

THE PROVERBS OF SOLOMON.

– OCT. 25. – PROVERBS 1:1-19. –

THE Book of Proverbs was not written nor prepared by Solomon in its present form. Apparently quite a number of the proverbs for which he was celebrated were uncollected until a number of years after his death. The book as a whole divides itself into five portions.

I. Chapters 1 to 9, discourses on Wisdom, which is personified.

II. Chapter 10 to 22:16, Solomonic proverbs. These are recollections of epigrams.

III. Chapter 22:17 to 24:34, the words of the Wise.

IV. Chapters 25 to 29, King Hezekiah's collection of Solomonic proverbs.

V. Chapters 30 and 31, Words of Agar, Words of Lemuel, and an alphabetical acrostic on The Virtuous Wife. These last two chapters, it will be noticed, do not claim to be Solomon's proverbs, but were evidently thought by the editor to contain sufficient wisdom to be worthy to be classed with the Proverbs of Solomon. Nor is such a procedure on the part of the editor out of harmony with modern usage; for instance, if we take up the latest Revised Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, we will find it to contain a large number of words and definitions of which Mr. Webster neither wrote nor knew in his day.

The Book of Proverbs contains very much that is recognized as wisdom by all who have understanding, whether worldings or Christians; but, as already suggested, the Proverbs do not deal with the heavenly wisdom which is foolishness with men and often runs counter to that which would be the best of earthly policy. It deals with wisdom from the earthly standpoint, and not from the standpoint of self-sacrifice

in preparation for joint-heirship with Christ in the heavenly kingdom. [R2053 : page 250]

Nevertheless, although the Proverbs were not prophecies, like the writings of Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc., we may well esteem them to have been supernaturally prepared inasmuch as Solomon was granted a supernatural wisdom, in order, as we have seen, that he might represent or prefigure Christ Jesus, our Lord, the "greater than Solomon." The propriety of respecting the Proverbs as inspired is shown in the fact that several quotations from them appear in the New Testament writings. Compare the following: Prov. 1:16 with Rom. 3:15; Prov. 3:7 with Rom. 12:16; Prov. 3:11,12 with Heb. 12:5,6; Prov. 3:34 with James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5; Prov. 10:12 with 1 Pet. 4:8; Prov. 11:31 with 1 Pet. 4:18; Prov. 20:9 with 1 John 1:8; Prov. 25:7 with Luke 14:10; Prov. 25:21,22 with Rom. 12:20; Prov. 26:11 with 2 Pet. 2:22. Furthermore, our Lord and the Apostles referred to the Jew's sacred Scriptures *as a whole* as divinely inspired, making no exception of Solomon's writings contained therein, which were, however, but a portion of his three thousand proverbs.

In this lesson the first six verses tell the object of the Proverbs to be for instruction, especially of the young and unlearned; to teach them true wisdom, appreciation of justice, of righteous dealing and equity in general.

Verse 5 points out that the instructions are not merely for the youth; that no matter how wise a man may be, he will still have opportunity for increasing his wisdom, and that a teachable attitude of heart and a desire to know the truth are necessary to progress in wisdom, and that a teachable attitude of heart and a desire to know the truth are necessary to progress in wisdom. How profitable it would be to Christian people if this lesson of verse 5 were very generally applied by them! They would no longer be satisfied with a mere acceptance of creeds of the past, but would be going to the fountain head of wisdom, the Divine Revelation. They would no longer be saying practically, if not by words,

We need and care nothing for the Divine plan of salvation; but, like the Bereans of old, they would be searching the Scriptures daily, that they might more perfectly understand the Divine plan.

The first clause of verse 7 is a quotation from one of his father David's Psalms (111:10), and is a gem of wisdom. If the word "fear" be given the sense of *reverence*, the passage will be better understood. The [R2053 : page 251] reverence of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. They who say in their hearts there is no God are certainly stupidly foolish. They have failed to learn the very first lesson of wisdom. Reverence for the Lord is one of the first essentials in approaching his Word as a student: God's revelation looked at from any other standpoint than that of reverence will not yield its blessings to the searcher. One of the peculiarities of our day, and particularly pointed out by the Apostle Paul (2 Tim. 3:1-5), is the lack of reverence which manifests itself, not only in the world, but also amongst those associated as believers and in their families. The general tendency is toward headiness, high mindedness, arrogance, self-consciousness, disobedience. All of these come under the head of lack of reverence for God and for the order and arrangement which he has established. The present irreverence is undoubtedly the result of the general awakening from the darkness and superstition of the dark ages, – when the great adversary brought in such teachings as produced a distressing fear of the Almighty, based upon misrepresentations of his character and plan. These were received with credulity, from human sources, without proving by the Scriptures, to which the Apostle exhorted. As mankind awakes from this superstition, as a pendulum vibrates from one extreme to the other, so human sentiment, finding that it has been too prejudiced and too fearful in the past, now goes to the opposite extreme of doubt, skepticism, infidelity, irreverence for all the experiences of the past as well as irreverence for God and his Word. As this spirit progresses and influences a wider and wider circle in Christendom, it is preparing the way for the great climax of skepticism and irreverence which will end in the overthrow of all law and order and the disregard of all the experiences of the past and the wisdom of God's Word, in the anarchy

and confusion with which this age will close, – in preparation, however, for the establishment of the Kingdom of righteousness in the hands of Christ and the Church.

Verses 8 and 9 point out, by the symbols of a wreath and a chain (used in ancient times as marks of honor and respect), that the way to true prosperity lies through obedience to parents, and in general would direct us to learn wisdom from the experiences of those who have gone before in life's pathway. The fact that we to-day are living in an age of peculiar progress in knowledge and invention, superior in many respects to anything with which the ancients were acquainted, will not lead a wise man utterly to ignore the experiences of the past, nor to consider himself, because favorably circumstanced, as superior in mental ability to many of times past. Our day is known as the "brain age," and many are unduly puffed up and do not consider that the brain capacity of the present time is not greater than that of past times, but that merely the opportunities for the acquisition of knowledge are superior. The wisest and best men to-day quote the wisdom of the past, not only in the Proverbs of Solomon and the words [R2054 : page 251] of the Lord and the Apostles and the Psalms of David and the Law given by Moses, but also in the words of Shakespeare.

Verses 10-19 were apparently intended as guards against the youthful tendency to *brigandage* more common in ancient times than now, because to-day, with the advantages of telegraph and telephone, it is more easy to apprehend and punish highway robbers than ever before. But the lesson of these verses can be applied to our day with still greater force. There are to-day different inducements held out, but on much the same line. First, financial brigandage: the inducement to join in business ventures which would dishonestly rob others by misrepresentation, by swindling advertisements, by fraudulent deceptions, trickery, etc. Second, we are coming into a time when there will be more of a temptation to a social brigandage with inducements held out and hopes of gain and common interest by combining for the passage of laws which would do violence to the liberties and interests of others. And

ultimately there will be inducements to revolution, disorder, anarchy, in the hope of getting by violence the property of others.

The last clause of verse 18 points out that those who follow such a course will surely bring calamity upon themselves.

Verse 19 shows that the principles here set forth are applicable to all who are greedy of gain and willing to sacrifice the lives or interests of others to obtain it. The words of the Apostle apply here with special force: "They that will [to] be rich fall into temptation and a snare [of the adversary]." – 1 Tim. 6:9. **page 251**

For further thoughts on Solomon's writings see TOWER, Apr. 15, '93, pages 121-127.
