Christ, at the very instant of creation united to the Divine Word, was inundated with Divine Wisdom to the highest degree of plenitude possible in a creature. Christ as God is Wisdom in infinite degree, and as Man is Wisdom in finite degree.

Mary is the Seat of Divine Wisdom. The Soul of Mary, at the very instant of creation espoused to the Soul of Christ, became full of divine Wisdom in the highest degree possible after the Soul of Christ. Mary is Wisdom itself, by Grace.

God Triune is by Essence the same Truth we must believe, and the same Law we must fulfil.

Christ as Man is the visible Image of the Invisible God, and therefore the visible Image of Divine Wisdom.

Mary is the Bearer of Divine Wisdom.

Christ as Man, and Mary, are the Parents of all other creatures invisible and visible.

3. Divine Wisdom speaks in the conscience of every human being.

Divine Wisdom also speaks publicly: By means of Sacred Scripture, the Church's Teaching, the sound testimony of the righteous, the chastisement of sinners, and in other ways.

Divine Wisdom, then, addresses man in many ways, so that he may never lack the knowledge of what is pleasing and displeasing to God, and thus be able to direct his steps along the paths of righteousness.

Chapter I

Introduction

Here are Solomon's maxims in order to learn Divine Wisdom: teaching and discipline that lead us to eternal salvation.

Whoever listens to these maxims and puts them into practice, will have greater light to live rightly and obtain ever-increasing degrees of Divine Wisdom.

Fear of God is the beginning of Divine Wisdom; foolish are those who despise Her.

Chapter II

The Soul of Christ, from the instant of His creation, is by justice Divine Wisdom

The Lord created and possessed Me at the beginning of Creation, before creating anything else.

I am that Wisdom which inspires good counsels and I am to be found present in wise and judicious thoughts.

Mine are the gifts of counsel and fair-mindedness; Mine are prudence and fortitude.

From Me kings receive the authority, knowledge and virtue necessary to enable them to rule with integrity. From Me legislators receive the assistance that enables them to decree laws which are just.

I love especially those who love Me, and those who seek Me shall find Me.

I go by the paths of justice and integrity.

With Me are all holiness, justice, glory and opulence, to enrich in Wisdom those who love Me, and swell their treasure of spiritual goods.

Just are all My sentences; in them is nothing crooked or perverse: those who accept them with simplicity will act rightly; those who avail themselves of their support will act with justice.

Receive My counsels and accept My doctrine with greater relish and interest than if you received the most valuable treasure of gold and silver; since Wisdom is immensely more valuable than all the most precious jewels, and nothing of all that is desirable is comparable to Her.

Now then, My children, listen to Me all, because I will speak to you of lofty things, and My lips will open to show you the path of integrity. My tongue will exalt the truth and My lips will abominate impiety.

From the highest celestial summits, My powerful voice cries out unceasingly: O children of men, it is to you I constantly appeal and direct My words! Learn the counsels of Divine Wisdom; be very attentive to My maxims.

Chapter III

The Soul of Mary, from the instant of Her creation, is by Grace Divine Wisdom

From eternity I was predestined: God had still not made the Earth, nor the rivers, nor anything else that exists in the Universe, and yet I was conceived in the Divine Mind.

My Soul was created at the beginning of Creation, and before anything after Me was created.

The abyss did not yet exist, nor had the wellsprings of water gushed forth, nor was the mighty bulwark of the mountains set in place, nor did the hills exist, and yet My Soul had been created.

When God created the Heavens, I was then present at the Creation. When God encompassed the whole wide Universe with His laws, established ethereal regions

in the heights, set the sources of water in equilibrium, circumscribed the sea within its confines by law so that the waters might remain within their limits, and set in place the foundations of the world: I was with Him arranging all things and I delighted in His presence. I rejoiced exceedingly in the creation of the Universe. My whole delight was to be as Mother with all the children of men.

Now then, O children, hear Me: Blessed are those who follow My ways. Listen to teaching, acquire Divine Wisdom, and do not seek to cast it aside. Blessed is the man who hears Me, and who attends at My doors each day, and who watches at My entrance gates. Whoever finds Me will find life, and will obtain salvation from the Lord. But whoever sins against Me shall injure his own soul. All who detest Me, love supernatural death, because they shall be deprived of true life.

Chapter IV

Exhortation of Divine Wisdom in order that all possess Her

My child! Receive My words and keep My commandments within you; so that your ear be attentive to Wisdom and you incline your heart to prudence.

Because if you desire Wisdom and incline your heart to prudence, if you seek Wisdom with the same eagerness as riches, and unearth Her as the most precious of treasures, then you will experience the holy fear of God, and will find the light of His Divine Science; because it is the Lord who gives Wisdom, and from His lips prudence and knowledge of the truth pour forth.

He is custodian of the righteous, and protector of the simple of heart. He it is who preserves the righteous in the path of virtue, and who directs their footsteps.

Satiate yourself with Wisdom's fare, because it is sweet and succulent to your soul.

Should Wisdom enter your heart, and your soul take pleasure in the enlightenment of Divine Science, you will understand what is righteous and agreeable in the eyes of God; good counsel will be your shield, and prudence will keep you upright; since She will free you from the wrong path and from perverse men who go by tenebrous ways, who rejoice in wrongdoing and revel in the perversity of vice.

Go then, My child, and do not leave the path of the righteous; thus will you dominate your passions and stay in God's Grace. But those who do wrong, if they do not repent, shall be precipitated into the eternal abyss.

He who listens to Divine Wisdom and puts it into practice, will live without fear, enjoy an abundance of Grace, and will be protected from evil.

The beginning of Wisdom is also the effort to acquire Her, at the cost of whatever goods can be possessed in this world.

Wisdom admonishes ungodly men, saying to them:

For how long must you be blockheads? For how long, fools, will you covet things harmful to you; or, as imprudent, will you abhor Wisdom? Senseless men, how often I call you and you do not respond, stretch out My hand to you and you reject it! You despise all My counsels and pay no heed to My reproaches. Be

converted at My summons, then, and I will pour My spirit out upon you and fill you with My doctrine.

But if you continue steadfast in ungodliness, disdain Divine Wisdom, disregarding My counsels, scoffing at My corrections and despising the holy fear of God, you shall eat the fruits of your base conduct and shall sate yourselves with the consequences of your own iniquity.

Lack of docility to Divine Wisdom will be the eternal perdition of insensate men, since those things in which they foolishly believe to find their happiness, shall be their ruin.

Chapter V

Excellences of Divine Wisdom

Blessed is whoever has acquired Wisdom and is rich in prudence; because Her possession is incomparably more profitable than silver and gold, and more precious than all riches, and all such things as are desirable.

The ways of whoever attains Wisdom will be clean and full of peace. Tree of life is Wisdom for those who attain Her, and blessed is whoever has clasped Her to his soul.

My child, never lose sight of the following: observe the Law and My counsels, and your soul will possess supernatural life, and you will be decked with the most precious of adornments. You will live full of confidence, and your feet will not stumble along the way. You will lie down to rest without anxiety and your sleep will be peaceful. The Lord will be at your side to guide your footsteps, so that you may not become the prey of your enemies.

My child, do not forget My Holy Law, and keep My commandments in your heart, because they will sate you with peace on Earth and glory in eternal life.

Whoever observes My Holy Law, safeguards his soul; but whoever despises its ways shall die eternally.

Eternal Glory will be the inheritance of those who proceed according to Wisdom; ignominy shall be the inheritance of fools.

Honour the Lord with your material goods as well, and give alms for His worship, and your granaries will be full of wheat and your presses of wine.

Do not disdain, My child, the Lord's correction, nor be resentful when He corrects you, because the Lord corrects whom He loves, and takes pleasure in him as a father in his son.

Chapter VI

Divine Wisdom prepares a home, a table and a banquet

Christ, Eternal High Priest, who is Divine Wisdom, founded the Church and endowed Her with eight Founts:

One invisible Sacrament and seven visible Sacraments.

In the temple of the Church He arranged an altar.

On the altar He instituted the Holy Sacrifice of Mass and conferred the Sacrament of Priestly Order on His Apostles.

He sent His Apostles to announce the Kingdom of God to all creatures, so that the simple and humble of heart might come to form part of the sheepfold of the Church, and benefit from the Graces of Holy Mass, through the Sacraments.

For outside the True Church there is no salvation.

Chapter VII

Divine Wisdom contrasts virtue with vice

The wise son is the joy of his parents; just as the foolish one is their trial.

The Lord will entirely satiate souls that hunger and thirst after justice; but will leave empty and insatiable those who hatch impiety for their own profit.

The wise heart accepts laws; the fool rejects them as intolerable.

Whoever lives with simplicity of heart, will be sure and confident in his dealings; whoever acts guilefully will come to be discovered.

Whoever is upright in his ways and fears God will be despised by one who is not upright in his ways.

Better is a man of forbearance than one of valour, and one who dominates his passions is better than a conqueror of cities.

Chapter VIII

Divine Wisdom's counsels on parents and children

Listen, My child, to your father's timely corrections, and do not disregard your mother's good advice; because such things will be as a graceful crown upon your head, and a precious chain about your neck.

Whoever truly loves his child, chastises him in season; whoever does not love him, does not trouble to chastise him.

Chastise your child, there is always hope that he may amend, but do not be so angered as to crush him.

Whoever ill-treats his father or mother is a base and shameless child.

Whoever ridicules his father or his mother, let ravens from the valley pluck out his eyes and birds of prey devour.

Whoever forsakes his father or his mother in their need, is a scoundrel and a murderer.

Chapter IX

Divine Wisdom's counsels on bad company

My child, for all that sinners flatter you, do not condescend to their bad example.

If they should tell you: "*Come with us, and let us lie in wait for someone to kill, or let us set a trap for the righteous and make him fall, and then, by the ruin of our neighbour, secure every kind of riches;*" or should they try to seduce you saying: "*Join up your destiny with ours, so that there be one purse between us all*":

Do not follow their footsteps, My child; take care not to follow in their evil ways, because their feet hasten along the paths of impiety, and they rush to do harm to their neighbour, take his life if need be, and even wrest eternal life from his soul. Flee from them, for in vain is the net spread in the sight of birds in flight.

The traps laid by the ungodly recoil against their own lives, and their deceits serve to bring about their own ruin. Covetousness for goods, for vainglory and for pleasure always ends up thus, since this vice eventually kills the one who has it.

Chapter X

Divine Wisdom's counsels on marriage

O My son! Live happy and contented with the lawful spouse you took in your youth, and let her be your delight. Let her affection inundate you with gladness in all seasons; and the love of your spouse in the bedchamber be your only pleasure, always in conformity with God's ordinances for marriage. Drink then, of the water from your own cistern, and from the abundance of your own well. Let you alone be the head of your spouse, and take care that she be chaste. May the rich fount of your marriage overflow with many children.

My son, be ever faithful to your spouse. Do not go out after other women, nor let yourself be seduced by them; for the Lord watches attentively the ways of man and considers all his doings. The ungodly falls prisoner to his own iniquity, and is caught up in the web of his own sins.

Can a man by chance conceal fire in his bosom without his clothes being burnt, or walk over live coals without the soles of his feet being scorched? Well, whoever seeks sinful dealings with his neighbour's wife, will no longer be clean from the moment he desired her.

The diligent and virtuous woman is an occasion of glory for her husband; the slovenly and frivolous woman is an occasion of dishonour.

The wise and prudent woman further strengthens her home; but the foolish will destroy it with her own hands.

Better to live in the desert than with a quarrelsome and irate woman.

Chapter XI

Divine Wisdom's counsels on the righteous and the ungodly

Fount of life are the lips of the righteous; fount of wrongdoing are the lips of the ungodly.

The lips of the righteous produce Wisdom; those of the ungodly, confusion.

The Lord abominates lying lips; and truthful ones are pleasing to Him.

The righteous employs his lips to speak good things; the ungodly, to speak underhand things.

The ungodly man is baleful, he speaks only of wrongdoing. He schemes evil in his depraved heart and at all times sows discord. However, if he does not amend, perdition will suddenly come upon him, and he will be crushed, without there being any remedy for him.

Among many other things, the Lord abominates: a man of haughty gaze, one of lying tongue, one who spills innocent blood, one who devises perverse schemes in his heart, one whose feet trip lightly to wrongdoing, one who raises false testimony and one who sows discord among brethren.

Because of his bad conscience, the ungodly flees from himself, without anyone having persecuted him; the righteous, however, remains steadfast like a lion, fearing nothing.

False scales are abominable in the sight of the Lord; the right weight is what is pleasing to Him.

Abominable to the Lord is the perverse heart; pleasing to Him are those who act sincerely.

The ungodly satisfy their hunger with the bread of impiety, and quench their thirst with the wine of injustice.

The way of the righteous is a shining light that increases daily and grows to perfection. The way of the ungodly, on the contrary, is a tenebrous light which augments daily and grows to complete obscurity.

The remembrance of the righteous will be blessed with praises; the name of the ungodly will be accursed.

The life-work of the righteous is to give life; the life-work of the ungodly is to spread sin.

The hope of the righteous is for the joy of eternal bliss, but the vain hope of the ungodly shall precipitate them into the eternal fire of Hell.

If the righteous is chastised in this life even for slight faults, how much more will the ungodly be chastised in this life and in the next!

The righteous will one day be delivered from trials, but the ungodly will be ever more afflicted.

The blessing of the Lord is poured out upon the head of the righteous; His malediction upon the head of the ungodly.

The knave deceives his friend by his word; but the righteous frees him from deceit by his Wisdom.

Untruthful lips are an abomination to the Lord.

Whoever builds on lies, builds on emptiness, and is as foolhardy as one who tries to grasp with his hand a bird in flight.

The tongue of the righteous is like refined silver.

Whoever is double-dealing cleverly ferrets out his friend's secrets to make them known later, but whoever is trustworthy at heart keeps to himself what his friend confides to him.

Chapter XII

Divine Wisdom's counsels on the wise man and the fool

The fear of God is the beginning of Wisdom, and knowledge of the saints is true prudence.

Give advice to a wise man, and he will become yet wiser from your teachings. Give advice to a righteous man and he will become yet more righteous from your instructions.

If you are wise, you will be so to your own profit; but if you are a self-important fool, you will pay the price.

The wise man does not presume upon his wisdom, but the fool preaches his folly.

Whoever keeps the company of the wise will end up becoming wise, but whoever keeps the company of fools will end up becoming a fool.

Wisdom resides in the heart of the prudent, and enlightens the ignorant.

The fool shows his annoyance at once; the sensible instead dissembles the injury.

Seeing evil approach, the prudent man withdraws, but the fool goes on ahead and receives the injury.

Reply to the fool according to his folly, that he may not take himself to be wise.

From the lips of the wise comes knowledge without presumption; from the lips of the fool comes confusion with self-importance.

Chapter XIII

Divine Wisdom's counsels on fraternal correction

Whoever loves correction loves Wisdom, but whoever despises it is a fool.

The fool does not wish to be corrected; therefore he rejects the company of the wise.

Only with difficulty will you secure that the foolish and presumptuous man accept your correction, for most probably he will disdain it and abhor you; but if you correct the wise man he will accept your correction and thank you for it.

Whoever corrects the presumptuous fool, receives ridicule from him; whoever corrects the ungodly, receives injury from him.

Whoever accepts correction is on the way to life, but whoever rejects it has gone astray.

Whoever rejects correction despises his own soul, but whoever submits to correction becomes master of his own heart.

Open correction is better than concealed love.

Wounds received from one who loves, are better than fraudulent kisses from one who loathes.

Chapter XIV

Divine Wisdom's counsels on the virtue of humility and its opposing vice which is pride

Wherever humility is, there is Wisdom; wherever pride is, there is folly.

Between the proud there are always conflicts, since they are ruled by folly; but whoever is humble is ruled by Wisdom's counsels.

On the ungodly man's home God's curse descends, and on the righteous man's His blessing; for He confounds the proud and gives His Grace to the meek and humble of heart.

Those who possess the fear of God will detest evil. God detests arrogance, pride, all bad conduct and every deceitful tongue.

Chapter XV

Divine Wisdom's counsels on the virtue of generosity and its opposing vice which is avarice

What good will riches be to the fool if with them he is unable to buy Wisdom?

A little with the fear of God is worth more than great treasures without His Law.
Better a little honestly than great profits dishonestly.

Do not desire to work to become wealthy, and do not fix your gaze on riches you cannot acquire.

Better to eat beans where there is love, than a fattened ox where there is hatred.
Riches draw many friends, but the poor man's friends abandon him.

Whoever turns a deaf ear to the cries of the poor, will not find response at his own cries either.

Many boast of their riches, but they are poor in Wisdom.

Those there are who in their very poverty are rich in spirit, because they live content with the little they possess; and others who, possessing great wealth, are poor in spirit because they are not satisfied with what they have.

Whoever ill-treats the poor, injures the Creator; whoever shows compassion for the poor, honours the Creator.

The days of the poor are all laborious, but peace of heart is a perpetual banquet.

Treasures are of no avail if they lead to ungodliness; the exercise of the virtues is fount of Grace and life for the soul.

Chapter XVI

Divine Wisdom's counsels on the virtue of chastity and its opposing vice which is lust

My child, heed the teaching of My Wisdom, and incline your ear to what My prudence enjoins, so that thus you have My counsels ever present and retain My instructions:

Do not let yourself be drawn by the seductions of the perverse woman; because the lips of the loose woman are like honeycomb that drips honey, and her words soothing as oil; but the consequences of her pleasure are more bitter than wormwood, and sharper than a double-edged sword. The feet of the loose woman follow ways that lead to Hell, and draw those who have dealings with her down to the abyss. Keep far from her, then, and do not even approach the doors of her house. Thus you will not have to lament following the loss of your soul's beauty and your body's vigour, saying: Why did I disregard Wisdom's advice, and not listen to the voice of those who taught me rightly, and my heart not accept their exhortations!

Do not let your heart, then, covet the beauty of the corrupt woman, nor let her glances captivate you; because her pleasure is a vile and fleeting thing, and snatches from a man the beauty of his soul.

Do not let your heart be allured by the charms of the loose woman; nor, seduced, follow her ways. Because many are the men she has degraded, and the strongest have fallen into her net.

Chapter XVII

Divine Wisdom's counsels on the virtue of patience and its opposing vice which is anger

Impassioned anger and rage leave no place for mercy, for who can suffer the outburst of the furious man?

The irate man provokes quarrels; the patient calms those that have arisen.
A gentle reply placates a neighbour's wrath; a harsh word intensifies his fury.
Whoever is patient governs himself with much prudence; but whoever is not,
evidences his folly.

Chapter XVIII

Divine Wisdom's counsels on the virtue of temperance and its opposing vice which is gluttony

Wine is a licentious thing, and drunkenness is filled with disorders.

When you sit at table, eat with decency and decorum what is put before you,
employing moderation and temperance.

Control your voracity, so that your soul always be master of your body.

Do not crave delicacies, as they will be your fare of ruin.

Do not keep company with those who take food and wine to excess, because
you will end up becoming one more of them.

Those given to excess of wine and those who find their delight in taking drinks,
cause distress to parents, enter into arguments, fall into ruin, harm the innocent
without the least cause, bawl out despairing ayes at their misfortunes and have
their eyesight clouded.

Do not be deceived by the fine colour of wine, nor by its excellent aroma;
because it slips down gently into the body, but will strike you as a serpent and
coil up inside of you like a basilisk; your eyes will then follow after another's
wife and, insensate, you will say shameful things; you will find yourself as one
rudderless and lost amid enormous waves. You will become so enslaved that
coming back to your wits you will say: Where can I find wine again?

Whoever has eaten well spurns even honey; but to the hungry even the bitter
appears sweet.

Chapter XIX

Divine Wisdom's counsels on the virtue of charity and its opposing vice which is envy

A sound heart gives life to the body, but envy cankers the bones.

Never let mercy and truth be taken from you; wind them about your neck and
write them in your heart, and you will find grace and a good reputation before
God and before men.

Always do good yourself, and never prevent your neighbour from doing so as
well.

Do not tell your friend: 'Come back later; I will give you what you want
tomorrow,' being able to give today. Do not plan to wrong your friend, since he
trusts you; neither take up lawsuits against anyone without just cause. Do not
imitate the wrongful ways of the unrighteous, because the perverse are
abominable in the eyes of God, Who reserves His intimacies only for the simple
of heart.

Whoever despises his neighbour for some defect, has a mean heart; whoever
suffers him with patience, is prudent and charitable.

The Lord abhors whoever sows discord among brethren.

The words of a gossip appear kindly and inoffensive, but their venom penetrates to the innermost depths.

Envy brings about quarrels; charity covers all faults.

Mercy and justice are more agreeable to God than sacrifices.

Whoever digs a pit for his neighbour to fall into, will fall into it himself.

Chapter XX

Divine Wisdom's counsels on the virtue of diligence and its opposing vice which is sloth

Whoever relishes sloth will be full of misery.

A good name is preferable to great riches.

Observe, O idler, the ant, and consider its work, and learn Wisdom from it as well; since the ant, without guide or master, provides itself with nourishment during the summer, gathering its food at harvest-time. Or observe the bee, and learn how it labours to produce rich honey which kings and subjects relish and seek for themselves. The bee, small and frail as it is, for its industry is held in high esteem.

For how long will you sleep on, idler? When will you awaken from your excessive slumber? For you will sleep a little, doze another while, again fold your arms to sleep, and lo!, indigence will come upon you like a brigand, and poverty like an armed man will overpower you. On the contrary, however, if you were diligent, your harvests would be like an abundant wellspring, and misery would fly far from you.

As the door turns on its hinges, so does the slothful turn over in his bed.

The hands of the slothful bring him misery in temporal and spiritual goods; the hands of the active accumulate them for himself.

Whoever tills his land, will be satiated with provisions; whoever loves sloth, will be a burden for others.

Whoever reaps the harvest in summer, acts with common sense; whoever sleeps at harvest time, is senseless.

Chapter XXI

Divine Wisdom's counsels on good government and the common good

The wise king disperses the ungodly and raises up over them a triumphal arch.

Mercy and justice safeguard the king, and clemency makes his throne stable.

The heart of the wise and prudent king is a wellspring in the hands of God, which He directs wherever He pleases.

Maxims from the lips of the wise and prudent king are like divine oracles, and his tongue will not err on pronouncing judgment.

Those who act wrongfully are abominable to the wise king, because justice is the stay of his throne.

Pleasing to the wise king are lips that always speak the right word; beloved of him will be whoever speaks uprightly.

The apt minister gains the king's will; but the inept will incur his wrath.

A roaring lion and a ravenous bear is an ungodly king over a poor people.

By the blessings of the righteous will a city be exalted, but by the tongues of the ungodly will it be ruined.

Without wise and prudent authority, the people will perish; the governor surrounded by good advisers will act with greater assurance.

Justice is what makes nations great, but injustice makes peoples hapless.

Whoever in a trial shows acceptance of persons acts wrongfully, since for a morsel of bread he will vend justice.

Chapter XXII

Various counsels from Divine Wisdom

Direct your works to the Lord and your undertakings will be successful.

In man's eyes a person's acts may be considered good or bad, but what matters is God's opinion, who penetrates the interior of the heart with unerring judgment.

By mercy and truth is sin expiated, and by the fear of God is evil avoided.

The heart of man proposes his paths, but God disposes his steps.

Just as gold and silver are tried in fire, so does the Lord try the hearts of His own.

As honey harms those who eat it to excess, so whoever dares scrutinize God's majesty shall be confounded before the inscrutability of His glory.

The wise man is strong, and the learned is robust and valiant.

Do not imitate wrongdoers nor desire their company, because their minds contemplate robberies and their lips speak falsehoods.

Senseless is whoever proposes to do wrong.

Do not go about watching out or seeking for faults in the righteous man's home, do not disturb his rest; because the righteous falls seven times, and always rises up again by the Grace of God. But the ungodly cast themselves deeper and deeper into evil by scorning Grace.

Fear the Lord, My son, and do not mingle with detractors, because perdition will suddenly crash down upon them.

Those who tell the ungodly, "*you are upright*", deserve divine malediction; those who rebuke him will be laden with God's blessings.

Whoever replies in accord with what is upright and fair, is as one who gives a kiss of peace and a blessing to his friend.

Do not say: "*The same wrong he did to me, I will do to him,*" because each will be judged according to his works.

Do not boast of being a person of importance before the mighty, nor sit in the grandee's seat, because it is preferable that they say to you: "*Come up higher*", than see yourself humbled in their presence.

Handle your affairs with your loyal friend, and do not disclose your secrets to a stranger; lest he, having heard them, insult you and continually cast them in your face.

Do not frequent your neighbour's home overmuch, if you do not wish him to weary of you and detest you.

As moth to clothing and canker to wood, so melancholy harms man's heart.

If your enemy is hungry, give him to eat; if he is thirsty, give him to drink; for your charity will sear his heart in such fashion that perhaps his hatred may turn to love.

Trust in God with all your heart, and do not trust your own strength. In all your doings think on Him, and He Himself will straighten out your steps.

Do not regard yourself as learned. Fear God and keep far from evil; for your integrity will be your soul's sanctity and your body's refreshment.

Whoever talks much without necessity will not be wanting in sin; whoever moderates his lips is prudent.

Chapter XXIII

Divine Wisdom extols the resolute woman

Who will find a resolute woman? She is more to be esteemed than all precious things brought from afar and from the utmost ends of the world.

In her the heart of her spouse trusts, to whom she will be a faithful and solicitous companion all the days of her life.

The resolute woman obtains wool and flax and knits with her own hands.

She comes to be like a merchantman, who with her labour brings sustenance from afar.

She rises before dawn to prepare meals for the family and tasks for her servants.

She saw a field and bought it, and with the work of her hands planted a vineyard.

She girds herself with virile fortitude and exerts her arms.

She takes the distaff in her hands and whirls the spindle.

She sees happily that her work is fruitful.

She does not extinguish her lamp at night, so as to watch over the house.

With her hand she succours the mendicant, and stretches out her arms to help the needy.

Her family do not fear cold or snow, because all wear heavy clothing.

She made a garment for herself of the finest linen and purple.

Her husband is highly regarded when seated among the senators and at the public gatherings of his country.

She makes the finest fabrics and rich girdles and sells them to merchants.

Fortitude and decorum are her chief attire, and she smiles at the prosperity that awaits her.

Her lips pronounce wise discourses, and on her tongue is the law of goodness.

She watches over the conduct of her family, and does not eat the bread of idleness.

Her children arose and acclaimed her blessed, and her husband praised her as well, saying:

“Many women have provided their household with all kinds of goods, but you have surpassed them all.”

Fleeting and deceitful is beauty in the vain and licentious woman; but the woman who fears the Lord is the one who merits praise for the beauty of her virtues.