Commentary on Proverbs

The Venerable Bede (AD 673–735)

SermonIndex.net / Church Fathers

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Introduction

Translated from Migne's Patrologia Latina, Parabolas Salomonis, Vol 91

Chapter 1

[Proverbs 1:1] -- The Parables of Solomon, etc. The Greek word Parables is translated as Similitudes in Latin; Solomon named this book so that we might understand its contents more deeply and not just according to the letter, in which he signifies that the Lord would sometimes speak to the crowds in parables. He also announces the everlasting kingdom of Christ and the Church, symbolized by his own name and the peaceful state of his reign; as it is written: His empire shall be multiplied, and peace shall have no end; upon the throne of David and over his kingdom (Isa. IX). Likewise, through the construction and dedication of the temple, he implies the edification of the holy Church, which will be dedicated forever at the time of the resurrection. For he himself is also said to be the son of David and the spiritual king of Israel, as testified by the crowds who came to meet him at Jerusalem with palm branches and praises (Matt. XXI). It is notable that the Vulgate edition, for Parables, which are called Missae in Hebrew, uses Paroemiae, meaning proverbs. But even this name does not deviate from the truth. For those things rightly called parables, because they are hidden, can also incongruously be called proverbs, because they are the kind of things that justly deserve to be frequently spoken of and retained in memory. And proverbs are often spoken so obscurely that they might not undeservedly be noted by the name of parables, the Lord himself attesting, who said: These things I have spoken to you in proverbs. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in proverbs, but will tell you plainly of the Father (John XVI). The usefulness of Solomon's Parables is shown in the added title, when it says:

[Proverbs 1:2] -- To know wisdom, etc. To know wisdom and discipline is to understand how to believe rightly, how one ought to live, to have truly learned where to direct the intention of the heart, and to know what is fitting to do. When it adds: [Proverbs 1:2] -- To understand the words of prudence, etc., it advises those whom it teaches not only to embrace wisdom, which they have once perceived, and to know how to serve the virtue of discipline they have recognized, but also to eagerly listen to the words of the wise, by which they may proceed to perfection, and to diligently strive to understand them. [Proverbs 1:3] -- Justice, and judgment, etc. Justice is in those things we do well according to the rule of truth; judgment, in those things we act with right discernment with our neighbors. Equity is in that action wherein with sincere intention we strive to please God alone in the things we rightly do or judge.

[Proverbs 1:4] -- To give prudence to the simple, etc. He calls simple those who have recently begun to listen to wisdom; the youth, who has already made some progress in listening to it. And perhaps he calls the simple in the plural number and youth in the singular, because the teaching of wisdom receives characters devoted to various emotions and manners of living, and leads them in the way of becoming more perfect in virtue. Of such it is rightly said: The multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul (Acts IV). To give, he says, prudence to the simple. This indeed is necessary for the untrained and the beginners, so that by determining and avoiding the craftiness of sophisms, they can be prevented from being drawn away from the simplicity of true wisdom, which leads to life. To the youth, knowledge and understanding, because one who prudently avoids falsehood will consequently receive the understanding of the truth. So far the preface; hence the text of the Parables begins.

[Proverbs 1:5] -- A wise man will hear and become wiser. Since Solomon was a lover of wisdom, who, having the option given to him, sought and received wisdom, he fittingly begins his Parables with wisdom. But when it is said: A wise man, when he hears the word, becomes wiser, it shows that no one in this life can become so wise that their wisdom cannot be increased, and it is always the custom of wise people to listen to the sayings of their elders, and sometimes even those younger than themselves; whatever utility they hear in them, they apply to themselves and remember in their heart. Indeed, a lesser wise man heard a greater one, the Queen of Sheba heard Solomon, and returned wiser (3 Kings 10). Moses heard his much lesser father-in-law, and he became more elevated and wiser (Exodus 18). The disciples heard Christ and were deemed worthy to receive the spirit of wisdom. Nicodemus heard, Gamaliel heard, and his disciple, then Saul, now the Apostle Paul, heard. Truly wise men heard the word of the Gospel and were made wiser. When Paul was caught up to the third heaven and heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter (Acts 22), nonetheless, he returned to earth saying: For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away (1 Corinthians 13).

[Proverbs 1:5] -- And he who understands will possess governance. Let no one boast about their knowledge because if anyone often neglects to hear and understand the words of the wise, they do not know how to properly govern their life. How much more can such a person not be appointed to another's governance, who has despised subjecting themselves to paternal discipline! Therefore, he says, Hearing, the wise man will be wiser, referring to the knowledge of things that are known through wisdom; and when he adds, And he who understands will possess governance, it pertains to the rectitude of life that is learned or taught through the same wisdom. And the beginning of Proverbs beautifully matches the beginning of the title, which reads, The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel, for gaining wisdom and discipline. [Proverbs 1:6] -- He will comprehend a proverb and a parable, etc. This humility was given to the disciples by the wisdom that taught them in the flesh so that they could understand both its parables, which the crowds could not comprehend, and the enigmas of the prophets and the law, that is, the obscure sayings that

they would spiritually perceive and elucidate for their listeners. And also to the succeeding teachers of the Church, the same secrets of spiritual understanding were unlocked to those who sought and knocked earnestly.

[Proverbs 1:7] -- The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. There are two fears of the Lord: the first is servile, which is called the beginning of knowledge or wisdom; the second is friendly, which accompanies the perfection of wisdom. Servile fear is the beginning of wisdom because whoever begins to be wise after the error of sins is first seized by divine fear, lest they be led to punishments. But this fear is cast out by perfect love (1 John 4). However, the holy fear of the Lord, which remains forever and ever (Psalm 111:10), is not excluded but is increased by charity. This is the fear by which a good son fears lest he offend the eyes of his most loving Father even slightly. For in the initial fear, the servile spirit still fears lest it be subdued by punishments from an angry master. Both fears, however, will cease in the future life; charity will never fail (1 Corinthians 13), but it will remain in the fullness of wisdom perpetually; which is to know the true and only God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent (John 17:3).

[Proverbs 1:7] -- Fools despise wisdom and discipline. It has been said of the wise man that he will become wiser upon hearing the word, and the one who understands will learn to rightly govern his actions. In contrast, it is said of fools that they do not only fail to attain the wisdom of right doctrine and the discipline of pure conduct but also despise knowing it. Indeed, while wisdom in the flesh was preaching, the wise rejoicingly ran to it: but the Pharisees and the chief priests spurned its saving words and deeds alike. And note that the singular form is used for the wise man, but the plural for fools, because there are not only more fools than wise people, but the assembly of the wise follows a single path of piety. Moreover, those erring with dissimilar doctrines have a dissimilar order of living.

[Proverbs 1:8] -- Listen, my son, to your father's discipline, etc. He has thus far disputed proverbially about each side, now he begins diligently to admonish each faithful person to prefer the discipline of the divine law to the enticements of the wicked; for certainly the observance of this leads to a crown, while the deeds of those lead to eternal death. Hence rightly he calls him son, whom the father takes care to instruct with solicitude. It may also be taken as spoken from the person of God the Father, and in the name of the mother, the Church, which was then called the Synagogue, is understood. And note that he so commands us to listen to the discipline of the Father, that we should in no way abandon the law, because it is not sufficient for someone to say they love the Lord and obey His precepts if they do not follow the unity of the Church with brotherly charity. And it is not prohibited to take the mother, who is herself the grace of God by which we are saved. For among the Hebrews, the spirit that grants grace is named in the feminine gender.

[Proverbs 1:9] -- "That grace may be added to your head," etc. It was a custom among the ancients that those who competed lawfully would receive a crown on their head and a torque on their neck. Therefore, for us too, if we keep the discipline of our Creator, if we observe the decrees of the mother of grace, the greater clarity of spiritual virtues is increased from

there. For grace is added to the head when charity, which adorned the principal part of the mind, is inflamed more ardently. And a torque is added to the neck when, with the splendor of perfect action, the word of preaching, which proceeds through the neck, is confirmed; and lest it be despised by the hearers, it is taught with an unbroken connection of virtues. But also in those who kept the decrees of the Mosaic law, when the Lord came, the grace of the New Testament was added with the hope of the heavenly kingdom. Whose exceptional splendor will never be enclosed by any end, like a crown or a torque. To us also, when the light of eternity is granted for our acts, which divine grace has bestowed, indeed grace is added to the head, and a torque to the neck, according to the Gospel saying: "For we have all received from his fullness, grace upon grace" (John 1); grace, namely, of blessed retribution, for the grace of righteous action.

[Proverbs 1:10] -- "My son, if sinners entice you," etc. Sinners entice in two ways those whom they deceive, because they either allure them to commit crimes with blandishments, or they uplift deeds already done with favors, as if laudably performed. In both cases, wisdom exhorts its listeners not to acquiesce to such things. [Proverbs 1:11] -- "If they say, Come with us," etc. This passage can be generally said of robbers, who bring either death traps or harm to the innocent. It can also be specifically understood of those who handed over the author of life to death. [Proverbs 1:11] -- "Let us lay in wait for the innocent without cause." They did this when they said: "Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?" (Mark 12) and countless other similar things. Truly he was innocent, who did no sin, nor was deceit found in his mouth. Truly they laid traps for him in vain, by whom they were not harmed, but from whom they had experienced many benefits.

[Proverbs 1:12] -- "Let us swallow him alive like the grave," etc. Thus the wicked desired to extinguish the Lord, that every memory of his virtues and teaching might be removed; and even that it might be forgotten that such a one ever lived among them. [Proverbs 1:13] -- "We shall find all precious substance," etc. They spoke of the people whom they saw adhering to Christ. For they thought that if they killed him, they could separate all who had believed from his love and following, and fill their gatherings with such spoils of people. Similar to this is that parable of the Lord, when the son of the king came to them, they said: "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours" (Mark 12). [Proverbs 1:14] -- "Cast in your lot with us," etc. A purse is a sack of money. It is evident about robbers that, to gather more accomplices in crime, they promise them a share of the booty they have taken. But also the persecutors of our Redeemer, whoever they could, they joined to themselves. But those whom they saw following him, they expelled from the synagogue, depriving them of their communion.

[Proverbs 1:15] -- "My son, do not walk in the way with them," etc. He forbids those who believe in Christ among the Jews from associating with the Jews who persecute Christ. Finally, all who believed were together. And Peter speaking to them said, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation" (Acts 2). [Proverbs 1:16] -- "For their feet run to evil," etc. They hasten not only to the evil they work temporarily, but also to the evil they will suffer

perpetually, as often as they hurry to commit murder or some other crime. For as much as they are led to commit a crime, so much they approach to endure the punishment for the crime. These things can be especially understood of the plotters against our Savior. However, the following verse is generally inserted about his faithful who equally endure the malice of the wicked.

[Proverbs 1:17] -- ”Surely in vain the net is spread,” etc. Truly the snare of persecution or death is spread in vain for the elect, who have the wings of hope and charity and other virtues, by which they desire heavenly things while they live, so that they may deserve to reach them after death. They also have the eyes of the mind, by which they foresee both the evils they endure from the wicked passing quickly and the eternal goods they have deserved for enduring. With these same eyes, they foresee both the pride of the reprobate soon to be consumed and the perpetual torments following. It can also be understood thus, that he rightly speaks of the pernicious doctrine of the wicked, which he wove from the place where he said: ”If sinners entice you, do not consent.” For it is in vain that such a net is spread before those who contemplate heavenly things with pure eyes of the heart; who know how to say with the prophet: ”Our soul has escaped like a bird from the snare of the fowlers.” For he easily avoids the snares spread on earth, who has his conversation in heaven. Therefore, the wicked in vain prepare both nets for the good, because if they persuade to wickedness, they are overcome by the wisdom of the righteous; and if they bring adversity, they are despised for their patience. Moreover, the tempters themselves are destroyed by their own snares. Hence, it is rightly added:

[Proverbs 1:18] -- They themselves also lie in wait for their own blood, etc. For their own blood, that they may be punished with temporal death; but against their souls, he says, that they may also be condemned by the eternal perdition of their souls. This applies to all who lie in wait for blood and think they should live by fraud, yet it especially suits the Jews, who hid snares for the innocent Lord and attempted to circumvent His apostles, supported by the wings of virtues, with deceit. For they acted against their own blood and their own souls, who, fearing lest they should lose their earthly kingdom, killed the King of heaven and earth, and persecuted the citizens of heaven upon the earth; and thus, they lost both the kingdom they had on earth and that which they could acquire in heaven. Generally saying, whosoever has the eyes of faith open, and receives wings from the Lord, as of a dove, with which he will fly to eternal rest, the wicked weave snares in vain, and by presuming this, they rather destroy themselves.

[Proverbs 1:19] -- If the paths of the greedy seize the souls of those who possess them. He calls the paths of the greedy his subtle thoughts, whereby he diligently inquires how to increase his wealth. Such paths seize the souls of those who possess them, that is, of those who excessively cling to the possessions of wealth. Therefore, he says, not only do those who, for the love of money, watch for the robberies and murders of the innocent, destroy themselves by acting thus, but also, in the same order, even though lesser in guilt, all greedy thoughts that prefer gold to God, lead to destruction. Alternatively: Thus, the paths of

every greedy person seize the souls of possessors. With such an end, as mentioned earlier, every greedy person destroys or strips those who abound in possessions, so that by doing this, he rather perishes himself. For why should he kill the poor, whom he sees possessing nothing? He does not find anyone to rob. Hitherto, the persecutions which the Jews brought upon Christ are described. From here, they recount what He Himself speaks to His own persecutors through the apostles after His passion.

[Proverbs 1:20] -- Wisdom preaches in the streets, etc. The Wisdom of God, indeed, is Christ, who, having lived in the world, revealed the mysteries of His divinity to a few and instructed them not to preach that He was Jesus Christ before His passion and resurrection, lest they tell anyone the glory they saw on the mount; and then, He showed His Majesty's power more by works than by words, fulfilling the prophecy that said: Nor shall anyone hear His voice in the streets (Isaiah 42). But after His resurrection, wisdom preached outside (Matt. 12); for, having sent down the Holy Spirit, He revealed Himself to the world through the apostles. In the streets, He raised His voice, because He publicly repeated to the crowds what He had taught to few, fulfilling the word which He said to His heralds: What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops (Matt. 10). He cried out at the head of the multitudes, because He openly brought to the memory of the princes, who thought they had prevailed against Him by crucifying Him, the guilt of the murder they committed and called them to the remedy of repentance.

[Proverbs 1:21] -- At the gates of the city, He utters His words. The city of the Lord is the Church, united from both peoples, namely Jews and Gentiles. Its gates are the teachers who, by preaching the word, bring believers into it. And at the gates of its doors, wisdom uttered His words when He spoke to His apostles. One of whom said: Do you seek proof of Christ who speaks in me? (2 Cor. 13). The gates of the city's doors can also be understood as the elders in the synagogues, among whom wisdom disputed, speaking through the apostles to the lawyers, Pharisees, and priests, recalling them to His grace; so that, as Luke says: A large number of priests became obedient to the faith. But what the same wisdom cries out, is added: [Proverbs 1:22] -- How long, O simple ones, will you love simplicity? How long, little ones in the sense of the old covenant's ceremony, as the new one shines forth, will you love it? How long will you prefer Moses to Christ, the Law to the Gospel? How long will you advance the decrees given by a servant to the still immature people over those given by the Son Himself coming to the perfect in mind? He says, How long will you do these things? You have now seen Christ in the flesh, you have now not only spurned, but also killed Him doing miracles and teaching. At least now, love Him risen from the dead and reigning in heaven, and He will forgive the crime you committed.

[Proverbs 1:22] -- And fools hate knowledge? etc. It should be inferred from the previous how long, that is, how long will they desire? how long will they hate? They indeed desired harmful things and hated knowledge, who followed the surface of the legal letter, and refused to accept the sacraments of the Gospel, which the letter itself signified. [Proverbs 1:23] -- Turn at my reproof. He reproved the Jews through the mouths of the apostles, be-

cause they were unwilling to believe, and even then He admonished them to turn after He had risen and ascended. [Proverbs 1:23] -- Behold, I will pour out my Spirit to you, etc. If you still, he says, neglect to convert, I will bring upon you the vengeance you have deserved, and I will show that the words I have predicted about your destruction are true. Indeed, he names his spirit the power of vengeance, about which Moses said: You sent your spirit, and the sea covered them (Exodus XV). And it is said in the book of blessed Job: the wicked perished by the breath of God, and were consumed by the spirit of his wrath (Job IV).

[Proverbs 1:24] -- Because I called, and you refused. Saying: Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you (Matthew XI). [Proverbs 1:24] -- I extended my hand, etc. First by doing good and healing all oppressed by the devil, later by suffering on the cross. [Proverbs 1:25] -- You have despised all my counsel. Saying, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matthew III). [Proverbs 1:25] -- And neglected my reproofs. Saying, Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you have taken the key of knowledge; you did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering (Matthew XXIII). And generally, Whoever does not believe is already judged (John III). [Proverbs 1:26] -- But I will laugh at your calamity, etc. It is said likewise in the psalm about the same: He who dwells in the heavens laughs at them, and the Lord scoffs at them. Not because the Lord laughs with his mouth, or scoffs with his nose, but the power implied by such a word is that he granted to the apostles to foresee that the wicked would not succeed against him at all, beyond what he permitted, rather that all their endeavors would be in vain, while his glory would be spread over the world after his passion. Therefore, they would utterly disdain their pride, even when they saw it prevailing greatly.

[Proverbs 1:26] -- When your fear comes as calamity. Saying to one another, If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation (John XI). [Proverbs 1:27] -- When sudden calamity comes upon you, etc. He speaks of the sudden siege of Jerusalem, and the destruction of the whole province that was made by the Romans, which the Lord himself predicted in the Gospel, seeing the city and weeping over it (Luke XIX).

[Proverbs 1:27] -- When distress comes upon you, etc. The Jews are not read to have called upon the Lord in that siege, but only to have relied on arms, although they witnessed the desolation of their homeland and the ruin of the temple with bitter minds. However, if some did call upon him then, because they refused to understand the guilt for which they were punished, to truly repent, they cried to him in vain whom they had despised. Therefore, they are rightly said to have endured tribulation with distress. For tribulation was in them, by which they were afflicted outwardly; distress, in that they found no consolation from God inwardly. On the contrary, the saints, when oppressed outwardly by adversity, expand in heart with certain hope of salvation, knowing that they are heard when they cry to him whose words they remember to have obeyed. Hence the prophet says: When I called, you answered me, O God of my righteousness, you enlarged me when I was in distress. This whole correction of wisdom can generally apply to all the reprobates, because in the day of

judgment they will cry to the stern judge, asking for the gate of the kingdom to be opened to them, and they will not deserve to be heard. For what follows, In the morning they will rise, and will not find me; that very time of the final judgment openly designates when some will rise to eternal life, and others to eternal shame and contempt.

[Proverbs 1:29] -- Because they hated knowledge, etc. By merit they are deprived of salvation, who not only do not have the beginning of wisdom, the fear of the Lord, and discipline but also pursue them with hatred; but the son of salvation says, I have hated the wicked, and loved your law.

[Proverbs 1:31] -- Therefore they will eat the fruit of their way. Their way, he says, of which he had spoken above: For their feet run to evil. Because, he says, they did not want to enter my ways that they might live, they will receive the reward of their ways, to perish eternally. But on the other hand, of those who fear the Lord, who walk in His ways, it is said: You will eat the labors of your fruits; blessed are you, and it will be well with you. And they will be satisfied with their own counsels. Because they refused to acquiesce to my counsel, by which I had decreed to save them, they will be satisfied with their own; with which they said, Let us hide snares against the innocent in vain; with which they chose a robber for themselves over the Savior, so that they might be destroyed by robbers, and condemned among robbers. This can also be understood of all despilers of the word of God, as in other things. The turning away of little ones will kill them. He calls little ones not by age, but by sense, to whom it was said above: How long, little ones, will you love childishness? who could have been not little ones, but perfect in senses if they had not turned away from the counsel of wisdom. But as they had turned away, they destined themselves to eternal death. And the prosperity of fools will destroy them.

When they accomplish their acts, hindered by no adversities, which meditating they say: We will find all precious substance. Likewise: The turning away of little ones will kill them, and the prosperity of fools will destroy them, because often a spirit turned away from the fear of the Creator, already suffers from the wrath of the same just Creator, so that in what they sin, they seem to endure nothing adverse. But as blessed Job says, Let him lead his days in goods, and in a moment descend to hell (Job. XXI).

[Proverbs 1:33] -- But he who will listen to me, etc. It can be understood both in this life and in the future, because he who serves the Lord perfectly, is not frightened by any adversities, indeed rejoices in adversities, and in the very death rejoices as if entering life, and always bears a heart quiet from superfluous thoughts and the tumult of temptations, with the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit, which the rest of the seventh day signified mystically in the law. But even when he has passed from this world, not only without the terror of evils, but also in great joy of the hoped-for resurrection, he will rest, like Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham. [Proverbs 1:33] -- And he will enjoy abundance, etc. Now the abundance of good works, with the fear taken away even of those who kill the body, then the abundance of joys in reward. For how great indeed will the abundance of all good things be there, where the

glory of Him, from whom all good things come, may be beheld, with all fear of anything adverse completely taken away!

Chapter 2

[Proverbs 2:1] -- My son, if you accept my words, etc. He who stores up God's commandments within himself is he who, listening, carefully hides them in his heart, as the one who says: I have hidden your words in my heart, so that I might not sin against you. For it is greatly to be cared for that these should not be taken from us by demons, like the seed, as in the parable of the Gospel, cast by the wayside, which birds take away. [Proverbs 2:2] -- That your ear may listen to wisdom. For he is proven not to listen to wisdom with his ear, who, receiving the words of God only through the hearing of the body, does not retain them in memory to perform them. Therefore, if you receive God's commandments with a fixed love for learning and keeping them, first hold to the path of humility. For this is what is subsequently added,

[Proverbs 2:2] -- Incline your heart to understand prudence. To incline is indeed to humble the heart to understand prudence and to cleanse the heart, to make it worthy to receive the mysteries of truth. Therefore, the same Wisdom, speaking to the Father, says: You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them to little children (Matt. XI; Luke X); that is, you have hidden them from the proud, and revealed them to the humble. [Proverbs 2:3] -- For if you call out for wisdom, etc. We ought to call upon, that is, to invoke through prayer, none but God. When therefore he teaches that wisdom is to be invoked, he shows beyond doubt, that not just any wisdom, that is, knowledge of heavenly or earthly things, but the very knowledge of the Divine is to be gained by us. For in the perception of this wisdom, the highest perception of blessedness is found, as attested by herself, who, praying to the Father for us, says: And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent (John XVII). It should be noted, however, that he advises both to call upon wisdom and to incline our heart to understanding prudence, because it is certainly necessary both to implore divine help in all things, and with the Lord's help, to do the good we are able. For without him we can do nothing, nor again without our effort, however small, should we believe we are to be saved by him.

[Proverbs 2:4] -- If you seek it like silver, etc. If with so much care you seek wisdom as the covetous seek silver, or certainly if you seek that same wisdom as anxiously as if you were to acquire through it infinite and ineffable riches, you will receive the rewards which are subsequently explained. He who digs for treasures casts out earth, makes a deep pit,

diligently persists in laboring until he reaches the treasures he seeks. And he who desires to find the treasures of wisdom should cleanse himself of any earthly matters he finds in himself, cut off carnal enticements, make a pit of humility in himself, and not cease from acting until he knows himself to have found the way of truth. [Proverbs 2:5] -- Then you will understand the fear of the Lord, etc. If you seek with a careful heart, you will come to the experience of the loving fear of the Lord, which is not only the beginning but the perfection of heavenly wisdom in this life alone. And thus perfect love does not cast it out (I John IV), but makes it endure forever. And you will find the knowledge of his divinity, which makes perpetually blessed.

[Proverbs 2:6] -- For the Lord gives wisdom. This verse refers to what was said above: For if you call out for wisdom, and so on, until it says: And you will find the knowledge of God. For wisdom, that is, the Lord, is to be invoked to receive wisdom, because wisdom cannot be possessed by us ourselves, but is given by the Lord. Let Pelagius be silent, refuted by the Apostle who says: For what do you have that you did not receive? (1 Cor. IV). And James the Apostle: If anyone lacks wisdom, let him ask of God (James I). [Proverbs 2:6] -- And from his mouth comes wisdom and understanding. In this verse, that ineffable and coeternal wisdom born of God the Father may be understood, of which it is elsewhere said: I came forth from the mouth of the Most High, the firstborn (Eccli. XXIV). The mouth of the Lord can also be understood in his saints, whence it is often said in the prophets, Because the mouth of the Lord has spoken; And from his mouth comes knowledge and understanding, which unless he himself sanctifies the human mouth, unless he graciously makes it his own, no one can speak perfect wisdom.

[Proverbs 2:7] -- He will guard the salvation of the upright, etc. Virtues are related to each other, righteousness and simplicity, nor can they be separated from each other. Hence, wisdom does not seek one of them without the other; but in whomsoever both are found, these it guards and protects. Finally, of the blessed Job it is said that he was a simple and upright man (Job I): simple, namely, by the innocence of meekness; upright, by the caution of discretion. Simple, because he desired to harm no one, but indeed to benefit all; upright, because he permitted himself to be corrupted by no one. [Proverbs 2:8] -- Keeping the paths of justice, etc. The ways of the saints, the general precepts of God; the paths of righteousness, the stricter rules of the heavenly life, which are accessible only to the perfect, it says; wisdom keeps both as to help the upright and the simple in whatever grade of virtues they stand.

[Proverbs 2:11] -- Counsel will guard you, etc. The evil way, the works of iniquity; the man speaking perversely, he calls the teachers of iniquitous behavior. The evil way, onto which they call those who say, Come with us, let us lie in wait for blood. The perverse speaker, he signifies as the author of this persuasion. [Proverbs 2:13] -- Who leave the straight path, etc. Beautifully he has opposed dark ways to the straight path, because indeed the journey of right action is performed in light and leads to the joys of the supreme light. As the Lord says: Everyone who does evil hates the light and does not come to the light, so that

his deeds may not be exposed (John III). And such a one meets his end in outer darkness. [Proverbs 2:14] -- Who rejoice when they have done evil, etc. Therefore, they who do evil rejoice because they walk in dark ways and do not know where they are going. For if they saw that they were heading toward punishments, they would certainly restrain their step and correct their harmful joy with wholesome weeping.

[Proverbs 2:16] -- To deliver you from the strange woman, etc. This verse depends on what was said earlier, where it was said, Prudence will watch over you. And the meaning is, Prudence will watch over you, to deliver you from the strange woman. Therefore, because previously Solomon admonished his hearer, whom he strives to teach wisdom, not to join thieves or run with them if he sees a thief, but to walk uprightly and simply, he now advises not to share their portion with adulterers. Of whom what was said before, To deliver you from the evil way and from the man who speaks perversely, can also be specifically understood; for what speech is more perverse than to persuade to debauchery? This chapter begins from the place where it says: My son, if you receive my words and hide my commandments with you. However, through the strange woman, the depravity of heretics, alien to the members of Christ and the Church, can be understood, which usually deceives the hearts of the innocent by the softness of persuasion and the blandishments of the tongue. From whence the Psalmist: They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; the poison of asps is under their lips.

[Proverbs 2:17] -- And leaves the guide of her youth, etc. It is clear about the adulteress because she first leaves her husband and forgets the covenant of her God, evidently that which she made with her husband, with the Lord as witness, at the time of marriage, that they would keep the faith of chastity with each other. It is also clear about the heretical mind, because it leaves the teacher from whom it learned the faith of the Church; and forgets the covenant of its God, that is, of the Lord's own faith, which is contained in the creed, which it promised to keep on the day of baptism. [Proverbs 2:18] -- For her house is inclined to death, etc. Every behavior of the adulteress leads to destruction, and although she seems sweet and gentle, she will feel no less vengeance at the end than those who serve with open impiety by robbery. The house of the adulteress, her very flesh, in which she is laid under degradation and lust, can be understood, which at the last time of judgment, will rise not to life, but to eternal death. But also the house of heretics, because it is built upon sand, even when it seems to stand, leans towards ruin, and by its own growth as by certain paths, it tends to the company of the impious, that is, it extends to the torments of evil spirits.

[Proverbs 2:19] -- All who go to her do not return, etc. To her, to death he says, not to the woman. For it is possible for him who is mixed with an adulteress, with the help of the Lord, to return and earn life again by repenting; it is possible for him who is stained with heresy, by coming to one's senses, to return to salvation. But he who is once snatched away by eternal death will never return to the way by which he seeks the life of the blessed. This is said specifically against the Origenists, who promise to heretics, prostitutes, and all

the crowds of the wicked, and even to the devil himself and his angels, forgiveness of sins, life, and the kingdom in the heavens after countless times of the filled universal judgment; misunderstanding that passage of Isaiah: And they will be shut up there in prison, and after many days they will be visited (Isaiah 24). As if, after many times of the finished judgment, the impious would be loosed and saved, whereas he rather grants them no salvation, but signifies that those who die at this time due to the enormity of their crimes, deserve to be confined in the prison of punishments, will be visited only for a short time at the time of resurrection, so that, having received their bodies, they will be condemned more severely in judgment, and immediately after the judgment will be shut up forever in more cruel punishments.

Although it can also be rightly taken this way, All who go to her, that is, to the prostitute, or to her house, do not return, because, as far as nature is concerned, corrupted by their perverse will, it does not have a return by itself; but through the grace of God, by which it is helped and renewed, so that it may take hold of the paths of life. For by this saying the weight of iniquity is designated, so that when someone returns, he does not attribute it to himself, but to the grace of God, not from works, lest he should boast.

[Proverbs 2:20] -- To walk in the good way, etc. The good way, he calls the unity of true faith, about which the Lord says, I am the way (John XIV); and again: No one can come to the Father, except through me (Ibid.). But the paths of the righteous, he names the various examples of the saints. This verse depends on what was said above: Prudence will preserve you; as also that, To be delivered from the strange woman. [Proverbs 2:21] -- For those who are upright will inhabit the land, etc. And here he joins the upright with the simple, as also above when he said: He will keep the salvation of the upright, and protect those who walk simply; because undoubtedly simplicity without uprightness is dissolved and foolish, but uprightness without simplicity is certainly austere and harsh; indeed, both virtues combined make a perfect man. But between the two verses it differs that in the former, the Lord is indicated to help the righteous struggling in the present, and in the latter, because he will crown the victors in the future. For by the name of earth, the Church is designated, which is accustomed to germinate spiritual fruit for God, in which the righteous dwell and remain, because they are not separated from its fellowship even by death, but at the end of this life, they reach that part of it which reigns with Christ in the heavens.

[Proverbs 2:22] -- But the wicked will be destroyed from the earth, etc. These words can be taken not generally about all the condemned, but specifically about those who seem to belong to the land of the Lord, that is, the Church, and yet due to their merits are removed from it: some openly by the judgment of the Church itself, like Simon, Arius, and Porphyry; some secretly by the judgment of the invisible judge, like countless even of those who seem good to people. For he calls manifest apostates the wicked; but all those acting wickedly who, having received the sacraments of faith, degenerate from its purity in some manner. Both, however, in the future retribution, will be destroyed from the land of the living, because the wicked will not dwell near the Lord, nor will the unjust remain in his sight. And rightly

so, because he predicted many things about the ways of the good and evil, he subjoined in conclusion the end of both, just as in the preceding parable, which forbade associations with robbers, saying of the end of the wicked: And the prosperity of fools will destroy them; saying of the end of the good: But whoever listens to me will dwell without terror. These verses which we have recently discussed, can be understood about the ancient people of God, because when they lived uprightly, they happily remained in their land, but when they sinned, they were destroyed by enemies.

Chapter 3

[Proverbs 3:1] -- My son, do not forget my law, etc. Here he teaches that works of mercy should be insisted upon, and that we should not trust in our own strength, but seek help from God. And he arranges all these things in a suitable order; for, after restraining from cruelty, after chastening from luxury, he adorns with good deeds the one whom he has taken to instruct himself. [Proverbs 3:2] -- For length of days, and years of life, etc. Lest the imposition of observing precepts should disturb the listener, he prefaces with certain rewards, and so enumerates the precepts. For by the length of days, he signifies eternal light; by the years of life, the transition from this mortality; by the increase of peace, he designates the very state of attained blessedness. Of which Isaiah says: His authority shall increase, and there shall be no end of peace (Isaiah IX). But it was also given to the previous people of God, and now in the present, that when they obeyed the law of God, they should live for a long time in the quiet of peace.

[Proverbs 3:3] -- Let not mercy and truth forsake you. Let truth never depart from your mouth, which is to be spoken; let mercy never recede from your work, which is to be bestowed upon neighbors. Thus it happens that God's mercy and truth always follow you: mercy indeed to blot out your sins; truth, however, to fulfill his promises. [Proverbs 3:3] -- Bind them around your neck, etc. In the neck, the organ of the voice, on the tablets of the heart, he insinuates the breadth of thought. Thus let the virtue of mercy and truth be fixed at the root of the mind, and be brought out in the voice of the speaker, so that they may please God, the hidden inspector who alone searches the hearts and loins, in their secret intentions, and benefit neighbors with the office of speaking. But he correctly teaches that virtues should be bound around the neck, as the voice of the speaker is usually made inwardly in the neck, since the voice of preaching emanates from within, but circumferences outwardly and spreads to many listeners at the same time. For as it incites others to live well, so it urges good deeds and actions of the preacher, lest the action fall outside the sermon, lest life contradict the voice.

[Proverbs 3:4] -- And you will find grace and good discipline, etc. One finds grace and good discipline before God, who by continual practice of virtues merits from the Lord to become more perfect and better day by day; but also finds grace and good discipline before men, whose works are such that they are rightly praised, and equally provide an example of

living to others. [Proverbs 3:5] -- Trust in the Lord with all your heart, etc. Do not be afraid that you cannot observe the divine commands due to your own weakness, nor again suppose that you can fulfill them by your own strength, or know them by your natural knowledge if you are not instructed by his law; but rather seek his frequent help both in learning and in doing, and he, being gracious, will grant that you can fulfill what he commands. [Proverbs 3:7] -- Do not be wise in your own eyes. Perhaps someone may think this command is the same as the one previously given, And do not rely on your own understanding; but there is a great difference: for one relies on his own understanding who prefers his own opinions about what should be done or said over the decrees of the fathers; but he is wise in his own eyes who, having rightly learned from the teaching of the fathers, exalts himself above others as if more learned. But what true wisdom for a man is, he shows subsequently:

[Proverbs 3:7] -- Fear the Lord, etc. Just as it is in Job: Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding (Job XXVI). For indeed, all the perfect ought to abstain from all evils, so that they always consider the presence of the divine majesty with fear. And it should be noted that above he commands to have trust in the Lord with all the heart, and not to lean on our own understanding, but now conversely admonishes with equal concern to fear God. But there is no contradiction: for there he strengthens the minds of the fragile, so they do not despair, with the promise of God's help; here he restrains the stronger ones, so they do not presume upon themselves, with the memory of divine fear. [Proverbs 3:8] -- Indeed, health will be in your navel, etc. Solid works of virtues are in the bones, and in the navel, which is in the middle part of the inner body, is designed to signify the still weak and imperfect action of good deeds. Therefore, if you fear God, and rely not on your own strength but on heavenly protection, and strive to abstain from evil, there will be health for your navel, and watering for your bones, because through these both the weakness of the work is strengthened to a state of perfection, and all your strong acts receive reinforcement.

[Proverbs 3:9] -- Honor the Lord with your substance, etc. Many give much to the poor, but from another's substance and harvests, which they have taken by force or fraud. Many give of their own, but do not honor the Lord in their giving, because they do it for human favor, and not for the love of the Heavenly Inspector. Therefore, anyone who wishes the fruit of alms to be profitable to them should give from their own possessions, and in honor of the Creator, who has deigned to graciously and abundantly bestow them with his kindness, so that men who are his creation, made in his image, may be refreshed, and we may be found his true and faithful stewards of good things. But it must be noted that we are commanded not only to honor from the substance of money, which we extend to the poor, but also from the entirety of good action that we do, and from the fruits of all heavenly grace that we receive, for the substance or fruits of men; that is, to seek his praise in all things, and not our own. And he honors the Lord with his substance and the first fruits of his crops, who attributes all his good works not to his own strength and merits, but to heavenly grace, mindful of that word, "For without me you can do nothing" (John XV).

[Proverbs 3:10] -- And your barns will be filled with abundance, etc. The Lord says in the Gospel, "Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Luke XII). Therefore, if the just can have treasures in heaven (because they find true riches there), they can also have barns and vats, because they will no longer hunger or thirst. And your barns will be filled with abundance. Because, he says, "I shall be satisfied when your glory is revealed" (Psalm XVI). The vats will overflow with wine, because the inner sweetness of eternal things kindles the hearts of all the faithful in praise of their Creator. Hence he says: "That you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom" (Luke XXII). But also in the present, sometimes the teacher who administers the bread of the word and the cup of spiritual grace to the needy, is granted greater gifts for administering by the Lord as a reward. He who shares earthly support with the needy is enriched by giving and rewarded with heavenly remuneration.

[Proverbs 3:11] -- My son, do not despise the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary of his correction, etc. There are those who serve the Lord in prosperity, but go astray in adversity. Thus, wisdom teaches those who live well in prosperity, also to exhort them not to faint in correction, so that when weakness or poverty or human persecution comes, they do not lose the piety they seemed to preserve in tranquility. [Proverbs 3:12] -- For the Lord disciplines the one He loves, etc. Therefore, we should murmur the less about the scourging with which we are corrected, the more certainly we hold in it the pledge of paternal love. Wherefore, he also says: "Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline" (Revelation III). It should be noted that the seventy interpreters said for this word, "And He scourges every son whom He receives" (Hebrews XII). This is remarkable, why the Apostle writing to the Hebrews in Hebrew would rather follow it.

[Proverbs 3:13] -- Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, etc. Because he was comforting those placed under discipline and correction, he adds what he had begun; insinuating that true blessedness of man is not to be free from adversity in the present, but to rejoice in the perception of eternal wisdom. Which is, to know God's will in this life, and to enjoy his vision in the future. And well did he say, "Blessed is the man who finds wisdom," adding immediately, "And the man who gains understanding." For there are those who find wisdom by hearing the doctrine of truth; but they neglect to gain understanding, unwilling to expand the bosom of their heart to perceive its breadth. [Proverbs 3:14] -- Better is her acquisition, etc. Let no one fear the correction of poverty, whoever has acquired the wealth of wisdom, because the celestial gift infinitely surpasses earthly treasures.

[Proverbs 3:14] -- Its first and purest fruits. If, according to Ecclesiasticus, the root of wisdom is to fear God, what are the fruits of wisdom except to see God? And these are the first and purest, either because God, who is from the beginning, is seen, and nothing defiled incurs in His vision; or because man was first created to contemplate this. Hence, the younger son, even though he had squandered all his substance by living luxuriously, when he returned to the father penitent, is remembered to have received the first robe (Luke 15); or because the first and crude gold is usually the purest, and our first beatitude alone is truly to be believed as beatitude, which is promised to be rendered to us more perfectly by

the Lord in the resurrection. [Proverbs 3:15] -- More precious than all riches, etc. Not only the riches of the earth but also the riches of heaven, indeed even the visions of angels, the brightness of this wisdom is preferred. Hence, the prophet also says: For what have I in heaven, and what do I want on earth other than You? and the rest through the end of the psalm (Psalm 73).

[Proverbs 3:16] -- Length of days is in her right hand, etc. With the vision of his divinity, He grants the chosen ones in perpetual light, and in this present life, he strengthens and illuminates them with the sacraments and charisms of his incarnation. He gives them, who sell all things for themselves, a hundredfold in this time, and eternal life in the future age. It follows in this place according to the ancient translation, which our codices do not have: Justice proceeds from his mouth, but he carries law and mercy on his tongue. This I believed should be noted because verses are often found placed in the works of the Fathers. [Proverbs 3:17] -- Her ways are beautiful ways, etc. His actions and teachings contained in the Gospels are beautiful because they are divine and pure, far surpassing the manner of man, and all his commands lead to eternal peace. All that he did in the flesh pertains to reconciling mortals to God, to making peace with the angels for humankind, and to demonstrating to his followers examples of maintaining mutual peace and love.

[Proverbs 3:18] -- She is a tree of life to those, etc. Just as Moses testifies that the tree of life was placed in the midst of paradise, so through the wisdom of God, namely Christ, the Church is made alive, of which even now the sacraments of flesh and blood receive the pledge of life, and in the future, it is blessed by the present vision. [Proverbs 3:19] -- The Lord founded the earth by wisdom, etc. God the Father through the Son created all things. Typically, however, He founded the earth by wisdom when He established the holy Church in the solidity of faith through Him; He stabilized the heavens with understanding when through the same He enlightened the sublime hearts of the preachers. [Proverbs 3:20] -- By His wisdom the depths burst forth. When in the days of Noah all the fountains of the great abyss were broken up, or when through the daily course the fountains and rivers emanate from the abyss through the veins of the earth. Otherwise, by His wisdom the depths burst forth, when, by the grace of Christ granted, the profound mysteries of the heavens become known to the faithful.

[Proverbs 3:20] -- And the clouds condense with dew. It is clear according to the letter, but allegorically the clouds are the teachers of the Church, elevated by contemplation and life, watering the hearts of listeners, like the land subjected to them by doctrine. Which condense with dew, because by the most subtle discernment they examine their virtues, which profit them, which lift them to high things, and which display examples to the lesser, and they examine them. [Proverbs 3:21] -- My son, do not let these depart from your eyes. Beware lest, wearied by temporal discipline, you lose the grace of wisdom, which is so great. [Proverbs 3:21] -- Observe law and counsel. The law of wisdom is, as it says, If you wish to enter into life, you shall not kill, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you

shall not bear false witness, and the rest (Mark 10). The counsel of wisdom is when it immediately adds: If you wish to be perfect, go, sell all that you have, etc. (Ibid.).

[Proverbs 3:22] -- And it will be life to your soul. Your soul has life with God if you keep His decrees, however much the flesh may be pressed by the discipline of correction or even death. [Proverbs 3:22] -- And grace to your throat. How sweet are your words to my throat, says the psalm (Psalm 118)! The senses of the soul, therefore, have their throat, by which they judge the words they hear, by which they scrutinize the deeds of each person they see, and by which they receive these by embracing them, and reject those by despising them. When we keep the law and counsel of the Lord with these throats, grace is multiplied, because the more diligently one obeys the divine commands, the more sweetly he conceives His love. The Psalmist desired that this grace be in our throats when he said: Taste and see that the Lord is sweet (Psalm 34).

[Proverbs 3:23] -- Then you will walk confidently in your way. We walk confidently in our way when, trusting in the grace of God, we undertake progress in our good conversation. Therefore, if we humbly submit to His commands, and taste the sweetness of heavenly love with the palate of our mind, we will always obtain an increase in good works. Moreover, with His help, we are defended in temptations so that we do not falter. For this is what follows: "And your foot will not stumble. For all things work together for good to those who love God." [Proverbs 3:24] -- "If you lie down, you will not be afraid," etc. It is clear according to the letter, since he who remembers to live innocently and justly before God, sleeps securely, wakes securely, rests and walks securely. But also, when the just man sleeps in death, he not only does not fear the powers of evil spirits, but also rests in peace and safely awaits the day of resurrection, because he has God everywhere as his protector and keeper. This is like in the Psalm: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me" (Psalm 22).

[Proverbs 3:27] -- "Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due," etc. Because above he diligently urged the observance of the law of the Lord and his counsel, and promised eternal rest to those who observe it, now he repeatedly explains in various ways what should be observed. First, returning to what he had previously mentioned, he teaches that mercy should be shown to one's neighbor, and that one should live justly with him; then, he warns that one should be cautious of the enemy. Thus he says, "Do not withhold good from those who deserve it; if you can, do good yourself. Do not hear from the Lord with the Pharisees, 'You have not entered, and you hindered those who were entering' (Luke 11). [Proverbs 3:28] -- "Do not say to your neighbor, 'Go, and come back,' etc. This command is given not only about someone asking for alms but that we should be willing and ready to give generously and promptly. Likewise, all the commands of Christ, who said: 'You are my friends if you do what I command you,' we are ordered to do immediately and not defer until tomorrow.

[Proverbs 3:30] -- "Do not contend with a person for no reason," etc. He does not forbid contending with the one who does wrong in order to correct him, because that is not done without purpose, but out of certain necessity which compels it to be done. Indeed, he who

said: “If your brother sins, rebuke him” (Luke 17), wants us to try to recall the erring one to the path of truth as much as we can. [Proverbs 3:32] -- “For the Lord detests the perverse man.” The Lord detests every mocker. Indeed, every mocker, because a mocker either despises carrying out the words of God which he knows, or distorts them by understanding and teaching them perversely. A mocker is also one who despises His promises as small, and scorns His threatening as bearable: just as he who insultingly mocks the simplicity or poverty of others. Consequently, divine justice rightly detests such a mocker. It is well added: “And he is intimate with the upright.” For often the proud, while mocking the simple, judge themselves to be more prudent than those they mock. But their prudence, as James says, is earthly, unspiritual, demonic (James 3). The Lord, however, is intimate with the upright, because He illuminates them with the secrets of heavenly wisdom, which He considers those free from earthly pride and possessing simplicity. Hence, He says, “You have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children” (Matthew 11; Luke 10).

[Proverbs 3:33] -- “The curse of the Lord is on the house of the wicked,” etc. According to the example of the rich man clothed in purple, who in this life lacked spiritual goods, and in the future came to such poverty that he sought a drop of water from the finger of the once poor Lazarus and did not deserve to receive it (Luke 16). [Proverbs 3:33] -- “The tents of the righteous will be blessed.” As the apostle says to the faithful, speaking of God: “Who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 1). And they are to hear in reward from Him, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom” (Matthew 25). According to the letter, it often happens that those who for a long time prey on the property of others are finally consumed by poverty. But those who give their own generously often abound even in earthly goods.

[Proverbs 3:34] -- “He mocks proud mockers, etc.” The Apostle James and Peter, following the ancient translation, wrote these verses, saying: “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble” (James 4; 1 Peter 5). [Proverbs 3:35] -- “The wise will inherit honor, etc.” And the Lord says: “Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Luke 14 and 18).

Chapter 4

[Proverbs 4:1] -- Listen, my sons, to the discipline of a father, etc. Here, about to exhort to philosophy, he explains how he himself was taught wisdom by his father. [Proverbs 4:3] -- For I too was a son to my father, tender, etc. Nothing more raises the mind to the hope of attaining wisdom than when we remember that those whom we admire as already shining in wisdom were once little and unlearned. And he taught me and said: Let your heart embrace my words. Such admonitions given to Solomon by his father David, he who reads Chronicles finds. But why does Solomon call himself the only begotten before his mother, when Scripture testifies that a uterine brother preceded him, unless because that one, born but immediately unnamed, departed life as if he had never been? [Proverbs 4:7] -- And in all your possessions acquire prudence. In all the good things you possess, remember to act wisely, or in all your possessions acquire prudence. Contemn all the earthly possessions you hold; provided you acquire wisdom. This is what Solomon himself did, when given the choice, he placed love of wisdom before all things (1 Kings III); and in the Gospel, he who sought the precious pearl, having found it, sold all he had and bought it (Matthew XIII).

[Proverbs 4:9] -- It will bestow ornament of grace on your head, etc. It is clear from Solomon, because while he despised all for the sake of wisdom, having received wisdom, he shone with greater exaltation of glory. But even for our head, that is, the principal part of the mind, if it embraces wisdom, the greater grace of the Spirit is increased, and moreover, in the future, the crown of life will be given. Indeed, after explaining these words he received from his father, he returns to teaching his own listener the wisdom he began. [Proverbs 4:10] -- Listen, my son, and accept my words, etc. That is, so you may receive the gifts of eternal life. [Proverbs 4:11] -- I will lead you in the paths of equity, etc. Paths, that is, actions of equity, while they begin, seem narrow and strait; but when they take progress, already by habit they seem spacious and broad, as the Psalmist testifies, who when he began told the Lord, Because of the words of your lips I stayed strong in the hard paths (Psalm XVI), but afterward, already making progress, he sang, I have run the way of your commandments, when you enlarged my heart (Psalm CXVIII). And therefore, even if the paths of equity seem narrow when you begin to enter them, once entered, the steps of your mind will not be constrained; but you will find that which the Lord says: His yoke is easy, and His burden is light (Matthew XI). For indeed, the reprobate in this life enter a broad way, but on the last

day, with feet and hands bound, they will be cast into darkness (Matthew XXII); while the feet of the elect will be directed into the way of peace.

[Proverbs 4:12] -- And running, you will not have a stumbling block. The more eagerly you run to fulfill God's commandments, the less you will fear adversities that impede you: for whoever sweats in evil deeds finds a stumbling block in the midst of the course, because immediately, when they do not foresee, they are snatched to punishment. [Proverbs 4:17] -- They eat the bread of wickedness, etc. Thus, by the action of wicked crimes, they are delighted as if by set feasts. Or certainly they drink the wine of the condemned, and they rejoice in taking ears of grain from the hungry, as the holy Scripture testifies about the custom of the impious. [Proverbs 4:18] -- But the path of the just is like the shining light, etc. The works of the just are conducted in the light of knowledge, and they lead to eternal life, which is the perfect day.

[Proverbs 4:19] -- The way of the wicked is dark, etc. John the Apostle also says concerning these: Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no offense in him (1 John 2); but whoever hates his brother is in darkness, and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes (ibid.). Against whom it is said to the wise man above: Because running, you will have no stumbling, that is, scandal. [Proverbs 4:23] -- With all vigilance guard your heart, etc. There are those who seem to live rightly to men, but because they do not do so with right intention, their life which was believed good is rejected by God, who looks into the depraved. Therefore, with all diligence guard the purity of your heart, because the evaluation of life will be judged by its intention.

[Proverbs 4:24] -- Remove from you a deceitful mouth, etc. This must be understood in two ways: that you should guard your own mouth from speaking anything deceitful, and keep your lips from getting used to detractions, and that you should flee from others whom you know to be subject to this vice, lest they corrupt you. [Proverbs 4:25] -- Let your eyes look straight ahead, etc. Learn diligently the path of justice on which you ought to enter, and cautiously foresee in all things you intend to do what end they are destined to reach. This means that the eyelids of your eyes looking straight ahead should precede your steps, anticipating the good work you are going to do with diligent thought, and, considering that it is according to God, foresee it by meditating. [Proverbs 4:26] -- Make straight paths for your feet. Namely, that you do not err in actions or faith. And all your ways will be established. May you not be swayed from your good purpose by fickleness of mind. Hence also the Apostle: Be steadfast and immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58).

[Proverbs 4:27] -- Do not turn to the right or to the left. The right way is taken as good, the left as reprobate. Therefore, we are forbidden to turn to the right way, but not to decline to the right. One turns to the left who is unjust; one turns to the right who arrogates to himself that he is just; one turns to the right who presumes on his own strengths; one turns to the left who, because of his frailty, despairs of being able to be saved; one turns to the left who serves folly; one turns to the right who wishes to be wiser than he ought to be. This is also understood in the same way concerning the rest of the virtues and vices. [Proverbs

4:27] -- Keep your foot from evil. This means do not deviate from the right, either to this side or that, because virtues seek discernment, and all excess is in vice. For the ways which are to the right, the Lord knows. That is, He has chosen, and they are pleasing to Him. Therefore, to those who are displeasing and reprobate He will say, I never knew you (Matt. 7:23); which is to say, I did not choose you, you are not pleasing to me. But He Himself will make your steps straight, etc. If you turn your foot away from evil, if you strive to do the good which I have taught with the Lord's help, He Himself will be propitious to your efforts, so that now you may walk rightly and then be able to reach eternal peace.

Chapter 5

[Proverbs 5:1] -- My son, attend to my wisdom, etc. Until now he had generally rebuked the listener; hence under the guise of the harlot, he prohibits from the wickedness of heretics. [Proverbs 5:2] -- That you may guard your thoughts, etc. Thoughts, by which you rightly believe; lips, by which you profess the faith itself in simple words, and usual, as well as ecclesiastical ones. But, according to the letter: He who adheres to a harlot defiles even his lips, either by kissing or speaking foul things. [Proverbs 5:3] -- For the lips of a harlot are like a honeycomb distilling. For in the mouth of heretics, the sweetness of eloquence not only resounds to sufficiency, but to superfluity; and for this reason, because falsehood is discerned to be aptly spoken, it is deemed truth by the foolish. [Proverbs 5:3] -- And her throat is smoother than oil. The Catholic faith is consecrated by the oil of the Holy Spirit, by which they who prefer their own sense to the faith of the Fathers show their throat smoother. It is evident concerning the harlot, because she seeks both the sweetness of speech and the beauty of body to capture the wretched.

[Proverbs 5:4] -- But her end is bitter, etc. The drink of wormwood becomes bitter within the bowels, outwardly the members are wounded by the sword. Therefore, to show the wicked in the final retribution, both internally to be filled, and externally surrounded by perpetual punishments, he assures that they will be tormented by the bitterness of wormwood, and slaughtered by the sword. And why the same sword is called two-edged, the Lord opens when he says: But fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell (Matthew 10). [Proverbs 5:6] -- Her ways are unstable, etc. The ways of heretical deception are unstable, because some deny Christ to be God, others to be man; some deny he took flesh, others a soul; some that he was born of a virgin; some that the Holy Spirit, others that the Father is God, some prohibit confessing pardon to the repentant. And this pestilence spreads itself into such countless paths, that they cannot wholly be traced. But Catholic truth is not unstable and untraceable, because it is one and the same, known to all, throughout the world, to the faithful.

[Proverbs 5:8] -- Keep your way far from her, etc. And the apostle says, Flee fornication (1 Corinthians 6). Because indeed the first remedy of this vice is to be far from those whose presence either allures or cooperates in the vice. But it also benefits weak listeners to be entirely separated from the hearing of heretics. [Proverbs 5:9] -- Do not give your honor to

others, etc. Do not subject the honor by which you were created in the image of God to the wills of unclean spirits, nor waste the granted time of living according to the will of the cruel adversary. For whoever succumbs to any crime, is surely enslaved to the dominion of malignant spirits. [Proverbs 5:10] -- Lest strangers be filled with your strength, etc. Lest you assist the deeds of demons, if you lend either the ingenuity of your mind or the strengths of your body to perform crimes; and you multiply the household of strangers, that is, the number of the lost, by adding yourself. And beautifully he said: Let your labors be in the house of a stranger, because there are those who, according to the prophet, labor to act wickedly. And would that it were hidden how much labor heretics have undergone against the Church.

[Proverbs 5:11] -- And you moan at the last, etc. To be prefixed from above, Lest perhaps. And the sense is: Therefore keep yourself chaste, lest you be forced to groan in punishments, when not only the carnal allurements pass away, but also with the body itself being left, the soul, which acted through the body, is compelled to render all things. Indeed, it often happens in this life that those who dissipated their possessions living luxuriously in youth, fall into poverty in old age. And as the heat of the flesh cools, and the flower of youth withers, they see others using their own goods, which they sold to lust, and, groaning with late repentance, say what follows: [Proverbs 5:12] -- Why did I hate instruction? etc. He calls the instruction of ecclesiastical faith; the reproaches by which heretics are rebuked, why they withdrew from the Church, he refers to them. It is evident concerning fornicators.

[Proverbs 5:14] -- I was almost in all evil, etc. The Church and the Synagogue are Greek names, and they signify the same thing in Latin, that is, an assembly of many together. But if they are distinguished more subtly, the Church is interpreted as a calling together, the Synagogue as a gathering together. And indeed the old people of God were called by both names. Now, however, for the sake of distinction, that one is called the Synagogue, ours is called the Church, rightfully indeed because of the greater faith and knowledge, because even irrational creatures can be gathered. Finally, God said, Let the waters be gathered into one gathering. Only the rational and sensible can be called together. But these names sometimes signify the gathering of the wicked. Hence that, "Fire burned their assembly" (Psalm 105); and, "I hated the assembly of evildoers" (Psalm 26). Therefore, what the late penitent, contemptuous of wisdom, says, "I was almost in all evil, in the midst of the congregation and assembly," seems to refer to someone sadly recognizing the magnitude of his own damnation, because he was involved in almost every sin, worthy of undergoing such torments. This adds to the heap of his miseries, that he was not merely the last of sinners, but rather in the midst and almost the leader. Or indeed, placed bodily in the midst of holy assemblies, he did not fear to lead a different life from them. And this is particularly felt about heretics because they could not be recalled from error by the sayings and examples of either the ancient fathers or the new ones.

[Proverbs 5:15] -- "Drink water from your own cistern," etc. Use your own wife's desire and cherish her with devoted services. [Proverbs 5:16] -- "Let your fountains be dispersed

abroad," etc. Give your son and daughter in marriage to others, and do this openly with many witnesses. [Proverbs 5:16] -- "Let them be yours alone," etc. Retain in your own power alone with whom you join your children in marriage, and let neither fornicators nor prostitutes be partakers with your offspring. [Proverbs 5:18] -- "Let your fountain be blessed," etc. Maintain such temperance with the woman you married in your youth, even in old age, that by faithful chastity you may rightly gain a blessing in your offspring. "A loving doe, a graceful fawn." Let her always be your beloved spouse, who, like a doe that avoids serpents, shuns harlots and drives them away from her home. Let a son be born from her, and he himself be a very strict lover of chastity.

[Proverbs 5:19] -- "Let her breasts satisfy you at all times," etc. He does not teach that one should always be occupied with conjugal work, but advises not to marry another while the first wife is alive, or ever associate with a prostitute. Otherwise, what he says, "Drink water from your own cistern and flowing water from your own well," teaches that one should beware of heretics and attend to the custody of the Scriptures and reading. Keep the knowledge, he says, that you preach to others, and the watering of your speech pours out. "Let your fountains be dispersed abroad, and divide your waters in the streets. When you have kept it yourself, then also preach to others, and in the great multitude of listeners, dispense divine words according to each one's quality. "Let them be yours alone. We divide the waters in the streets and yet possess them alone, when we also broadly spread the preaching outwardly, and yet by it we do not aim to achieve human praises. "And let strangers not share with you. Unclean spirits become the teacher's partners if they corrupt his mind with pride while he preaches, or with heresy, or any other vice. But alone he possesses the waters when faithfully connected with the Church's members, he keeps himself free from the company of strangers. "Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth.

Let your doctrine be, and whoever is born from it, in the blessing of the Church, and rejoice with her to whom you have been joined from youth, that is, from the first time of believing. "A loving doe, a graceful fawn; let her breasts satisfy you at all times, and always be enraptured with her love. The most beloved or most pleasing deer, as some manuscripts have it, is the holy Church, which is accustomed to hate and crush the serpent-like doctrine. The most pleasing young stag is the people, delightful by the variety of its virtues, and always kindled by the emulation of the same pure faith. We are intoxicated by its breasts, when we are instructed by the pages of both Testaments against the deceptions of heretics. To always delight in its peace and love is a great occasion for exercising virtues.

[Proverbs 5:20] -- Why are you led astray, my son, by a foreign woman? etc. And it should be understood of both the prostitute and heresy. [Proverbs 5:21] -- The Lord looks upon the ways of man, etc. Let adulterers not think they are covered by the darkness of night against the wall, nor heretics that their schemes can be hidden, because the darkness will not be obscured from the Lord, and night will be illuminated like day. [Proverbs 5:22] -- The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, etc. There is a difference between a sinner and a wicked person, because a sinner is called anyone who falls into either small or great

crimes; but a wicked person is one who either never accepts the faith or, by the enormity of his crimes, becomes anathema from the faith he once received, like heretics or Catholics involved in public scandals, who are bound by the chains of their sins and perish with the incessant increase of their depravity. For one who makes a rope, always by twisting and entangling thread upon thread, increases it. Such is the strength of evil deeds, such are the books of heretics, in which they bind wrong with wrong, doing nothing other in writing than tightening the bonds.

[Proverbs 5:23] -- He will die because he lacked discipline, etc. Because he had disputed much about adulterers or heretics, as is his custom, he shows in the close of his narrative what the end of such people is; that is, they tend towards eternal death, who have hated the discipline of life. He calls it the multitude of folly, when heretics consider themselves wiser than the holy Fathers, or when the wicked, doing the works of darkness, either think the Lord does not see these things or believe they can easily endure His wrath.

Chapter 6

[Proverbs 6:1] -- My son, if you have become surety for your friend, etc. The plain sense of this letter is clear, as it advises one who has become surety for a friend to diligently admonish that friend to repay the money owed to the creditor, thus freeing both himself and the friend. Allegorically, however, in this passage, it addresses the teacher; and further, in the subsequent passage, it instructs anyone wandering on how they should conduct themselves cautiously. It is said to the instructor, If you have become surety for your friend, you have struck your hand with a stranger. Which is openly to say: If you have taken the soul of a brother into the danger of your conduct, you have already bound your mind with the care of solicitude, which was previously absent. [Proverbs 6:2] -- You are caught by the words of your mouth, etc. Because when you are compelled to speak good words in preaching what has been entrusted to you, you must first keep what you have said yourself.

[Proverbs 6:3] -- Therefore, do what I say, my son, etc. Run, hurry, rouse your friend. Not only remember to keep vigil yourself by living well, but also detach by preaching the one over whom you preside from the body of sin. [Proverbs 6:4] -- Do not give sleep to your eyes, etc. He gives sleep to his eyes who utterly neglects the care of his subjects; but he dozes who indeed knows their blameworthy deeds but, due to weariness of mind, does not correct them with deserving rebuke. [Proverbs 6:5] -- Deliver yourself like a gazelle from the hand, etc. Just as a gazelle seeks to escape from the hand of the captor, strive so much that, with your listener being healthily instructed, you are freed from the surety of his life. Or certainly, because the gazelle is by nature a pure animal, swift in running, and most keen in sight. Hence it is also named in Greek from seeing, that is, dorcas. But the bird, by flying, usually seeks the altar. When you are engaged in teaching your subjects, strive to be pure from all sins, vigorous in good works, keen in detecting the snares of the wicked, and supported by the wings of virtues: so that, having completed the task of preaching, you may deserve to fly to the heights and enter the pastures of heavenly life.

[Proverbs 6:6] -- Go to the ant, O sluggard! etc. Here he exhorts anyone wandering, that if he is not sufficient in teaching others, he should at least not neglect to manage his own cares, and if he cannot learn wisdom in teaching from a man, he should learn the wisdom of working from an ant. [Proverbs 6:7] -- Which, having no guide, etc. If such a small animal, lacking a leader and devoid of reason, foresees things for itself by nature as its guide for the

future, much more so should you, created in the image of God, called to see His glory, aided by the teaching of doctors, having the very Creator as your guide, in the present time gather the fruits of good works, by which you may live eternally. For indeed, this life is compared to harvest and summer because now, amidst the fervors of temptations, is the time to gather the rewards of future good deeds. But the day of judgment is likened to the cold of winter, because then, assuredly, no opportunity is left for working for life, but everyone is compelled to bring forth from the storehouse of past actions what he has reserved. Therefore, the Lord commands, saying: ”But pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath” (Matthew 24). For in winter, the opportunity, and on the Sabbath, the permission by law is lacking to gather the fruits of life, and to escape perpetual poverty.

[Proverbs 6:9] -- How long, sluggard, will you sleep? etc. How long will you sleep in vices when you can rise to do well, you who, weighed down by noxious sloth, always say, ”Let me still lie a little, and thus afterward I will rise by repenting”? For it happens that, while you always delay doing good work, suddenly the judge who considers your evil deeds will be present. This is what follows: [Proverbs 6:11] -- ”And poverty will come upon you like a traveler,” etc. For poverty and misery are the ultimate punishment, in which the damned deserve nothing of wealth: they will come like a traveler, because unforeseen and sudden; like an armed man, because they cannot be conquered perpetually. It is clear according to the letter, that sloth is the nurse of poverty and indigence. But if you are diligent, etc. The earthly fruits we reap are not comparable to a spring, but to a cistern, because they feed the gatherer for a time and eventually run out; but he who is diligent in laboring for heavenly riches, the harvest of this, like a spring, will come, because it will perfect the enduring reward of labors. And poverty will flee far from you. Because I will be satisfied, he says, when your glory is made manifest.

[Proverbs 6:12] -- An apostate man, a useless man walks with a perverse mouth, etc. He spoke of heresies and other kinds of vices; he had instructed a teacher, aroused the sluggard, but now he reproves the schismatic. Where it should be noted that he who wished to call the sower of quarrels, first named him an apostate, because unless he first fell inwardly in the manner of the proud angel by turning his mind from the sight of the Creator, he would not come outwardly to sow quarrels. He is rightly said to nod with his eyes, scrape with his foot, speak with his finger. For there is an inward custody that orderly preserves the outer members. Therefore, he who has lost the state of his mind flows out into the inconsistency of movement and indicates by external mobility that nothing roots within. [Proverbs 6:16] -- There are six things that the Lord hates, etc. He more fully indicates how detestable he is to God by sowing discord. But when the Lord says ”soul,” He does it in a human manner, to signify that He hates such people with full intention and not lightly. Thus it is in Isaiah: ”Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates” (Isaiah 1).

[Proverbs 6:17] -- Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, etc. He enumerates six capital crimes, which yet, in comparison to the one who sows discord, he somewhat diminishes as lesser, because indeed the greater crime is that which disrupts the unity and fraternity connected

by the grace of the Holy Spirit. For anyone can proudly lift up their eyes, lie with their tongue, be polluted with murder, plot evil against their neighbor, subject their members to other crimes, bear false witness against someone. This should not be thought to be the same as what he previously called a lying tongue. For a lie can be spoken, but not against a neighbor. For even blessed Augustine teaches that there are eight kinds of lies in the book he wrote on Lies. Anyone who is lost can inflict such evils on themselves or others, while maintaining the peace of the Church. But Donatus and Arius and their followers did something graver, who tore apart the concord of fraternal unity by sowing discord.

[Proverbs 6:20] -- Preserve, my son, the precepts of your father, etc. Now under the guise of the adulterous woman, he forbids listening to heresy. [Proverbs 6:21] -- Bind them in your heart forever, etc. And keep the precepts of the Lord fixed in your mind, and safeguard your speech with their sweetness on all sides, lest you fall into sin in your speech. [Proverbs 6:22] -- When you walk, let them guide you, etc. Let your meditation of the Lord's law be so constant that when you are working while awake, you recall this with diligent mind; when you wish to sleep, you will rest in this memory; when you wake up, first recall this to your mind; for in this way you will neither err while awake, nor be harmed by the fear of the night. Another interpretation: When you walk in the progress of righteousness, let the commandments of God be with you to instruct you; when you sleep in death, let them guard your soul, so that the enemy does not seize it; when you awaken in the resurrection, speak with them in seeking the rewards which they promised you if you kept them.

[Proverbs 6:25] -- Do not be captured by her glances. This applies to the adulteress. But even if heretics seem to live and act well, be careful not to be deceived by their doctrines. [Proverbs 6:26] -- For the price of a harlot is hardly a loaf of bread. Remember that the pleasure of fornication is brief and the punishment for the fornicator is perpetual. Just as one loaf of bread only dispels hunger for a day, and nevertheless he who has been satisfied by the eaten bread will hunger afterward, so he who goes into a harlot may indeed dispel his lust for a moment, but afterwards returns with greater fervor. [Proverbs 6:27] -- Can a man hide fire in his bosom, etc.? It is permitted only to him who is solidified in the Catholic faith, such that he cannot be separated from it by the sweetness of words or cunning, to read the books of heretics.

[Proverbs 6:30] -- The fault is not great when someone has been found stealing, etc. Theft is not considered a great fault by its own estimation, but by comparison with a greater sin, that is, adultery; as it is said to Jerusalem who sinned more grievously, Sodomy is justified in comparison to you; not because Sodomy had none or few sins, but because Jerusalem sinned more. [Proverbs 6:34] -- For jealousy and the fury of a husband will not spare in the day of vengeance, etc. And this is to be understood of the Lord, because He who now spares reprobates will not spare on the day of death; nor will He acquiesce to the prayers of those who call to Him too late; nor will He accept gifts, for there is neither time nor facility for them there. For He is jealous if anyone presumes to corrupt His bride, that is, the Church, or any faithful soul.

Chapter 7

[Proverbs 7:1] -- My son, keep my words, etc. And this section is the same as previously explained more fully under the person of the harlot. [Proverbs 7:2] -- And my law as the apple of your eye. Keep what I teach as diligently as if nothing right could be seen without it. [Proverbs 7:3] -- Bind them on your fingers, etc. On your fingers, means in actions; on the tablets of your heart, in the breadth of thought. Indeed, another translation says: Inscribe it on the breadth of your heart. [Proverbs 7:4] -- Say to wisdom, You are my sister, etc. Join the wisdom of ecclesiastical doctrine to you with fraternal love; so that it may preserve you from heretical defilement, which is proven to be foreign to the chastity of the Church. [Proverbs 7:6] -- For from the window of my house I looked through the lattice, etc. Aptly, however, does Solomon say he looked from the window of his house through the lattice, to judge the deeds of the little ones. For one who looks from a window through the lattice can fully consider what is done outside, yet those outside cannot see the one looking within. For this is what the Apostle says: The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself judged by no one (1 Cor. I). From the window therefore, and so on. It is clear according to the letter, that the gaze of wise teachers diligently observes the actions of the weak and the strong; but the eternal wisdom of God looks from heaven, and sees all the sons of men.

[Proverbs 7:7] -- I observed among the youth, etc. He calls the adulterer a youth, not because of virtue, but because of instability. Who passes through the street, because he has abandoned the narrow way that leads to life. Near the corner, because he deviates from rectitude. [Proverbs 7:8] -- And walks towards her house. He who has turned from the way of truth, rightly appropriates the way to the house of the harlot or heretic; which is fittingly placed, as we have explained, both in the street and near the corner. [Proverbs 7:9] -- In the twilight, in the evening of the day, etc. Because such a one, through the blindness of the heart, hastens to the darkness, both of sin and damnation. [Proverbs 7:10] -- And behold, a woman meets him in the attire of a harlot, etc. These all clearly relate to the literal sense of harlotry; however, heretical doctrine attempts to deceive anyone it finds careless and foolish. It indeed appears in harlot's attire, because it shines with unclean eloquence. It is prepared to capture souls, for it spiritually kills whomever it can associate with it.

[Proverbs 7:11] -- Loud and wayward, etc. Desiring to disturb the peace of the Church. [Proverbs 7:11] -- Unable to remain at home with her feet. There is no heresy content with

its first disciples: for they are its house, but it always seeks new ones to deceive. [Proverbs 7:12] -- Now in the streets, now in the squares, etc. Outside, it seizes the pagans; in the streets, the voluptuous; by the corners, other heretics. [Proverbs 7:13] -- And having seized the young man, it kisses him. With the flattery of deceitful words, it tempts the unstable. [Proverbs 7:13] -- And with a shameless face, it flatters, saying, etc. According to the letter, the understanding is evident, because the harlot confesses that she has prepared a magnificent feast. But the heretics in all that they do boast and rejoice that they sacrifice the victims of their salvation to God. For the Lord also said to the disciples: But the hour is coming when everyone who kills you will think that he is offering service to God.

[Proverbs 7:16] -- I have woven my bed with cords, etc. Beds that are woven with cords, or according to another translation, with withes, are usually softer than those made of wood, leather, or any other material. Therefore, with a bed woven with cords, the harlot designates the softness of resting. And on carpets embroidered from Egypt, she also tempts the allurements of the eyes, with which, by a nefarious sight, she more easily penetrates to seduce the mind's secrets. But since by the name of cords divine precepts are sometimes figured, which restrain us from our pleasures binding us with religion, the heretics promise their listeners that they are preparing a beneficial bedding with the weaving of heavenly words, in which they may rest with a free heart from the tumults of vices. But in truth, they construct with those cords a pit of perdition, where their feet and hands being perpetually bound, they are condemned. Concerning which the Lord says in the Apocalypse: And I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her fornication. Behold, I throw her into a bed, and those who commit adultery with her will be in great tribulation (Apoc. II). On those embroidered carpets from Egypt are understood the ornament of eloquence and the cunning of dialectic art, which took its origin from the pagans, through which the heretical mind boasts that it has woven the fabric of its evil deed as a harlot.

[Proverbs 7:17] -- I have scented my bed with myrrh, etc. They promise that they have such fragrances of heavenly virtues, by which they consecrate their hearts and those of their followers as if in beautiful bedchambers; so that they may say with the Apostle: For we are the pleasant fragrance of Christ to God (II Cor. II). [Proverbs 7:18] -- Come, let us be drunk with love, etc. The heretics boast that they are sated with each other with the cups of holy doctrine and joined by the grace of virtues until their deeds are followed by eternal light. [Proverbs 7:19] -- There is no husband in the house, he has gone, etc. He says, Christ is not bodily in the Church. For having risen from the dead, He ascended to heaven and left us the ministry of governing the Church, namely His house. [Proverbs 7:20] -- He has taken a purse of money with him. He took with him the glory of the resurrection and the honor of immortality, by which He might gladden and enrich the citizens of that homeland.

[Proverbs 7:20] -- He will return to his house on the day of the full moon. When the Church of His elect has completed its number, He will return for judgment. [Proverbs 7:22] -- Immediately he follows her, etc. That is, as if a foolish person, not knowing, he himself is led to destruction. [Proverbs 7:26] -- And all the mighty men were slain by her. As Solomon him-

self, the wisest of men, as Samson, the strongest, as David, the most gentle, were ensnared by the trap of women, just as Origen was by heretical doctrine, whom whoever denies to have been a master of the Church after the apostles, while he thought rightly, errs. [Proverbs 7:27] -- Her house is the way down to Sheol, etc. But also concerning the Church, it says: The gates of hell will not prevail against it (Matt. XVI). Indeed, the innermost parts of death, the most severe torments of hell, are said to be sharper and darker, by which it is evident that heretics and fornicators are to be submerged. Just as it is said concerning the saints suffering adversities for the Lord in this life: And the jailer put them in the inner dungeon, that is, a more atrocious, fouler, and darker place.

Chapter 8

[Proverbs 8:1] -- Does not wisdom cry out? etc. Has not the Lord spoken openly to the world? and has he spoken nothing in secret (John. XVII)? Why then, neglecting His Gospel, do the wretched rather flock to listen to heresy, or the seduction of vice, which whisper in the corner? [Proverbs 8:2] -- On the heights and lofty places above the way, etc. He taught the disciples together with the crowds on the mountain, but also often preached to those who met him on the ways, and healed those who needed to be cured. Also, at the very gate of the city of Nain, raising the dead, he commended the words he had taught with the example of the miracle. And why do you follow those who in secret sharpened their tongues against him (Luke VII)? [Proverbs 8:3] -- At the very gates she speaks, saying: O men, etc. She cries out to men, that is, to the vigorous hearers of the word in both sexes. For those who are of a womanish, i.e., weak mind, cannot grasp the words of wisdom.

[Proverbs 8:5] -- Understand, you simple ones, craftiness, etc. It is evident concerning the Lord, that when he was in the world, he spoke the word to every age, sex, and condition; indeed, even cried out standing in the temple, If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink (John VII). And now through the teachers of the Church (for they are the gates of his city) he preaches to men and women alike, to the wise and the foolish, to the elderly and the young; but on the contrary, deceptive teaching seeks those whom it might seduce secretly and privately. [Proverbs 8:6] -- Listen, for I will speak of great things. Great indeed, because he both promised and gave the kingdom of heaven, and taught the faith of the holy Trinity, and innumerable other things which the prophets left to be spoken by him. [Proverbs 8:6] -- And my lips will be open, etc. His lips are the two Testaments, concordant in the truth, joined in attestation, which, with his flesh appearing through the gift of the Holy Spirit, were opened to preach salvation throughout the whole world.

[Proverbs 8:10] -- Receive my discipline, etc. You cannot serve God and mammon (Luke XVI). [Proverbs 8:12] -- I, wisdom, dwell in counsel, etc. Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in their midst (Matthew XVIII). [Proverbs 8:13] -- Arrogance and pride, etc. Arrogance and pride in those who consider themselves better than others; the perverse way in those who openly do evil; the double-tongued mouth in those who in the good they follow have nothing stable, but change their words according to the pleasure of their listeners. [Proverbs 8:14] -- Counsel is mine, equity, etc. Let not human presumption

exalt itself, for the fullness of virtues rests in the wisdom of God alone, and from this human weakness receives whatever virtue it has. [Proverbs 8:15] -- By me kings reign, etc. He calls apostles kings, or other saints, who know how to rule both themselves first and then the church subject to them well: lawmakers, the authors of both Testaments, and the following writers of the Church; he calls princes and potent ones the other teachers and rulers of the faithful. Certainly, all these, if they are to be anything, have it not except through wisdom. For it is said: Because without me you can do nothing (John XV).

[Proverbs 8:17] -- I love those who love me, etc. Such is it also in the Gospel: ”But he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him, and manifest myself to him” (John 14). Surely, they who always in the renewed pursuit of the mind strive to reach the vision of Christ are watchful in the morning for wisdom. ”Riches and glory are with me,” etc. He speaks of wealthy riches, high riches, so as to signify heavenly gifts. For in Greek, ”proud” is called ”hyperiphanos,” that is, ”super-appearing.” And therefore wisdom rightly says that riches hyperiphanous are with her, because whatever gifts are given from heaven to the faithful are proven to be more excellent than all the riches of the world. This is also more clearly emphasized by adding ”justice:” for unjust men often have earthly riches and glory; but we in the resurrection, as Peter says, expect new heavens and a new earth, and his promises, in which justice dwells (2 Peter 3).

[Proverbs 8:22] -- ”The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways.” The ways of the Lord are his works, by contemplating which man comes to faith or knowledge. For his invisible attributes are clearly seen, understood by the things that are made, from the creation of the world. His ways are the very illuminations by which he shows himself to angelic spirits and to human minds. In the beginning of these ways he possessed wisdom, for in the beginning of the nascent creation, he had the Son, who arranged all things with him. But lest anyone think that the Son began at the beginning of these ways, or at any time before, he vigilantly added:

[Proverbs 8:26] -- ”Before he made anything from the beginning,” etc. Similar to this in the Gospel: ”In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made through him” (John 1). Perish those, therefore, who deny that the power of God and the wisdom of God, namely Christ, was begotten by the Father from the beginning, indeed even before any beginning could be said or thought. Another translation begins at this place: ”The Lord created me the beginning of his ways in his works,” which the Fathers understand to be spoken of the incarnation of the Lord, saying that by the mystery of a certain grace it is said, ”The Lord created me,” and not ”The Father created me.” Flesh, they say, acknowledges the Lord, glory signifies the Father. The creature confesses the Lord, charity names the Father as the beginning; or ”in the beginning of his ways,” as he himself said, ”I am the way,” because rising from the dead, he made a path for his Church to the kingdom of God, to eternal life. ”In his works,” because he was created from the Virgin to redeem the works of the Father; taking flesh to free the works of the

Father from the bondage of corruption. For the flesh of Christ is for the works, the Divinity before the works.

[Proverbs 8:30] -- ”And I delighted every day,” etc. Saying ”playing,” he means rejoicing. Therefore, he was playing before the Father every day, because, as the prophet says, ”From the beginning, from the days of eternity” (Mic. 5), he was rejoicing to be one with the Father. He was at all times playing in the world, for even when the times of the world and creation began to exist, he remained the Son, which he was in the Father. This is said so that no one would claim that he began with creatures and times. And his delights are to be with the sons of men, because he desires to rest in our soul, and to lead us by the grace of good merits to the vision of himself. [Proverbs 8:34] -- ”Blessed is the man who listens to me,” etc. He calls his doors and the posts of his gate the Holy Scriptures and their teachers, without whom we cannot enter into the life he promises.

Chapter 9

[Proverbs 9:1] -- Wisdom has built herself a house. Because he had adequately spoken about the eternity of the divinity of Christ, he also adds to speak of the assumed humanity: Therefore, Wisdom has built herself a house, because the Son of God himself created the man whom he would assume in the unity of his own person. [Proverbs 9:1] -- She has hewn out her seven pillars. He established churches throughout the world with the sevenfold grace of the Spirit, which would, by believing, worshiping, and preaching, as if by sustaining, uphold his house, that is, the mystery of his incarnation, so that the memory would not be obliterated by the wickedness of the faithless. Or certainly the house of wisdom is the Church of Christ; the pillars, however, are the teachers of the holy Church filled with the sevenfold Spirit, such as James, Cephas, and John; indeed, Wisdom has hewn out these pillars, because, detached from the love of the present age, she raised the minds of the preachers to bear the structure of the same Church.

[Proverbs 9:2] -- She has slaughtered her beasts. She consecrated the Church with her sufferings, or she allowed the lives of the preachers to be martyred in persecution. And indeed, these beasts are opposed to the beasts of the harlot, to which she invites fools, as it was read above, saying: I owed victims for salvation, today I have paid my vows. [Proverbs 9:2] -- She has mixed her wine, etc. For those unable to grasp the mysteries of her divinity, she revealed the sacraments of the assumed humanity and prepared for us the nourishment of the sacred Scriptures by revealing them. [Proverbs 9:3] -- She has also sent out her maidens, etc. She chose weak and despised preachers, who would gather the faithful people to the heavenly edifices of the supernal homeland. [Proverbs 9:4] -- Whoever is simple, let him come to me, etc. He calls the humble the simple; he calls the foolish those who have no arrogance of worldly wisdom. But he calls such to make them wise and noble by his teaching.

[Proverbs 9:5] -- Come, eat my bread, etc. In the bread, the divine words are expressed; in the mixed wine, the united nature of his divinity and humanity in one person of Christ is expressed, as was said above. Or certainly in the bread, it is shown the sacred mystery of his body, and in the mixed wine, the holy mystery of his blood, with which we are satisfied on his altar, that is, his table. [Proverbs 9:6] -- Forsake foolishness and live, etc. After offering the feast, he also adds the admonitions of life, so that those whom he refreshed with the

mysteries of his incarnation, he may also instruct equally with the words of his teaching. [Proverbs 9:7] -- He who corrects a scoffer, etc. [Proverbs 9:7-9] As if you were asking why wisdom invites the little ones and the foolish to her feasts rather than others; she says, I did this because it is in vain that one labors who tries to instill the word of wisdom into one who despises listening, believing himself to be wiser and greater than his teacher.

[Proverbs 9:7] -- Do not rebuke a scoffer, etc. It is not to be feared that a scoffer, when rebuked, will insult you; but rather this should be foreseen, that, drawn to hatred, he may become worse: and therefore, you must sometimes cease from his correction for the sake of love, not out of fear. [Proverbs 9:8] -- Rebuke a wise man, and he will love you. He speaks of a wise man who is in progress, that is, a lover of wisdom, whom he previously called a little one due to humility. For a perfect wise man does not need to be rebuked. [Proverbs 9:13] -- A foolish woman, clamorous and full of allurements, etc. This woman is heresy, clearly opposed to wisdom, which above sang her sacraments. But she also sits at the doors of her house, that is, in the teachers of falsehood, who introduce the miserable to the innermost parts of deceit. Moreover, she claims for herself a chair of preaching. This is the chair of pestilence in which the blessed man refuses to sit (Psalm I).

[Proverbs 9:14] -- On a high place of the city. He speaks of wisdom as giving her voice in the high and elevated places; but she rises in the sublimity of virtues, this one elevates herself in the arrogance of pride. [Proverbs 9:15] -- To call passersby who walk by the way, etc. Heresy often calls the Catholics to deception, seeing them proceed on the right path, wishing to quickly pass through this world and hasten to the eternal homeland. [Proverbs 9:16] -- Whoever is simple, let him turn here, etc. Wisdom also seems to invite the little ones and the foolish to her feast with nearly the same words; but it differs, as she simply asks them to come to her, whereas this one urges them to turn aside to her. For wisdom summons those she sees wandering to the right path of action; this one teaches those walking rightly to deviate from their way and turn aside to her.

[Proverbs 9:17] -- Stolen waters are sweeter, etc. Wisdom has publicly set forth her table and mixed her wine; but the foolish woman, having nothing pure, gathers whoever she can to stolen waters and hidden bread, because the Catholic Church publicly spreads the feast of the divine words to the world, and has commanded the mysteries of the divinity and humanity of Christ to be celebrated. Or certainly, in the mixed wine, she offers to her listeners the historical and allegorical knowledge together, so that each one, according to his capacity, may be refreshed by the cups of life. But the doctrine of heretics secretly prefers the decrees of its public faith and profession, and when it has nothing spiritual to offer, it boasts of teaching knowledge sweeter than that of the Catholic pastors, so that what is forbidden to be said and believed openly in the Church is more willingly heard and acted upon. And so, ignorance is more sweetly received as it is thought to be knowledge, whose forbidden hearing it steals. The baptism of heretics can be signified in the stolen waters, and their sacrifice in the hidden bread. But literally, it asserts that the adulterous woman in stolen waters and hidden bread asserts that forbidden and illicit unions are sweeter.

[Proverbs 9:18] -- And he did not know that giants are there, etc. The adulteress does not know, the heretic does not know, that unclean spirits inhabit their houses, and those who suffer eternal punishments in the depths of hell delight in the acts of the luxurious, and in the dogmas of the heretics, as if they were lavish banquets. But when the sacraments of Christ are duly celebrated in the Church of Christ, the word of Christ is heard and preserved (who is the wisdom of God), it is established that angelic virtues are there, and in the heights of heaven, the faithful partake. For He gave them the bread of heaven; man ate the bread of angels (Psalm LXXVII).

Chapter 10

[Proverbs 10:1] -- The Parables of Solomon. A new title is given, because a new kind of speech begins; so that not as before on individual aspects of good or evil debating at length, but in alternating verses he describes the actions of both. [Proverbs 10:1] -- A wise son makes a father glad, etc. Whoever keeps the mysteries of faith well received, gladdens God the Father; but he who stains them with evil deed or heresy, saddens the Church, his mother. [Proverbs 10:2] -- Treasures of wickedness profit nothing, etc. And often from temporal death, as with Daniel and the three youths, and always from eternal death, righteousness delivers. But treasures gathered through wickedness, even if they seem sometimes to rescue from bodily death, bring more harm because of the wickedness by which they were acquired, than benefit in being given in exchange for life. [Proverbs 10:3] -- The Lord will not let the soul of the righteous be famished, etc. And if at any time the unjust afflict or even kill the righteous with famine, they will not hurt his soul, whom the Lord will comfort in the future life with the glory of His visitation, who also rightly turns the same traps of the wicked back upon them by judgment.

[Proverbs 10:4] -- Lazy hands lead to poverty, etc. Whoever lives negligently in this world will suffer lack of good things in the future; but whoever fights bravely for the Lord is rewarded with the riches of eternal blessedness. [Proverbs 10:5] -- He who gathers in summer is a wise son, etc. He who gathers to Christ the souls of the faithful is a wise son. And indeed, this harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few (Luke 10). But he who in this acceptable time is sluggish in caring for his own salvation will be ashamed in the day of tribulation. [Proverbs 10:6] -- The blessing of the Lord is upon the head of the righteous, etc. The righteous will be told in judgment: Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom (Matt. 25). The mouths of the wicked, which served for revelry, drunkenness, and evil gossip, will be condemned by the wickedness they practiced. Indeed, the mouth of him who sought to cool his tongue in torment, on account of the many crimes for which he was punished more severely, was covered by wickedness (Luke 16).

[Proverbs 10:7] -- The memory of the righteous is a blessing, etc. And in this life, the good praise the good, whether living or dead; but they detest the actions and name of the wicked. In the future life, the righteous live in God's praises, but the honor, name, and praises of the reprobate are changed into putrid torments of hell, where their worm does not die, and their

fire is not quenched (Isaiah 66). [Proverbs 10:9] -- Whoever walks uprightly, walks securely, etc. He who knows he lives uprightly, easily disregards all adverse things, because he trusts he will come to joy through them, saying with the prophet: The Lord is the protector of my life; whom shall I fear? and the rest (Psalm 26). But he who walks in crooked paths, though unwilling, becomes exposed and receives due recompense. For there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed (Luke 12).

[Proverbs 10:10] -- He who winks with the eye causes trouble. Whoever mockingly winks at someone will not escape without the pain of torment and regret. Of such people the Psalmist says, Those who hate me without cause and wink maliciously with the eye (Psalm 35); or certainly, he who winks with the eye causes trouble because a foolish son is a grief to his mother. [Proverbs 10:10] -- A fool's lips bring him strife. It is either from his own, by whom he deserved to be condemned, because death and life are in the power of the tongue (Prov. XVIII), or from those by whom, because he could not be corrected, he received the sentence of condemnation; as the Psalmist says, "Lord, deliver my soul from lying lips and a deceitful tongue" (Psal. CXIX), he asks this from the Lord, so that he himself neither possesses lying lips and a deceitful tongue, nor can he be deceived by the iniquity and deceit of others.

[Proverbs 10:11] -- The mouth of the righteous is a well of life. And the Lord speaks of teachers, "He who believes in me, as the Scripture says, rivers of living water will flow from his heart" (John VII). [Proverbs 10:11] -- And the mouth of the wicked covers iniquity. The wicked are those who conceal their own or their neighbor's faults, defending them so that they do not reach health. The prophet, detesting this, prays to the Lord that his heart might not incline to an evil word, to excuse excuses in sins (Psal. CXL). [Proverbs 10:13] -- In the lips of the wise is found wisdom, etc. The rod on the back is vengeance on the posterior, that is, in the following life; well expressed by that famous plague by which the Philistines were struck on their buttocks (1 Sam. V). Therefore, whoever does not want to carry the rod on their back, let them carry wisdom in their lips. I will speak the praises of Christ and preach His commandments. However, because it is always suitable to praise God but not always to teach, it is fitting that the wise do not teach everything they know to everyone, rightly adding:

[Proverbs 10:14] -- The wise hide knowledge. Knowing indeed, that there is a time to be silent and a time to speak (Eccl. III). Hence the prophet says, "While the sinner stood against me, I was mute and humbled and silent from good things" (Psal. XXXVIII). And the Apostle, "I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Cor. II). [Proverbs 10:14] -- But the mouth of the fool is near to confusion. Because either he will speak good things inordinately, or openly speak evil things. [Proverbs 10:15] -- The wealth of the rich is his strong city, etc. The rich trust in their wealth as in a fortified city; the poor therefore tremble, fearing they may lack because they know they are needy. Spiritually, he who is rich in God trusts in Him through good works, as in an impregnable city that no enemy can overcome; but those who are afflicted by a lack of virtues are therefore

in need of heavenly riches because they fear with harmful dread to endure harsh labors for the Lord.

[Proverbs 10:18] -- Lying lips hide hatred, etc. Therefore, if you desire to be truthful and wise, neither conceal hatred in the secret of the heart, nor express slander through the mouth; but let your heart be filled with love and your mouth with truth. [Proverbs 10:23] -- As if through laughter a fool works mischief, etc. Prudence takes its name from providence. Therefore, it is foolish to rejoice in mischief (Proverb. XIV). However, it is wise and worthy of a man to foresee that laughter will be mixed with pain, and the joy of sinning will be followed by the penalty of retribution. [Proverbs 10:24] -- What the wicked fears shall come upon him, etc. He speaks of that wicked one who sins knowingly. Therefore, the wicked fear to see the strict judge; the righteous desire to be dissolved and be with Christ: he, lest he be deprived of earthly joys and punished with eternal vengeance; they, lest their pilgrimage be prolonged and they receive the rewards for which they have strived. But to both, what they fear in their heart will come upon them.

[Proverbs 10:25] -- As a passing storm, the wicked shall not be, etc. He speaks of the persecutors of the Church, who seek to overthrow the house of faith. But that house, having been set upon the true foundation, that is, in Christ, remains, while they immediately perish. [Proverbs 10:26] -- Just as vinegar to the teeth, etc. Just as the treachery of heretics generates trouble and tears for good teachers, so a Catholic living badly is a burden through laziness to those who have been commanded to show their faith through works. For the eyes and teeth are the preachers of the holy Church, who are accustomed to foresee right ways for her and to supply spiritual nourishment. But vinegar, which degenerates from wine, and smoke, which rises from fire and vanishes, figuratively denote those who, withdrawing from ecclesiastical sweetness and charity through pride or sloth, also attack it with words. Of such, John says, "They went out from us, but they were not of us," and so on (1 John II).

[Proverbs 10:27] -- Fear of the Lord will prolong days, etc. Those who serve God faithfully will be gifted with eternal light; but those who are devoted to impiety lose the goods they loved along with this life. [Proverbs 10:28] -- The expectation of the righteous is gladness, etc. It is clear that the righteous rejoice in the expectation of the life to come, even though they are saddened by the affliction of present trials. Hence that saying, "You are my refuge from the distress that surrounds me, my exultation" (Psalm XIII). But the impious, who think they will find rest in the future, or indeed will be nothing after death, are deceived. Nor does this contradict the statement made above, "What the wicked fear will come upon them"; for there are those who, knowing the judgment of future goods and evils, nonetheless sin out of negligence, despair, or even deliberately: for to such the destruction they fear will come; there are those who think the evils they do will never be punished, or the good deeds they do will be rewarded with good recompense; of whom it is rightly said that the hope of the impious will perish. For concerning those who sin knowingly, he subsequently adds:

[Proverbs 10:29] -- The strength of the simple is the way of the Lord, etc. He says, If you cannot understand the hidden meanings of Scripture, do not despair of salvation, but walk

in the way of the Lord, do the good things you know, and you will be counted among the strong. But those who scorn doing the right things they know ought to rightly tremble, because certain evils remain for them to suffer.

Chapter 11

[Proverbs 11:1] -- ”A deceitful balance is abomination to the Lord,” etc. A deceitful balance is not only held in the measurement of money but also in judicial discretion; for he who weighs the case of the poor differently from the case of the powerful, the case of a friend differently from that of a stranger, certainly uses an unjust balance. Also, he who judges his own good deeds to be better than those of his neighbor, and his own faults to be lighter, weighs with a deceitful scale. Likewise, he who imposes unbearable burdens on people’s shoulders but does not want to touch them with one finger (Matt. XXIII). Also, he who does good in public and acts badly in secret will be abominated by the Lord for the iniquity of the deceitful balance. But he who acts sincerely in all things, who discerns each case with an even hand, certainly conforms to the will and action of the just judge.

[Proverbs 11:2] -- ”Where there is pride,” etc. Because they behave arrogantly and insultingly, through contempt or ignorance of discipline, they insult their neighbors; or certainly because everyone who exalts himself will be humbled (Luke XIV, XVIII). [Proverbs 11:2] -- ”But where there is humility,” etc. ”You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them to little children” (Matt. XI; Luke X), that is, to the humble. [Proverbs 11:7] -- ”When a wicked man dies, there is no longer any hope.” Alas, poor man! Origen ignored this sentence, who believed that life would be given to all the wicked and sinners after the universal and final judgment. It should be noted, however, that although there is no hope of pardon for the wicked after death, there are those who, after death, can be absolved of lighter sins to which they were bound, either by chastisement of punishments or by the prayers, alms, and celebrations of masses by their loved ones. But these things, whenever they are done, are done both before the judgment and for lighter faults. However, those who think they will be liberated after a long time following judgment are mistaken and perhaps it pertains to them what follows:

[Proverbs 11:7] -- ”And the expectation of the diligent will perish.” Similarly, there is one kind of diligence with which the good are always girded to fulfill God’s commandments; another, with which the wicked, when they sin knowingly, fear diligently lest they someday be seized for eternal punishment. Therefore, rightly the expectation of those who serve God with a diligent mind will be crowned; but the expectation of those who, disregarding God and already condemned by their own conscience before His judgment, the expectation of

the diligent will perish. This verse is very different in the old translation, which says: "The hope of a just man who has died will not perish, but the glory of the wicked will perish." [Proverbs 11:8] -- "The righteous is delivered out of trouble," etc. Any martyr freed from the distress of suffering after death will be entrusted to punishment on account of his cause to the persecutor who caused him distress. James was crowned with martyrdom, Peter was saved from prison; and Herod, who persecuted them, visibly consumed by worms, was invisibly snatched where his worm does not die and his fire is not quenched.

[Proverbs 11:9] -- "A hypocrite with his mouth destroys his neighbor," etc. A heretic who pretends to teach Catholic doctrine deceives his listener; but those who justly follow the truth of the Gospel will be freed by Catholic knowledge so that they are not snatched by heretic deception. [Proverbs 11:12] -- "He who despises his friend lacks sense," etc. One who is not proven to love sincerely should not be despised or ridiculed by us, even if he does something foolish out of inertia; for he who does this is unworthy of wisdom. But indeed any prudent person does not publicly speak about such ones' faults; rather, he secretly corrects them. The same is more strictly inculcated in the following verses when it is said: [Proverbs 11:13] -- "He who walks prudently reveals secrets," etc. And the Lord in the Gospel, "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone; if he listens to you, you have gained your brother," etc. (Matt. XVIII). From this, it is rightly inferred:

[Proverbs 11:14] -- "Where there is no guidance, the nation falls," etc. Lest you should think that, if you cannot correct the faults of a friend, you should keep them hidden, he rightly says that a people without a governor will fall; but there will be safety where there are many counsels, to show that what you cannot amend alone must be revealed to many, so that the unified diligence of all may correct it. [Proverbs 11:15] -- He who makes a pledge for a stranger will be punished by the evil. The sense of the letter is at hand. But he is a stranger from the lot of saints who neglects to correct his sins by repentance; and whoever grants the grace of communion to such or promises eternal life, because he has made a pledge for a stranger, surely renders himself deserving of vengeance before the strict judge.

[Proverbs 11:15] -- But he who avoids snares, etc. He will be secure in the future, who then, being very fearful, diligently cures his errors by penance and keeps himself immune from the society of the impenitent. [Proverbs 11:21] -- Hand in hand, the evil will not be innocent. He who joins hands does indeed nothing. But hand in hand, the evil will not be innocent, because even if he withdraws his hand from impious action for a time, the evil cannot have the innocence of the heart. Hence it is also said beforehand, The small heart is an abomination to the Lord. [Proverbs 11:21] -- But the seed of the righteous will be saved. This is what is said above, But to him who sows righteousness, there will be a faithful reward. Or surely, the seed of the righteous will be saved, because those who follow the examples of the previous righteous also follow their footsteps to see the joys of eternal salvation. Of whom Isaiah speaks, All who see them will recognize them, because they are the seed which the Lord has blessed.

[Proverbs 11:22] -- A golden ring in its nose, etc. Even if you fix a golden ring in its nose, it will still turn the earth with its nose and hurry to immerse itself in a wallow of mud; so, if a foolish woman receives the beauty of the face or dress, she nonetheless turns her face to low things, spreads her beauty everywhere to overthrow the flowers of chastity, and loves to stain herself with the mud of pleasure. Otherwise, he who attains the ornament of divine words by meditation but follows it with a bad life has a golden ring in his nose; but like a pig, he does not cease to turn the earth, because what he perceived by the scent of knowledge, he defiled by an impure action. Therefore, such a soul is considered a beautiful and foolish woman, because, given over to carnal enticements, she is beautiful through knowledge but foolish through action. Otherwise, he who sees heretical doctrine shining with all the brilliance of eloquence, yet does not fit it with the understanding of wisdom, says here that a golden ring in its nose means a beautiful and circumflexed speech in the senses of a foolish mind; to which gold hangs from the speech, yet due to the weight of earthly intention, like a pig, it does not look upwards. Which he then explains by saying, A beautiful and foolish woman, that is, heretical doctrine: beautiful through word; foolish through understanding.

[Proverbs 11:23] -- The desire of the righteous is all good, etc. The righteous always desire justice to reign everywhere, but the impious, even when they seem to rest from the execution of impiety, yet with the purpose of a cruel mind, intend to inflict fury on anyone. And this is what is said above, Hand in hand, the evil will not be innocent; likewise, The expectation of the wicked is wrath, because often wrath enclosed in silence boils more vehemently within the mind. [Proverbs 11:24] -- Others divide their own, etc. Because they receive a hundredfold in this time, and in the future age, eternal life (Matt. XIX). [Proverbs 11:24] -- Others seize what is not theirs, etc. He says, They will always be in poverty, not only in torments, where they receive not even a drop of water to be refreshed for a short while (Luke XVI), but even in this life, where although they seize innumerable things, the greedy are always in need.

[Proverbs 11:25] -- The soul that blesses will be enriched, etc. He who outwardly blesses by preaching receives inwardly the fatness of increase. And while he ceases not to drench the minds of his hearers with sacred discourse, he himself grows fat with the multiple drink of grace. [Proverbs 11:26] -- He who hides grain in time, etc. He who keeps the words of holy preaching to himself will be cursed among the people, because for the fault of silence alone, he is condemned for the punishment of many whom he could have corrected. He is the wicked and slothful servant, cast into outer darkness for keeping the talent which he received (Matthew 25). But they sell the grain who impart the word of life to those who hear it, from whom they receive the price of faith and confession, as the Lord says, ”Trade until I come” (Luke 19). Blessing descends upon their head, while the Lord says to each one returning with such business, ”Well done, good and faithful servant; because you have been faithful over a few things, I will set you over many; enter into the joy of your Lord” (ibid.).

[Proverbs 11:27] -- He indeed rises early who seeks what is good, etc. To seek the good things you ought to do, by which you may attain heavenly goods, this is to rise early well, that is, to be girded for good work with the growing light of knowledge. Or certainly, he rises well, that is, to life at the time of resurrection, who now seeks the good things in the time of action. But he who now diligently inquires into the evil which he may say or do, will then be hindered by their weight from reaching the higher kingdoms. [Proverbs 11:28] -- He who trusts in his riches will fall, etc. He who hankers after present goods and does not think of future ones, will lack both in the end. But those who do good in the hope of future rewards, justly receive what they hope for at present. Indeed, a green leaf on a tree signifies the fruits that it does not yet show. And the just flourish like a green leaf, because having been saved by hope, they do not cease to grow in faith and the grace of virtues, until they reach the fruit of the desired retribution, that is, the heavenly homeland.

[Proverbs 11:29] -- He who troubles his own house will inherit the wind, etc. He who does not fear his mind to be disturbed by the tumult of great thoughts, indeed opens it to the blasts of evil spirits by which it may be overwhelmed. And he who foolishly persecutes the wise, by this ruling over him serves him, because by pressing his patience, he makes him more approved, so that he evidently rewards the prize for which he strived, despite being condemned himself. [Proverbs 11:30] -- The fruit of the just is a tree of life. The reward of the just is the vision of Christ. For He is the wisdom of which it is said, "She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her" (Proverbs 3). And in the Apocalypse, it is said, "To him who overcomes, I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of my God" (Revelation 2). And now the just await this fruit, because long, as it is predicted, they flourish like a green leaf.

[Proverbs 11:30] -- And he that wins souls is wise. He who undertakes the care of souls for the Lord, such as to teach the erring, to comfort the mournful, to sustain the needy with temporal goods, to lead the resistant to the remedies of salvation, or to govern those destitute of a shepherd, so that he may bring many to the Lord with himself; he, I say, who undertakes souls in this way, is wise, because he greatly procures for his own soul by these means, whereby he may reign more gloriously with the Lord. [Proverbs 11:31] -- If the just on earth receive, etc. If the holy martyrs endured so much as the just, how much torment do you think awaits those who unjustly afflicted them? If Job and Tobit, and others chosen by God, received so many adversities in this life, why are you troubled if a slight affliction reaches you, who lie so far beneath their traces? And indeed you, even if you should not say and believe that you are impious, you should not deny that you are a sinner, that is, to have some sins, small or great, open or hidden. Rather, you must confess so as not to deceive yourself, and the truth may not be in you (1 John 1). If, therefore, the just received on earth, Abel the martyr and Job the example of patience, how much more the impious, Antiochus and Herod! And sinners in the Gospel, the paralytics, could be healed by the Lord only after their sins were first forgiven. Note that Peter, in his Epistle according to the old translation, placed this sentence, saying: And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear (1 Peter 4)?

Chapter 12

[Proverbs 12:2] -- He who is good will draw grace from the Lord, etc. The connection of these verses is as follows: He who is good does not trust in his own thoughts, but seeks the grace of the Lord, and through it receives the ability to live piously. However, he who trusts in his own thoughts cannot be good. For he who does not care to seek the grace of the heavenly Helper, rightly endures in an impious action. [Proverbs 12:4] -- A diligent woman is a crown to her husband, etc. The meaning of the letter is evident because a good and chaste woman gives honor to her husband in all things, and by well managing the household with his virtues, she, as it were, adds grace to the crown; but indeed an adulteress, although she may appear beautiful outwardly, internally defiles her limbs with the stench of luxury. Indeed, spiritually, the Church offers Christ a crown, none other than herself.

[Proverbs 12:4] -- For all who are around him, etc. And the son of Sirach concerning the high priest: He himself standing next to the altar, and around him a crown of brothers. But the bones, that is, the virtues, which can be seen in the faction of heretics, the rot of evil doctrine corrupts. [Proverbs 12:5] -- The thoughts of the righteous are judgments, etc. The righteous judge their actions by diligent meditation, to see if they please the Lord, lest, by any chance, being less careful, the heavenly arbiter dispenses adversities against them invisibly; according to that of the Apostle, If we judged ourselves, we would not be judged (I Cor. XI). But the wicked, forgetting divine fear, devise their plans from the fraud they commit.

[Proverbs 12:7] -- Turn the wicked, and they will be no more, etc. When the wicked depart from this life, they will not be as they were, because after death they find not what they believed, but frustrated in their hope, they receive torments instead of rewards. However, the house of the righteous, that is, the Church, which partly sojourns on earth, partly reigns in heaven, never fails; but whatever members of it pass from here to there, find the joys they hoped for there. Alternatively, Turn the wicked, and they will be no more, because there was much impiety in the gods of the gentiles, much in the sects of heretics, much in the illusions of magicians, much in the persecutions by pagans. But with these being overthrown by the Lord's gift, the memory of their impiety was equally taken away, even the foolish authorities themselves, and the doctrines were seized by fire, as we read was done in Ephesus during the time of the apostles. However, the house of the righteous will remain, because the holy

Church could never be hidden or taken away, no length of time prevailed to corrupt any of its Scriptures, nor to violate its faith in any way. It can also be understood thus, Turn the wicked, and they will be no more: turn them from impiety, and they will no longer be wicked, but righteous. For this, another translation says: Wherever the wicked turn, they will be exterminated. To which it is said against them about the saints: For those who love God, all work together for good.

[Proverbs 12:8] -- A man will be known by his doctrine. Scripture usually calls those endowed with divine virtues men. Hence the Apostle: Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men (I Cor. XVI). Therefore, a man is known by his doctrine, because if he teaches correctly and also fulfills it with deeds, he is understood to be holy. [Proverbs 12:8] -- However, he who is vain and foolish, etc. Because he himself despises having the strength of manly courage. [Proverbs 12:9] -- Better is the poor who is sufficient for himself, etc. Better is the simple and humble brother, who, working the good he knows, earns life in heaven, than he who is renowned for scripture learning or even performs the office of a doctor, but lacks the bread of love. Regarding this love, he proceeds to add that which pertains to one's neighbor: [Proverbs 12:10] -- The righteous knows the souls of his animals. That is, he pities and sympathizes with the condition and weakness of his neighbors entrusted to him.

[Proverbs 12:10] -- But the compassion of the wicked is cruel. Who not only do not sympathize with those under them, but also, according to what the Lord says: Beat the male and female servants, saying, My master is delayed in coming (Luke XII). [Proverbs 12:11] -- He who works his land, etc. Who exercises his soul with spiritual studies will now be satisfied with virtues and then with the feasts of rewards. But he who refuses to labor for the salvation of his soul, will then be numbered among the foolish; even though now he may seem glorious with either divine or human wisdom. [Proverbs 12:12] -- The desire of the impious is a monument to the worst. The impious desires to imitate preceding evildoers, and to speak of their life and deeds. Certainly, the desire of the impious is a monument to the worst, because all his desire tends, although he himself is unaware, to be enclosed with the unjust who preceded him in the prison of eternal death. However, because such people meet the end they least foresee, it says contrary about the good:

[Proverbs 12:12] -- But the root of the righteous will prosper. Because the faith and charity of the elect, by which they are rooted in Christ, do not deceive them, but always growing towards perfection, they will receive more than they knew to hope for in the future. [Proverbs 12:14] -- Each will be filled with good things from the fruit of his mouth. The fruit of the mouth is a good word, for he who speaks evil does not generate the fruit of the mouth, but harm. Therefore, everyone who speaks good will be rewarded with eternal goods, provided that his actions do not contradict his words. For he carefully adds this when he says, [Proverbs 12:14] -- And according to the works of his hands it will be repaid to him. For otherwise, his teaching will not be fruitful if he himself is the first not to do the good that he teaches.

[Proverbs 12:16] -- The fool immediately shows his anger, etc. He who desires to avenge himself in the present is a fool; but he who disregards an injury for the sake of the Lord is wise. Another translation of this verse says, the fool immediately pronounces his anger, but the astute hides his shame. He does not decree that the shameful passion of anger should be so hidden by the wise, that while condemning its swiftness, he does not prevent its tardiness, which certainly, if it falls upon him due to the necessity of human weakness, he judged to be hidden so that while it is wisely covered for the present, it may be more wisely removed and deleted forever. For such is the nature of anger that, if delayed, it weakens and dies; but if revealed, it burns more and more. [Proverbs 12:17] -- There is one who promises, etc. Some promise obedience to the truth, but when frightening or tempting trial provides an obstacle, they desert what they had begun, but their conscience pricks them as with a sword for their promise.

[Proverbs 12:18] -- But the tongue of the wise is health. Because they both reach life by performing the good they promise, and in preaching they demonstrate to others what is to be followed. [Proverbs 12:19] -- The lip of truth shall be established forever, etc. The faith of the Church shall always remain. But he who suddenly introduces new dogmas is a minister of the heretic. [Proverbs 12:23] -- A shrewd man conceals knowledge. Shrewd in this place is understood in a good sense, that is, wise and prudent, who sometimes conceals his knowledge out of prudence: for two reasons, either not being able to speak to weak listeners as to spiritual ones, but as to carnal ones, or being unwilling to give what is holy to the dogs, nor to cast pearls before swine. [Proverbs 12:23] -- And the heart of fools proclaims foolishness. When they either desire to know more than they should, and leap to thinking that foolishness is wisdom; or certainly when trying to teach others who cannot yet understand, they provoke them to greater foolishness, and like forcing the sun's light on small eyes, they take away the little light they seemed to see.

[Proverbs 12:24] -- The hand of the diligent will rule, etc. The perfect not only overcome the battles of vices but also govern the chosen brethren with greater grace of virtues. But those lax in spirit, not fearing to be entangled in sins, daily pay the tribute of vices to the worst tax collector, the devil, and if not escaping his dominion by live repentance, after death they are handed over to him, being cast by him into the prison of eternal punishments, as the Lord testifies in the parable from the gospel. For the repentance of such people is not to be despaired of, since it is immediately added: [Proverbs 12:25] -- Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down, etc. Because it is necessary that first the sinner be healthily humbled by the anxiety of repentance, and then afterward by the judgment of the priest, the word of given reconciliation may bring joy. He who neglects loss for the sake of a friend, is just. If this is rightly said about the general giving of money and a pure man friend, how much more is he worthy of the crown of justice who, for the sake of Him who said, I tell you, my friends, do not be terrified by those who kill the body, either selling what he possesses, gives to the poor, or receives the plundering of his goods with joy, or certainly, in passion, hands over his flesh to be mortified or killed!

[Proverbs 12:26] -- The way of the wicked will deceive them. When they rejoice in holding their own or seizing others'. Whence it is rightly added: [Proverbs 12:27] -- The fraudulent one will not gain profit, etc. For money acquired by fraud adds more harm to the soul than profit to the chest. And he who knows how to dispense his own substance for the Lord, will receive celestial gifts as a reward for the earthly ones. [Proverbs 12:28] -- Otherwise, the fraudulent one will not gain profit, etc.: he who fraudulently pretends to be good while living wickedly in secret, will not find the goods of the life to come; but he who truly acquires the substance of spiritual virtues, from it will gain the brightness of the perpetual kingdom; which he more clearly stated in the following verses, On the path of righteousness is life; the way of error leads to death. For the path of righteousness acquires the substance of virtues, which more precious than gold, buys the brightness of eternal life; but the perverse way, in which the fraudulent walks, having lost the temporary gain he seeks, leads to the eternal death he wished not to foresee.

Chapter 13

[Proverbs 13:1] -- ”A wise son is the instruction of a father,” etc. There is such a great difference between the wise and the foolish man, that the latter, at some point, arrives to teach even the one who had taught him with the advantage of learning, while the former, when reproved, does not know how to listen. [Proverbs 13:4] -- ”And the sluggard desires and does not desire,” etc. Rightly, the lazy person is marked by the term, who wants to reign with God but does not want to work for God. The rewards delight when they are promised; the struggles deter when they are commanded. Concerning this, James says, ”A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways” (James 1). And the son of Sirach says, ”Woe to the sinner who walks on two paths!” But those who carry out the Lord’s commands do so because their soul is refreshed by the sweetness of heavenly things; according to him who beseeches the Lord, saying, ”My soul will be satisfied as with fat and richness” (Psalm 62). Or certainly, the soul of the workers will be enriched, because those who toil with pious labor for the Lord will be rewarded with a heavenly and unfading recompense after their labors.

[Proverbs 13:7] -- ”There is one who makes himself rich, yet has nothing,” etc. He seemed rich to himself who was clothed in purple and fine linen and feasted sumptuously every day; but because he did not have God, he found in the end that nothing of what he had possessed existed. Hence it is said about such people, ”They have slept their sleep, and none of the men of wealth found anything in their hands” (Psalm 75). Conversely, Lazarus appeared poor, lying at his gate, full of sores; but he was in many riches, possessing the virtue of humility, carrying the Creator of all riches, namely God, in his heart. ”What true riches can accomplish and what true poverty can do,” he clearly shows by saying: [Proverbs 13:8] -- ”The ransom of a man’s life is his wealth,” etc. Therefore, whoever wants his soul to be redeemed from future wrath should gather the riches of good works. For he who lacks these kinds of wealth cannot endure the rebuke of the strict judge. The Psalmist prays about this, saying: ”Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger, nor chasten me in your wrath” (Psalm 38). Otherwise, the poor in spirit are not rebuked by the Lord there but receive the blessing of an eternal inheritance.

[Proverbs 13:9] -- ”The light of the righteous rejoices,” etc. The light of the righteous, which perpetually rejoices, is the hope of future things; the lamp of the impious, which suddenly

goes out, is the happiness of this fleeting world. Among the proud, there are always quarrels, but those who act with counsel are governed by wisdom. Heretics always quarrel among themselves, and so do other reprobates, because, evidently, they do not know the unity of faith and truth. But the faithful, who continuously enjoy the counsel of divine words, are governed by the moderation of wisdom, which does not allow them to quarrel. [Proverbs 13:11] -- "Wealth hastily gotten will dwindle," etc. Those who want to become rich fall into temptation, and they do not possess those very riches, which they either acquire or desire, forever. But whoever strives justly for the acquisition of the wealth of heavenly rewards will receive the multiple gifts of heavenly blessedness. About this, he aptly adds:

[Proverbs 13:12] -- "Hope deferred makes the heart sick," etc. For certainly, as long as the hope of eternal things is deferred, the soul of the faithful is afflicted, either because of the delay of the good things they love or because of the imposition of the evils they endure. But when what they desire comes, they easily forget what they have endured, because they begin to live forever with their Redeemer, whom they sought with their whole intention. He himself is the tree of life to those who embrace him. [Proverbs 13:13] -- "He who disparages something," etc. He who disparages a good thing binds himself in the future because, by doing what he ought not to, he prepares a punishment for himself by which he may be bound. But even he who disparages an evil thing obliges himself in the future, not so that he may suffer punishment for such slander, but so that after the slander he may act more cautiously, for clearly, what he justly rebukes in others, he does not admit with impunity himself, as the Apostle shouts, "You who preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?" (Romans 2).

[Proverbs 13:13] -- "But he who fears the command," etc. It is better, therefore, for anyone to fear concerning his own weakness so that he may not transgress the divine commands, than to foolishly tear apart the errors of others with his mouth, as the Apostle says, "Even if a man be overtaken in a fault, you who are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering yourself, lest you also be tempted" (Galatians 6). [Proverbs 13:16] -- "The shrewd man does everything with counsel," etc. Where he teaches that everything should be done with counsel, he understands more the divine counsel, which is clothed with sacred words, than the human counsel. For he is foolish who lives outside this counsel, even if he seems naturally shrewd and wise. [Proverbs 13:17] -- "The messenger of the wicked falls into trouble." He refers to Arius and Sabellius, and other angels, that is, messengers of Satan, who, because they neglected the counsel of the divine Scriptures, fell into the trouble of hellish torments. "But the faithful envoy is health." That is, every Catholic preacher acquires eternal health for himself and his listeners.

[Proverbs 13:19] -- If desire is fulfilled, it delights the soul, etc. Every desire, whether good or bad, when it anticipates affection, delights the soul; but the foolish, who enjoy only carnal desires, detest those who, for the love of heavenly things, despise lower entertainments. [Proverbs 13:20] -- He who walks with the wise will be wise, etc. To walk with the wise is

to imitate the actions of the wise. Therefore, however simple and rustic one may be, who cannot comprehend the secrets of wisdom, if he nevertheless follows the examples of the wise by living, he will rightly be counted among the wise. But he who loves the foolish, not because of their nature, since they are men, but because of their foolishness, whether as mimes or actors, or such like, not to correct by instructing, but to make them worse by favoring: such a one, though he seems wise by wit and doctrine, will be held worthy of the mark and condemnation of fools.

[Proverbs 13:22] -- A good man leaves an inheritance to his children, etc. We often see good men die without children, indeed promising greater rewards from the Lord to those who have preferred the chastity of virginity to the procreation of children, yet also the substance of the just being taken by sinners. For the Apostle glories in those who received the seizure of their goods with joy. Hence, it must be understood spiritually that the good and just Lord, who, after his passion ascending into heaven, left the apostles and their successors as heirs of his doctrine, to whose faith a multitude of peoples were converted, who were the substance of the devil. For he entered the house of the same wicked adversary and, breaking him with greater strength, plundered his arms in which he trusted and distributed his spoils, as he testifies in the Gospel. Or certainly, the substance of the sinner was kept for the just when the kingdom of God was taken from the Jews and given to a nation producing its fruits.

[Proverbs 13:23] -- Many foods are in the fresh fields of the fathers, etc. He acts without proper judgment who is diligently occupied with amassing riches and does not himself dispense these accumulated riches to the poor for the redemption of his soul, but reserves them to be dispensed by others after him, as it is said in the superior verse by the letter: And the substance of the sinner is stored up for the just, especially when victuals abound for him from the right of paternal inheritance, and there is no necessity incumbent on him to gather any moneys. This is indeed what he says, Many foods are in the fresh fields of the fathers. But in the spiritual sense, there are many foods of heavenly nourishment in the sayings and examples of venerable fathers, and he acts without reason who eagerly reading, meditating, and expounding upon these, serves not his own salvation by this, but rather others, while he himself deviates from what he reads, either by evil deeds or by the impiety of heretical sense. Such a one, in the fresh fields of the fathers, that is, in the works or sayings of the fathers well cultivated by optimal institution, acquires support not for himself, but for others, those namely who reading his treatises find through them the spiritual sense, by which they are inwardly refreshed... The preceding verse was thus translated by ancient interpreters: Just men will enjoy riches for many years; but the wicked will perish quickly.

[Proverbs 13:24] -- He who spares the rod hates his son, etc. For both a good father teaches his son, and a catholic teacher instructs his disciple, lest he deflects to iniquity, solicitously.
[Proverbs 13:25] -- But the righteous eats and fills his soul, etc. The righteous receive the foods of wisdom, which are found to have sprung in the fresh fields of the fathers, that is, in the works and words of preceding just men, and they transfer these to the profit of their soul by living well. The belly of the wicked, that is, the capacity of the sense of heretics, is

insatiable; for, as the Apostle says, Ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth (II Tim. III). Why, indeed, they do not deserve to be filled with knowledge, unless it is because, not being replenished with the foods of paternal instruction, they gather these for others without judgment?

Chapter 14

[Proverbs 14:1] -- A wise woman will build her house, etc. And each faithful soul, and the universal Church throughout the world, builds her mansion in the heavenly homeland through good deeds; but the wicked, by living badly and sometimes openly resisting, dissipate what has been well ordered by the good. But why the foolish tear apart the acts of the wise is shown in the following words, as it is said: [Proverbs 14:2] -- Walking in a right path, and fearing God, etc. For religion is an abomination to sinners. It seems foolish to the unbelievers when the faithful, due to the fear of God, not only cast away fear but also deride the torments of those who kill the body. About whom it is aptly added: [Proverbs 14:3] -- In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride, etc. Because the foolish through their idle talk afflict the humble whom they despise; but the same humble in spirit fortify themselves by the doctrine of wisdom so as not to be deceived.

[Proverbs 14:4] -- Where there are no oxen, the crib is empty, etc. These are connected with the preceding. For the oxen signify catholic teachers; the crib, the listeners of the assemblies; the crops, the fruits of good works. Therefore, it is in vain that the proud swell and uneducated eloquence strikes the ears and hearts of their subjects, because where there are no learned preachers, the crowd of common people gathers in vain to hear. But where many acts of virtue appear, it is most evident that it is not a heretic who babbled in vain, but he labored for the fruit of the word, who both ruminates the word with a chaste mouth and knows to walk the path of truth with the straight foot of discretion. Nor is it to be wondered at why we said that listeners are signified in the crib, since the ox is fed from the crib, and the teacher usually nourishes the hearers with the word. But it is to be noted that the crib is filled from the labor of the ox, and the ox itself is refreshed from its own fruit from the crib, because the faithful preacher both refreshes the hearers with the word and is himself refreshed with the same nourishment by the Lord; as is figured in the work of Elijah, who is both fed by and feeds the widow of Zarephath whom he sustains.

[Proverbs 14:6] -- The mocker seeks wisdom, etc. Caiaphas, who said to the Lord, ”I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ”; because he sought badly, he did not deserve to find what he sought. But the disciples, who humbly submitted to the hearing of the truth, receiving the grace of the Spirit, not only deserved to know Christ the Son of God but also to understand the hidden things of the Scriptures. But then the doctrine of the pru-

dent was easy when Cornelius with his household and others like him, humbly hearing the word, immediately believed, and receiving the Holy Spirit, spoke in all tongues. Now also, whoever is prudent, while being catechized, easily grasps the doctrine of the catholic faith; which the heretics, because they seek perversely, never truly find at all. [Proverbs 14:7] -- Go against a foolish man, etc. Therefore the mocker does not find the wisdom he seeks because even if you openly proceed by disputing against his foolishness, he does not know how to understand what you say: like Arius, who contended that the word ”consubstantiality” between the Father and the Son could nowhere be found in the Scriptures, although it was clearly objected to him, ”I and the Father are one”; and ”the Word was God,” etc. Therefore, the doctrine of the prudent is easy because the lips of prudence with wisdom, that is, because whatever lips are governed by the moderation of prudence, they only delight in speaking and hearing wisdom, and they strive to devote themselves to its meditation with effort.

[Proverbs 14:10] -- The heart that knows the bitterness of its soul, etc. The elect have bitterness of soul as long as they are deferred from eternal joys; and the wicked, when they are afflicted by perverse desires. But the elect, because they walk in the light, foresee how their bitterness is to be changed into such great joy. But the wicked, blinded by their own will, do not see what they suffer in the present nor foresee what they will suffer in the future. Therefore, they will remain strangers to the future joys of the good because they do not know to be partakers of their present bitterness. Whence it is aptly added: [Proverbs 14:11] -- The house of the wicked will be destroyed, etc. He indeed uses a house in dwelling, but tents on a journey; thus the house of the impious will be destroyed because they lose the habitation of the present life, in which they always desired to remain, as they die reprobate, and in the exile of perpetual damnation, which they did not foresee, they will undergo. But the tents of the righteous will flourish, because their present conduct, in which they are sojourners with God and strangers, with their merits constantly increasing, will reach up to the most delightful fruition of the heavenly homeland.

[Proverbs 14:15] -- The innocent believes every word, etc. John both prohibited this innocence and taught how to have this prudence, when he said, Beloved, do not believe every spirit; but test the spirits, whether they are of God (1 John IV). [Proverbs 14:16] -- The wise man fears and departs from evil, etc. Just as it is foolish to trust in one’s own eagerness and wish to leap a fast river or a wider abyss, but wise to turn to a plain or bridge, so he who avoids sins as much as possible, fearing he may be involved in evils, is wise. But that man is foolish who sins with disdain, flattering himself that either he will repent of his actions at a later time, or if he suddenly dies, that he will bravely endure the punishments of hell. [Proverbs 14:17] -- An impatient man works folly, etc. Certainly an impatient man is reprehensible, but far worse and more hateful to God is the cunning man, although he is considered better among men. For the former openly shows his folly to all, while the latter, in his perverse heart, often feigns simplicity and righteousness, and is pleased to be called holy in human judgment, while in the divine examination he is considered among the reprobate.

[Proverbs 14:19] -- The wicked will lie down before the good, etc. In the last judgment, when the righteous are crowned, the reprobate who oppressed them in the present will be condemned. For what is said, Before, that is, before the good, and before the gates of the righteous, pertains not to proximity of place, but to the sight of the good, because they always see the torments of the wicked, so that they may endlessly give greater thanks to their Redeemer. Hence Isaiah says of them, And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me. Their worm does not die, nor is their fire quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh (Isaiah LXVI). But what he says, They shall go forth, does not denote a movement of feet, but a gaze of the eyes, which, placed within the kingdom to see the punishments of the wicked, they send out whenever they wish.

[Proverbs 14:24] -- The crown of the wise is their riches, etc. The wise do not have any earthly gain for riches, but only a crown, which they will receive for their virtues in the future. But the greatest folly of fools is that imprudent and unmindful of eternal things, they rejoice in present advantages only. Imprudence, in fact, is called improvidence. [Proverbs 14:25] -- A faithful witness delivers souls, etc. Christ, who is the faithful witness, liberates souls, as we read in the Apocalypse; and, as the Apostle says, he testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate (I Tim. VI). The devil, who rightly is called the deceitful, proclaims lies, because he pronounces the evils which he suggests to be done as good, and promises eternal joys to those whom he prepares for the torments of hell. Likewise, the catholic teacher liberates souls, who faithfully proclaims, that is, correctly preaches, the testimonies of the Scriptures, and the heretic proclaims lies, or, as in another version it is clearly translated: He stirs up deceit with lies; it is implied he deceives the souls of those whom he has led astray by his error.

[Proverbs 14:26] -- In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence, etc. The fear of the Lord provides the confidence of strength, because indeed our mind more valiantly despises the terrors of temporal things as much as it submits itself more truly to their creator through strength. The sons of the fear of the Lord are those who are governed by divine fear, just as the sons of power and the sons of resurrection, those who are zealous for virtues, or who pertain to the joys of the resurrection, who will have hope, according to that saying of the Psalmist, Those who fear the Lord, hope in the Lord (Psalm CXIII). Of which hope he consequently adds:

[Proverbs 14:27] -- The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, etc. This then is the hope of those who fear the Lord, that turning away from the ruin of death, they may merit to come to Him who says, I am the way, and the truth, and the life (John XIV). But as it is said above, The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to turn away from the ruin of death, now it is said, The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to turn away from the ruin of death. From this it is clear that there is no earlier law of the wise by which one ought to avoid death and acquire eternal life, than to have the fear of the Lord. Wherefore it is also said elsewhere, The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. In the multitude of people is the dignity of the king,

and in the paucity of people the disgrace of the prince. Where there is a multitude serving God, there especially is the glory of Christ. Where only catechumens, or those preparing for baptism, or recently born infants are still held under the kingdom of the devil, and they hasten in due time to be reborn in Christ, there is the manifest disgrace of the prince of the world. Or certainly in the conventicles of heretics, which are always fewer than the churches of Catholics, the disgrace is evident of those who have separated these from the unity of the church.

[Proverbs 14:30] -- The life of the flesh is the health of the heart, etc. By flesh, certain weak and tender things; by bones, strong deeds are signified. It is well said, The life of the flesh is the health of the heart, because if the innocence of the mind is preserved, even if some things are weak outwardly, they are sometimes strengthened. And rightly it is added, Envy is the rottenness of the bones, because through the vice of envy those things perish before the eyes of God which seem strong to human eyes. For bones to rot from envy means that even some strong things perish. [Proverbs 14:35] -- A minister of the kingdom who is understanding is acceptable. He indeed to whom it is said, Because you have been faithful over a few things, I will set you over many things; enter into the joy of your lord (Matt. XXV).

[Proverbs 14:35] -- His wrath will fall upon the useless. He indeed about whom the same says: And cast the useless servant into the outer darkness (Ibid.)

Chapter 15

[Proverbs 15:1] -- A soft answer turns away wrath, etc. He who humbly receives words of reproach already approaches pardon for the guilt he carried; but he who arrogantly resists reproach, provokes greater wrath from the strict judge. [Proverbs 15:2] -- The tongue of the wise adorns knowledge, etc. The tongue of the Catholic Fathers adorns the knowledge of divine words, by broadly explaining what the canonical Scripture has placed obscurely or has left written only in a historical manner. [Proverbs 15:2] -- And the mouth of fools pours out folly. By perversely understanding the words of sacred Scripture, and by preferring their own interpretations over its authority. It can also be understood about the philosophers of the pagans, as he says, The mouth of fools pours out folly; such as Porphyry and Julian, who spewed out their streams of folly against the doctors of the Church. [Proverbs 15:4] -- The soothing tongue is a tree of life, etc. The tongue of the Catholic teacher leads to the fruit of eternal life; but the one who ignores the measure of ecclesiastical rule, destroys both his own spirit and that of his hearers by speaking ill.

[Proverbs 15:6] -- The house of the righteous contains great treasure, etc. The house of Christ, that is, the Church, has great strength; so that rain, winds, and rivers of frequent temptations cannot demolish it. And in the works of the devil there is continuous turmoil, because he attempts to overthrow the same house of Christ through false brothers or open adversaries. [Proverbs 15:7] -- The lips of the wise spread knowledge, etc. The lips of the Catholics spread knowledge of correct faith by preaching, while the heart of heretics will be different, because it conceives betrayal as knowledge to teach. It can also be understood that the heart of the devoted will be unlike itself, showing itself inconstantly variable with different thoughts, and never remaining what it was. Against this, it is said of Anna when she prayed to the Lord with an attentive mind: And her countenance was no longer changed (1 Sam. I, 18).

[Proverbs 15:8] -- The sacrifices of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord, etc. The prayers, works, and sacrifices of heretics are abhorred by the Lord, and He accepts the vows of those who affirm the Catholic faith with righteous deeds. [Proverbs 15:10] -- The instruction of the wicked leads away from life, etc. The doctrine is evil of those who desert the path of truth; about whom the Lord says, Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven

(Matt. V). But such, if they repent their corrections, have an open return to forgiveness; but if they do not yield to ecclesiastical corrections, certain destruction remains for them. [Proverbs 15:15] -- All the days of the afflicted are evil, etc. All the time of the people of God, as long as they are poor in the present, abounds with afflictions and troubles, because they have not yet reached the riches of supreme goodness and eternal abode. Hence the Apostle advises, saying: Redeeming the time, because the days are evil (Eph. V). But indeed the reprobate, who are devoid of divine fear and securely use the world, are refreshed as fools with continual feasting. Hence it rightly adds:

[Proverbs 15:16] -- Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, etc. As it is in the psalm: Better is a little that the righteous person has than the riches of many wicked (Ps. XXXVI). It is better, therefore, to lack wealth or even daily sustenance while preserving the fear of God, than to abandon the fear of God in the desire of acquiring more. [Proverbs 15:17] -- Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, etc. Everyone who shows examples of good works to others, which they may imitate, invites them as to a feast by which they are refreshed. It is better to be invited to a dinner of herbs with love, than to a fattened calf with hatred, because certainly it is much more useful to keep the innocence of a simple life with love, than to shine outwardly with greater miracles of virtues and not purge the inner mind of the filth of hatred. Hence to certain ones saying in faith, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? And in your name cast out demons? And in your name perform many powerful works? The Lord himself will say, I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness (Matt. VII).

[Proverbs 15:19] -- The way of the sluggard is blocked with thorns. He calls those lazy who are reluctant to work righteousness, for while they desire the way of God, they are pricked by the suspicions opposed by their fears, like thorns of obstructive hedges; which, since they do not usually hinder the elect, he added, [Proverbs 15:19] -- The way of the just is without stumbling. For indeed the just, in their conduct, whatever adversity confronts them, do not stumble, because they overcome the obstacles of temporal adversity by the leap of eternal hope and inner contemplation. [Proverbs 15:23] -- A man rejoices in his mouth's sentence, etc. It is indeed human for each to rejoice in his sentence as though prudently uttered; but a true wise man carefully investigates not only the matters he speaks, but also the opportunity of place or time or person, to whom he speaks.

[Proverbs 15:24] -- The path of life is above the wise, etc. He calls the wise one perfected not only in knowledge, but also in practice. For to him indeed the paths of life from above are rightly opened; to him the gate of heaven is open. But the last hell, from which he is delivered, is the final punishment of damnation. For the first hell is the blindness of the sinning soul, and the lack of knowledge of true light, of which it is said in the Psalms, And they descend into hell alive (Ps. 54), that is, they knowingly fall into sin. [Proverbs 15:25] -- The Lord demolishes the house of the proud, etc. The Lord demolishes the gatherings of heretics and other persecutors of the Church, and establishes the boundaries of the same

Church, that is, His bride, firm throughout the whole world, for whose life He deigned to die.

[Proverbs 15:26] -- The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord, etc. The Lord abhors the thoughts of heretics, indeed all contrary to piety, and the pure word of true faith will be established by Him, when in the judgment, not only for deeds but also for all words, worthy rewards will be given. He abhorred their evil thoughts, who said, Who is this who even forgives sins? (Mark 2). And He affirmed the pure word of him who said, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt. 16:16), to be most beautiful, to whom He replied, Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona, because flesh and blood did not reveal it to you, but my Father who is in heaven (Matt. 16:17). [Proverbs 15:30] -- The light of the eyes rejoices the soul, etc. It rightly delights the human mind, when it recognizes, by the Lord's revelation, that it has perceived the light of heavenly mysteries. Which another translation more clearly says, The eye seeing good things delights the heart, certainly the good things of the Lord in the land of the living. Whoever contemplates these with the eye of the mind, rightly delights in the heart, though externally he seems to walk sadly, oppressed by an enemy. That most blessed fame, by which we have learned that not only our deeds and words, but also our thoughts are known in heaven by the reporting angels; offers the richness of love and faith to our virtues, lest they wither by failing. For the more surely we hold that the hidden things of our heart, and likewise our works, are open to divine views, the more we ought to inflame with the oil of His charity the strength of our good action, lest it grows weary.

[Proverbs 15:31] -- The ear that hears the corrections of life, etc. The disciple who obediently listens to the corrections of teachers often progresses to the very seat of honor. Finally, Paul, who humbly submitted to the correction of his Creator, subsequently reached the seat of apostolic dignity.

Chapter 16

[Proverbs 16:1] -- It is for man to prepare the soul, etc. It is certain that neither to prepare the mind, nor to govern the tongue, nor to do any good thing, we are able without divine grace; because without me, he says, you can do nothing (John XV, 5). How then is it for man to prepare the mind, and for God to govern the tongue, unless this specifically signifies in the time of persecution? about which the Lord said: But when they hand you over, do not be anxious about how or what you are to speak; for it will be given to you in that hour what you are to speak (Matthew X, 19). [Proverbs 16:2] -- All the ways of a man are open to His eyes, etc. Thus the ways, that is, the actions of all, both good and evil, the Lord sees, so that He distinguishes with a certain scale even the individual spirits, what they secretly think. Hence it is rightly added:

[Proverbs 16:3] -- Commit your works to the Lord, etc. Indeed, we reveal our works to the Lord when we remember Him in all we do, knowing that nothing is hidden from Him, and we seek His help in all things. And when we do this devoutly, it happens that not only the same works, but even our inner thoughts proceed under His direction. [Proverbs 16:4] -- The Lord has made everything for its own purpose, etc. The Lord had no other cause for creating the invisible or visible creature than His will, that He might show His goodness to the rational creature, whom He would make eternally blessed: and also the one who of his own will abandoned the good of his condition, that is, the devil and his followers, He justly condemned with severity. [Proverbs 16:5] -- Every arrogant person is an abomination to the Lord, etc. Whoever attributes to himself the good that he does, even if he appears to work nothing evil with his hands, has already lost the innocence of his heart, in which he has preferred himself to the giver of the gifts. Therefore, his Creator abhors such a one, as guilty of being ungrateful for the benefits he contemplates.

[Proverbs 16:7] -- When a man's ways please the Lord, etc. Such is the sanctity of divine religion, that often even those who are outside hold it in veneration. And those whom they perceive to serve God perfectly, they begin to have peace with, even though they differ in religion. Hence because the ways of Daniel and the three youths pleased the Lord, He also turned their enemies, who had cast them into the fire or to the beasts, to peace. Because the ways of the holy preachers pleased the Lord, He converted many of their persecutors not only to peace but also to the same unity of faith and religion. [Proverbs 16:8] -- Better

is a little with righteousness, etc. And the Lord says, Blessed are the poor, for yours is the kingdom of God (Matthew V). And again, Woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation (Luke VI). It can also be understood thus, that it is better to serve God devoutly in simple conversation, than being abundant in many virtues, for example, alms, prayers, fastings, teaching, chastity, to despise the deeds of others, and to glory as it were in one's unique sublimity.

[Proverbs 16:10] -- Divination is on the lips of the king, etc. He signifies that king, of whom it was said, God, give your judgment to the king (Psalm XVII). For who among temporal kings never errs in judgment? In whose lips is divination, because He not only directs His own words and deeds, but also controls what the soothsayers of the Gentiles, commonly called diviners, may answer to those who inquire; as evidenced by the prophet Micaiah, who testifies that a spirit was sent from the throne of the supreme judge to fill the mouths of his prophets and to arm them with the persuasion of things by which the wicked king would perish. For indeed the mouth of the Eternal King did not err in this judgment but permitted the erring prophets to speak to the impious king what he deserved to hear due to his previous sins. But also, Ezekiel says to the sinning and perishing people of the Ammonites, When you were seeing falsehood, and divining lies (Ezekiel XXI, 29). There is not the divination of demons, but the judgment of God; who put an end to perfect malice. Another translation of this verse has it more clearly of the Lord: Nothing false will come from His mouth; for He neither can be deceived by any lying, nor can He ever lie.

[Proverbs 16:11] -- A weight and balance are the judgments of the Lord, etc. He calls the stones of the age, just and strong in faith, such as the apostle Peter desired those to be whom he admonished, And you also, like living stones, are being built into spiritual houses. Therefore no one was chosen by his own virtue from the beginning of the world and fit for the heavenly building; but rather by His work, who, constituting all things by weight and measure and number, distributed to each as He willed, the measure of faith and graces. [Proverbs 16:13] -- The will of kings is just lips. He speaks of holy kings who primarily command over vices and are accustomed to be surrounded by the ranks of virtues of the soul as of obedient companions. Of whom the Lord says, Many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see and have not seen it (Matthew XIII). Otherwise, earthly kings often detest just lips, as Herod of John, for which he punished him with death.

[Proverbs 16:13] -- Whoever speaks rightly will be guided. So that, namely, with the right steps of deeds he may reach eternal life. But on the contrary, the talkative man will not be guided on the earth. Nor does this statement contradict what is said of Antiochus, And deceit in his hand will be directed. For Scripture did not say that that man, whom it foresaw to be perverse and wicked, would be directed; but it says, deceit in his hand will be directed, because indeed the frauds and crimes which he planned, without anyone hindering, he brought to the effect he intended; yet having accomplished them, he himself perished forever as he deserved. [Proverbs 16:14] -- The king's indignation is messengers of death. The messengers of death are the angels of Satan, that is, heretics and vain philosophers; indeed,

all who announce those words to their neighbors, by which they are taken away to eternal death. The more they serve the author of death, the more they gravely offend the giver of life; yet the path of repentance is not closed to such. For it is added,

[Proverbs 16:14] -- And a wise man will appease him. For he can appease God by repenting, whom he happened to offend by speaking foolishly. [Proverbs 16:15] -- In the cheerfulness of the face is the life of the king. Whoever deserves to see the cheerful face of Christ, will be given to live with Him forever. Otherwise, on the day of judgment, as it is written, Every flesh will see the salvation of God. But then the reprobate will see Him angry, the just will see Him placid. [Proverbs 16:15] -- And mercy is like the late rain. The late rain in Judea until this day is accustomed to come to the already mature crops; where the Lord also promises the early rain, saying through the prophet, I will give you the early and the latter rain for your land (Isaiah XXX). Therefore, the early rain is, or is called temporary elsewhere when we first receive the seeds of believing in Christ; but the late rain, when, taken from this life with the mature fruits of virtues, we are stored in the Lord's barn. And rightly the mercy of the king is compared to the late rain because the fruit of life which we receive by acting well is not achieved by the freedom of our will, but by the irrigation of the heavenly gift.

[Proverbs 16:20] -- Instructed in the word he will find good, etc. Not only will he who is instructed for preaching the word of the Lord find good with Him, but also he who has learned to place his hope in the Lord, even if he is not fit to preach to others, will share in the same God's blessedness. [Proverbs 16:23] -- He who is wise in heart, etc. He who keeps the wisdom of the Catholic faith, which he learned, unblemished in his heart, deservedly receives the name of prudent; but he who knows also to preach the same wisdom learnedly and to defend it against heretics will receive greater rewards for greater labor. [Proverbs 16:23] -- The fountain of life is the instruction of the possessor, etc. When he said, of the possessor, he did not add, what the possessor holds. What then do we think was meant to be understood, except perhaps the very instruction itself? so that the full meaning is: The fountain of life is the instruction of the one possessing that very instruction; which is openly said to mean that the preacher truly opens the ways of life to his listeners who practices what he preaches himself; who possesses in his steadfast heart the love of the word, by which he instructs others, and does not scatter it like seed retained only in memory, as if gathered in a bosom, on the ground. But the teaching of fools is foolishness, because even if they have learned to say some good things by the practice of instruction, they themselves, foolish at heart, despise the same good things they speak.

[Proverbs 16:24] -- A honeycomb, composed words, etc. Many can sweetly pronounce good things through eloquence to those who love and favor them, which, however, they themselves do not love nor care to do. But words proceed only from the inner sweetness of your soul, which lead to the health of your bones, that is, to the spiritual growth of your virtues. [Proverbs 16:26] -- The soul of the laborer labors for itself, etc. It is evident, according to the letter, that man expelled from paradise exercises daily labor so that he may not lack. For

he compelled his mouth, when he spoke with the serpent and touched the forbidden thing, to suffer long exile with labor and to eat bread by the sweat of his face. But also the teacher compels his mouth to labor, because he must practice the good things he says. [Proverbs 16:27] -- The wicked man digs up evil, etc. And the prophet says, They have labored to commit iniquity (Jeremiah IX). It can also specifically be understood about the heretic, who breaks up the most beautiful and flourishing fields of divine utterances with the harmful ploughshare of his tongue, to draw out from their inner parts wicked senses that are not there. In whose lips a fire burns, by which he destroys himself and his listeners forever. Hence James also says, The tongue is set among our members, defiling the whole body; and sets on fire the wheel of our birth, being set on fire by hell.

[Proverbs 16:29] -- A wicked man coaxes his friend, etc. It can also be understood about the heretic and every doer of evil. For the sinner is praised in the desires of his soul, and he who does iniquity is blessed (James I). [Proverbs 16:30] -- He who thinks evil with astonished eyes, etc. It is more grievous to accomplish evil than to do it. Not only does he accomplish evil who acts perversely and harmfully with the members of his body, but also he who with fixed intention plans to commit it. For the proud, indignant, are accustomed to bite their lips, and to have astonished eyes, and not to see the present, who for some time silently ponder with diligent mind. Hence it can be inferred that thinking evil with astonished eyes says of him who thus seeks to commit the evils that he does not see the retribution of evil deeds that follows in the future.

[Proverbs 16:32] -- Better is the patient man than the strong man, etc. It is a lesser victory to conquer cities, because they are conquered externally; but what is conquered by patience is greater, because the spirit conquers itself, and submits itself to itself, when patience brings it down in the humility of tolerance. [Proverbs 16:33] -- Lots are cast into the lap, etc. Just as lots are openly cast into the lap and kept secret in the lap, it is the divine judge's part to decide whose lot will be taken up; so the deeds of men are indeed visible to each other in the present life, but the merit of each one will become clear in the future, with the judgment of each one then brought forth and manifested, as if from the lap of divine examination.

Chapter 17

[Proverbs 17:1] -- Better is a dry morsel with joy, etc. It is better to do small good deeds with charity without the knowledge of preaching, that is, to have a dry morsel, than to shine with great virtues mixed with discord. [Proverbs 17:6] -- The crown of old men is the children of children, etc. He calls the patriarchs and prophets old men, who are celebrated with worthy praise by the children of children, that is, by the successors of the apostles; and it is a glory of the preachers of the New Testament that they have deserved to be sons of the old fathers. [Proverbs 17:8] -- A highly desirable gem is the expectation of one waiting, etc. Whoever faithfully awaits future rewards rejoices as if in the possession of a most splendid gem. For in the Gospel, the wise merchant sold all that he had for the acquisition of the precious pearl, that is, heavenly desire. Such a merchant, whether faced with adversity or prosperity, does not deviate from his intention; prudently understanding that all things work together for the good of those who love God (Rom. VIII, 28).

[Proverbs 17:11] -- The wicked always seeks conflict, etc. A cruel angel is an unclean spirit who is sent by the Lord against sinners to afflict them in the present; just as he afflicted the Egyptians to whom he sent the wrath of his indignation, indignation, and wrath, and tribulation, impositions by evil angels, or even after death to eternal destruction. But on the other hand, the Lord will send his angel around those who fear him, and he will deliver them. [Proverbs 17:12] -- It is better to meet a bear robbed of her cubs, etc. It was easier for the holy teachers to confront the fury of the pagans, having snatched some people from them and converted them from their bestial cruelty to the piety of faith by preaching, than to confront any heretic confident in the defiance of his dogma; because surely that battle was fought against outsiders, this against their own people. The bear's name can be understood as the very malice of the ancient enemy, from whom we snatch cubs when we join those who were sons of the devil to the company of the sons of God by catechizing and baptizing. And this is often accomplished with much lighter labor than if you try to call a heretic back to the right faith, or to bring a Catholic doing wrong to the state of good action.

[Proverbs 17:14] -- He who releases water, etc. To release water is to loosen the tongue into flowing speech. In a good sense, it is said, "Deep waters, words from the mouth of a man." Therefore, he who releases the waters is the beginning of quarrels, because he who does not restrain his tongue disrupts harmony. Whence it is written conversely, "He who imposes

silence on a fool mitigates wrath." [Proverbs 17:16] -- What does it profit a fool to have riches, etc.? What does it profit the people of the Jews to have the riches of the Scriptures in faith if they cannot understand Christ in them? What does it profit a heretic to abound in the same riches if he cannot learn the unity of the faith in them? What benefit does it bring to an evil and Catholic man to possess the riches of true faith if he neglects to have the wisdom of pious action?

[Proverbs 17:17] -- At all times a friend loves, etc. He who truly loves the Lord keeps His love at all times, nor does he abandon Him in the strait of suffering, whom he has confessed in the tranquility of peace. [Proverbs 17:18] -- A foolish man claps his hands, etc. He is foolish who, when receiving the soul of his brother to be governed, glories in his own deeds, and does not rather help him with humble compassion, rendering whatever help he can of saving aid. [Proverbs 17:22] -- A joyful soul makes a flourishing age, etc. He who rejoices in the inner consolation of the Holy Spirit is also adorned with the flower of good action and expects the fruits of heavenly rewards. But he who is distressed by worldly sorrow, which works death, seems to exercise the fatness of divine charity in the strength of virtues but is unable to truly have it, but rather withers as with dry bones, because he has lost the grace of love in the good deeds he does.

[Proverbs 17:24] -- In the face of the prudent, wisdom shines, etc. Indeed, in the face of the Lord Savior, the wisdom of divinity shone, which, appearing in the flesh, He demonstrated through the testimony of virtues and doctrine; but the eyes of unbelieving Jews were focused more on fulfilling earthly desires than on his salutary instructions. And in general, the prudent often prefigure the gravity of their sense even in their very countenance; yet the foolish do not lift up the eyes of their mind to admire and follow this, but contrary to that, they seek with all intention how they may reach the end of carnal pleasures. [Proverbs 17:26] -- It is not good to inflict harm on the just, etc. This can be understood of the very Prince and Judge of the ages, who willed to be struck for our salvation, and of all the rulers of the Church generally, who are either stripped of their possessions by the impious or consumed by death itself.

Chapter 18

[Proverbs 18:3] -- The impious man, when he has come into the depth of sins, despises, etc. He who, being wrapped in the long darkness of sins, despairs of the light, already out of desperation, loosens the reins for himself to sin everywhere. But such a one by no means escapes the reproach of future damnation, whom the memory of divine fear did not restrain from the practice of his iniquity. [Proverbs 18:4] -- Deep water, the words from the mouth of a man, etc. The words of the wise are compared to water because they both wash the minds of the listeners and irrigate them, lest they remain deformed by the filth of sins, or waste away through lack of heavenly doctrine, and as if perish through harmful dryness. And because in these same words of teachers, certain mystical and hidden things lie, which are comprehended by more diligent effort, while certain other things flow openly and easily to be understood by all who listen; rightly do they call these both deep water and an overflowing torrent. But it can also be distinguished in this way, that because the Scripture of the Old Testament is given typically, it is said of it, Deep water, words from the mouth of a man, because the Lord and the apostles openly revealed the mysteries of both Testaments to the world, it is added concerning them, And an overflowing torrent, a fountain of wisdom.

[Proverbs 18:9] -- He who is lazy and slack in his work, etc. Because he who does not strictly follow through with good beginnings imitates the hand of a destroyer through the laziness of negligence. [Proverbs 18:11] -- The wealth of the rich is his strong city, etc. Earthly wealth cannot always defend; indeed, many are captured or killed because of riches. Thus Ecclesiastes also says, Riches kept to the harm of their owner; for they perish in a terrible affliction. Therefore, it is better understood to praise the wealth of virtues, with which whoever abounds wards off all the plots of enemies as with an impregnable wall. [Proverbs 18:13] -- He who answers before he hears, etc. He who wants to be a teacher before he learns does not avoid the fault of foolishness. He who judges the deeds of his neighbors before he fully understands the cause of both parties hastily acts improperly, and he shows himself worthy of confusion.

[Proverbs 18:14] -- The spirit of a man sustains his weakness. And the man himself says, The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak (Matthew 26). It may also be understood of any holy man who supports the weakness of the flesh with the strength of the mind, lest he yields in temptations. [Proverbs 18:14] -- Truly, the spirit is easily moved to anger, etc.

He who is easily moved to anger cannot even sustain himself, so that when he is angry, he often says things which, when calm afterward, he regrets having said and often does not even remember having said. However, his madness is sometimes most easily endured through the moderation of the wise and is immediately quieted. [Proverbs 18:16] -- The gift of a man makes his way broad, etc. The gift of charity or other virtues which the faithful receive from the Lord broadens the way of their actions because the more they are internally filled with the grace of the Spirit, the more they abundantly multiply their steps of good works outwardly, and they attain a peak of honor among the great leaders of the Church in the future. Alternatively, the spiritual gift of the Savior, which he brought to the world, broadened his way that he might come to many nations of the world through his presence in faith and love; and he made not only the peoples, but also the rulers themselves, renounce desires and willingly obey him.

[Proverbs 18:17] -- The just man is the first to accuse himself, etc. Everyone who is truly just, when he observes the errors of sinners, first turns the eye of consideration upon himself, and while he anxiously accuses his own frailty, only then does he gently extend his tongue to rebuke others. But he who said to his faithful, 'But I have called you friends, because all that I have heard from my Father, I have made known to you' (John 15); it comes into his heart through the presence of divine contemplation, thus he perceives how the world is cleansed from the filth of iniquity, and he rewards its humility with a fitting recompense. [Proverbs 18:19] -- A brother helped by a brother, etc. When both peoples, namely Jews and Gentiles, agree in fraternal charity in Christ, they now build a united city of the Catholic Church. And just as the bars fortify the gates of cities, so the doctrines of both Testaments defend the churches around the world, which make up the one Catholic Church, from the incursion of unbelievers.

[Proverbs 18:23] -- With supplications a poor man speaks, etc. The humble in spirit humbly worship the Lord, like the publican in the Gospel; the proud boast of their merits, like the Pharisee. [Proverbs 18:24] -- A lovable man to society, etc. The believing people from the Gentiles are more loved by the Lord than the Jewish people continuing in unbelief, among whom he was born according to the flesh. It can also be understood of the apostles born from Jews, that they loved the believers from the Gentiles more than the unbelievers of their own people.

Chapter 19

[Proverbs 19:1] -- Better is the poor who walks in his simplicity, etc. Better is the simple hearer of the word of God, if he completes by working those things which he could understand in the Scriptures; than any learned person, if in those things which he has acutely understood, he twists his lips to preach heresy. [Proverbs 19:2] -- Where there is no knowledge of the soul, it is not good, etc. The knowledge of heavenly life is indeed necessary for the human soul, because without it, it surely cannot be blessed forever. But yet, those who desire to know more than what is proper with unrestrained senses of the mind, often fall into the offense of heretical foolishness through their rash pursuits, which was mystically signified in the first parents of the human race, who, in their desire for greater knowledge, hastened to touch the forbidden, deviating from the state of blessedness in which they were created, and fell into the punishment of misery and mortality.

[Proverbs 19:3] -- The foolishness of a man supplanteth his steps, etc. It is the habit of fools, that when they abandon the way of truth through sinning, they do not admit they have erred, but refer the origin of guilt to their Creator, as if He has given the opportunity for sinning, either because He made man fragile, or because He allowed a crafty enemy to tempt him. Hence also the first parent of our race, after the excess of transgression, being reproved by the Lord, instantly fled to the defense of an excuse, saying: The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate (Gen. III). And the woman said: The serpent deceived me (Ibid.). For they indeed turned against the Creator what they had sinned: he, that he had received a woman from the Lord as a companion through whom he perished; she, that the Lord had placed the serpent who deceived her in paradise. Against this the Wise Man prays to the Lord not to incline his heart to an evil word, to excuse excuses in sins. But also, he, failing his steps against God, burns with fervor in his mind, who, despising divine commands through his own inertia, even reproaches God Himself with an insane mind, as if He had imposed unbearable burdens on men.

[Proverbs 19:4] -- Riches add many friends, etc. The riches of the kingdom of heaven, which are preached to be given to the faithful by the holy doctors, gain many friends both for the preachers themselves and for the Lord, their Giver. But by the philosophers and other teachers of the Gentiles, since they know to promise nothing of certain blessedness in the future, even those whom they had are separated, namely, converted to the faith and the

most certain hope of the Lord's promise. [Proverbs 19:4] -- He who only follows words will have nothing, etc. And the Apostle says: For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law will be justified (Rom. II). [Proverbs 19:5] -- A false witness will not go unpunished, etc. He reproved him who only followed words of knowledge without the efficacy of operation; now he reproves him who corrupts the very words of divine authority by misinterpretation. But that many things are often repeated indicates firmness, as Joseph interpreting the dream of the king said: Because the word of God is established, and it will be done quickly (Gen. . . .).

[Proverbs 19:7] -- Delight does not befit a fool, etc. Delight in the Scriptures does not befit a heretic, because he does not know how to use them well; nor does it befit him who is still proven to be a servant of sin to be preferred to the just in the governance of the Church. [Proverbs 19:11] -- The doctrine of a man is known through patience. The perfection of ecclesiastical doctrine is shown through the patience of the teachers, for while they preferred to submit their bodies to afflictions and death rather than cease from the duty of teaching, they certainly showed how salutary it was, which they cared to defend with such great persistence. Otherwise, The doctrine of a man is known through patience, because anyone is shown to be less learned as he is convicted of being less patient. For he cannot truly impart good teaching if he does not know how to endure the evils of others with equanimity in living. Indeed, it is rightly added:

[Proverbs 19:11] -- "And his glory passes away unjustly." For certainly it is characteristic of a perfect teacher to bear the wickedness of others patiently, while also skillfully preventing his own frailty from committing unjust actions. For neither does the purity of one's own conduct suffice without the endurance of external disturbances, nor does one strongly endure external adversities if he is inwardly weakened by wicked habits.

[Proverbs 19:12] -- "As the roaring of a lion, so is the anger of a king," etc. It speaks of God the King, who in judgment is both cheerful and gentle to the just, but will appear terrible to the unjust. "A foolish son is a father's grief. God, who is always impassible and placid in His nature, is nevertheless said to grieve in our manner when He sees that men, whom He created to believe in and praise Him, rather serve a malignant enemy than Himself. Hence Moses also says of Him, "He repented that He had made man on earth. And being inwardly touched with sorrow of heart, He said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth" (Gen 6:7). "And a contentious woman is like a continuous dripping. Just as roofs that continuously drip indeed receive rain from heaven, yet do not distribute it for any useful purpose, but rather cause annoyance to those living below; so too, indeed, the Church of heretics, improperly interpreting and arguing against Catholics, receives gifts of heavenly words, not for the salvation of souls, but for the misuse of its wickedness. For dripping roofs indeed receive pure drops of rain, but render those beneath them filthy, and a heretic, though he hears the purest words of the heavenly oracle with his body, yet when he touches these with a defiled heart, he administers them mingled with filth to his audience. "Laziness induces sleep.

He is called lazy, who, though correctly perceiving, is almost awake, yet is slothful by doing nothing. But laziness induces sleep, because even the vigilance of correct perception is lost for a while, whenever one ceases from the pursuit of good deeds. And rightly it is added: "And a loose soul shall hunger. For since it does not direct itself by striving towards higher things, it expands downward through neglect towards desires. And while it is not constrained by the vigor of diligent study, it is wounded by the craving for the lowest desires, so that by rejecting restraint through discipline, it scatters itself in hunger through the desires of pleasures.

[Proverbs 19:17] -- "He who has mercy on the poor lends to the Lord," etc. The Lord himself proves the truth of this statement, when he predicts that he will say to those who give alms: "Insofar as you did it to one of these least of my brethren, you did it to me" (Matt. XXV). "Discipline your son, lest you despair; but do not set your heart on putting him to death." Be diligent in chastising any subject whom you see erring. But if he refuses correction, act towards him with such caution and temperance that he may find nothing in your words or actions wherewith he might sin more. The following also supports this sense: [Proverbs 19:18] -- "He who is patient will sustain loss," etc. For if provoked by the hardness of the opposing brother, whom you began to teach, you fall into the vice of impatience, you indeed incur the loss of your own virtue. And when by scolding him too harshly, you snatch away the hope of obtaining salvation and fulfilling repentance that he had, you will give an account for having scandalized your brother to the strict judge. The sense of the text is clear, because he who by impatience serves the theft of poverty or robbery, causes harm to his own soul, and when he takes the property of his neighbor; and if not to man through this, surely he will have to give an account to the eternal judge. Hence another version has translated this verse as: A man thinking evil will be afflicted with much loss; and if he is pernicious, he will also add his soul, because evidently, when he violently takes away money, he will unwillingly give his life for it.

[Proverbs 19:22] -- A needy man is merciful. He calls the needy humble, who continually remembers that he is in need of eternal goods. Such a one, so that he may obtain mercy from the Lord, never refuses to show mercy to his neighbor. About whom he subsequently adds: [Proverbs 19:22] -- And a poor man is better than a lying man. Indeed, better is the humble in heart, who trusts nothing in his own works, than he who, by the excellence of virtues, considering himself worthy of the name of man, is deceived; unaware that while he transfers the glory of God to himself, by pride he loses the goods he has done. [Proverbs 19:24] -- The slothful man hides his hand under his armpit, etc. No one is so slothful that he considers it labor to bring his hand to his mouth while eating. But for the slothful, it is labor to bring the hand to the mouth, for a lazy preacher does not even want to do what he says. To bring hand to mouth, indeed, means to align actions with words. A false witness mocks judgment, namely, that which is said, "You shall not bear false witness." Or certainly the future judgment, of which it is said above, "A false witness shall not be unpunished; and he who speaks lies shall perish; and the mouth of the wicked devours iniquity." As a hungry

man desires to be filled with food, so the wicked eagerly seek to be satisfied with the excuse of iniquity.

[Proverbs 19:29] -- Judgments are prepared for scoffers, etc. Even if the reprobates, as has been said before, mock the divine judgment of either command or threat, nonetheless, the judgments of damnation prepared for them await, which, like a hammer on glowing iron, will strike them endlessly in the furnace of Gehenna.

Chapter 20

[Proverbs 20:4] -- Because of the cold, the sluggard would not plough, etc. He who now neglects to labor in the service of God due to sloth will beg in the coming day of the kingdom, and it will not be given to him, because whatever a man sows, that also shall he reap. Therefore, it is rightly compared to the kingdom of God, because then the clouds of our sorrow pass away, and the days of life shine with the brightness of the eternal sun, and the fruit of labor is received in joy. [Proverbs 20:7] -- The just man who walks in his simplicity, etc. This cannot always stand according to the letter. For even the blessed Samuel, a just and simple man, left unlike sons behind him; and Ahaz, an unjust and reprobate king, left a blessed son Hezekiah after him. But the sons of the just are those who follow the examples of the just. Hence, all the elect are now called sons of Abraham because of faith, as the Apostle says: If you are of Christ, then you are the seed of Abraham. To whom blessedness is promised not of this age, but of the future. Therefore, it is rightly added:

[Proverbs 20:8] -- The king who sits on the throne of judgment, etc. For although the elect suffer evil in this life from the reprobates, when the day of universal judgment appears, all evils will be dissipated; and the unjust will alone undergo punishment, while the just will be crowned with the Lord. This even now is partially done, when any of the saints departs as a victor from this world, and the persecutor who troubled him receives punishment worthy of his deeds. This verse can also be understood of the elect, who sometimes have hidden evils in their minds that cannot be seen by other men, but the Lord Himself sees them when with the secret gaze of grace He destroys them, as testified by him who said: The Lord turned and looked at Peter, and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, etc. (Luke 22).

[Proverbs 20:9] -- Who can say, My heart is clean, I am pure from sin? It should be noted that He does not say, Who can have a clean heart and be pure from sin? But He says, Who can say, My heart is clean, I am pure from sin? Because there are those who, by the grace of God, can have according to human measure the purity of heart and work. Hence the Lord's saying, Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God (Matthew 5); and in the psalm: Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord, or who shall stand in His holy place? He that has clean hands and a pure heart (Psalm 23). For if no one has a clean heart, and there is none pure from sin, it would certainly follow that no one would ascend the mountain of the Lord, nor would any man stand in His holy place. But because it is certain that many

will ascend the mountain of the Lord, and will stand in His holy place, therefore many must have a clean heart, and according to the measure of human possibility, be pure from sin. Yet no one should rashly declare himself clean of heart and free from sin. For the boasting of one's own praise is foolish; it is rash to glory in one's own innocence or justice. And because there are those who tend to praise their own deeds as excellent and criticize the deeds of others as vile, it is rightly added:

[Proverbs 20:10] -- Diverse weights, diverse measures, etc. For a man with diverse weights in his house has different measures, that is he measures differently for himself and for his neighbor, who always seeks in his own deeds what can be praised, but in others' deeds what can be blamed. And therefore the Lord rightly abhors such a person, because as much as he unjustly pleases himself, he justly displeases the supreme observer. But because it is perilous for anyone to judge another's conscience, of which he cannot know the intention, he advises by what signs we ought to direct the judgment of our own heart towards our neighbor. For it follows:

[Proverbs 20:11] -- Even by his pursuits, a youth is known, etc. For whomsoever you see striving for virtues, modesty, continence, listening to the wise, and observing the commandments of God, especially humility and simplicity, know that his works are pure and right. But whomsoever you find taking a contrary course, recognize him as a man of an impure and crooked heart, and either correct and chastise him or if you cannot, avoid and shun him, lest you yourself be corrupted by him. It should not seem contrary that here the diligent youth is testified to have pure and right works, but above he said: Who can say, My heart is clean, I am pure from sin? For in this verse, he advises diligence in living rightly; in that, he dissuades from presumption of one's purity; in this, he teaches that purity and rectitude should be held as much as possible in this life; in that, he warns that the subtlety of divine examination, by which the deeds and intentions of men are judged, should always be kept in mind. Therefore, the ancient interpreters also translated that place in this way: When the just king sits on the throne of judgment, who will boast of having a pure heart? Or who will boast of being clean from sin? They also rendered the verse we are explaining more clearly, saying: A young man who is with the just will have a straight path. He who walks with the wise will be wise. Conversely, a friend of fools will become like them.

[Proverbs 20:12] -- He speaks of the hearing ear as the obedient listener of the word: the seeing eye as the learned teacher. Let no one who sees himself as trained in the knowledge of Scriptures and deemed fit to speak the word of God despise the simplicity of a brother who, though less learned in preaching, is no less eager to learn or to fulfill the good things he has learned. Let him recall that the One who gave him a greater grace of knowledge also bestowed the spiritual gifts upon the brother. And He grants the gifts, not solely on his account, but also for the benefit of the brother, giving each grace according to the measure of His donation. [Proverbs 20:13] -- Do not love sleep, etc. Do not love the sleep of sin and slothfulness, about which the Apostle says, "It is high time to awake out of sleep" (Rom. XIII); lest, if you do not wish to be vigilant now, you be overtaken by that dire poverty in

the future where you cannot find even a single drop of water when thirsty. Open the eyes of your heart to holy vigils, and seek the satisfaction of heavenly joys by living well.

[Proverbs 20:14] -- It is bad, it is bad, says every buyer, etc. Therefore, he who desires to obtain eternal rewards in the heavens must endure what is bad in the present, so that when he departs from the world, he may then glory; clearly perceiving that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that will be revealed in us. [Proverbs 20:15] -- Gold and a multitude of gems, etc. This is the boast of the wise buyer, who, as long as he buys, says that what happens to him is bad: but when someone has hurt or offended the saints of God, and has not refrained from treating them like a vile servant according to his own pleasure, he will rejoice that he has wisely made his purchase. Likewise, the buyer of the heavenly kingdom will rejoice when he departs from here, finding that the lips of knowledge, that is, of spiritual doctrine, used in the acquiring of heavenly things, are to be compared to gold, gems, and precious vessels.

[Proverbs 20:17] -- Sweet is the bread of falsehood to a man, etc. In whichever member one has sinned more, in that member he will suffer greater torment in retribution. Therefore, rightly, he who has sinned more with his tongue is said to burn more in it, as his mouth is to be filled with a burning stone, which is known to have happened to the rich man who feasted splendidly daily, as he, burning in hell, asked for his tongue to be cooled by Lazarus. For he who had erred in idle words and feasting burned more in his tongue. [Proverbs 20:19] -- And he who reveals mysteries, etc. If anyone wishes to join your circle of friends and you see him revealing the secrets of a former friend, beware of him as a traitor. [Proverbs 20:21] -- An inheritance obtained hastily in the beginning, etc. Those who seek to be multiplied in this life through the wickedness of avarice will be disinherited in the future from eternal patrimony. Alternatively: An inheritance obtained hastily in the beginning will lack a blessing in the end. He who takes up a position of leadership before learning to be subordinate takes it in an improper order; in the end, he will lack the reward of blessing that is owed to good rulers. He who rashly and unlearnedly approaches the ministry of the altar will also lose the grace of the reward, which is promised to those who minister well, in the last day. It can also be understood this way, that he who seeks to avenge his own injuries here will lack the crown of patience in the future. This sense seems to fit especially with the following statement: Do not say, I will repay evil, etc. Which is also strengthened by the following verse, which says:

[Proverbs 20:23] -- It is an abomination to the Lord to have diverse weights, etc. For having diverse weights and a deceitful scale in one's heart means that while seeking pardon from the Lord for one's own sins, one is unwilling to forgive a man who has sinned against and repented toward oneself. He who is God strives to be moved to compassion by prayers; although he, being human, cannot be moved to mercy by any human prayers, that he may rightfully be abhorred by the Lord as an unjust weigher, since his injuries are measured as graver than those of the Lord: for example, he who does not wish to forgive one who has defiled his wife and asks to be forgiven himself, although he may have defiled a virgin

espoused to Christ; or certainly, may have defiled his soul consecrated to God in baptism with some filth of vice.

[Proverbs 20:24] -- The steps of a man are directed by the Lord. Whosoever among men walks the right path, this is not done by the liberty of human will, but by the governance of Him to whom Isaiah says, For you have worked all our works in us (Isaiah...). [Proverbs 20:24] -- Who among men can understand his way? In this, he says, it is manifestly clear that whatever good anyone has, he does not have it from himself, but by the grace of God, which neither by his own free will can he understand what he will be, nor how or how long he will live. [Proverbs 20:25] -- It is ruin for a man to devour the holy, etc. Since it is a sin to harm any man, how much more so when it is he who has sinned? How forty men in the Acts of the Apostles vowed that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul; and pagans often, as we read, devoted the blood of Christians to their gods. This verse the ancient edition set in another sense, saying: It is a snare for a man to dedicate something quickly of his own; afterwards, when he has made a vow, he repents. And because to both those who, to complete their vows, persecute the holy, eternal damnation remains, it is rightly added:

[Proverbs 20:26] -- A wise king scatters the wicked, etc. It was the custom of the ancients, when victory was achieved over an enemy, to erect arches for themselves in which they described the praises of their virtues, as we read in the work of Saul. Therefore, our Lord the King not only destroys the malice of the wicked, but also perpetually celebrates the great glory of the same triumph with His elect. Another translation has this verse thus: A wise king winnows the wicked, and will bring upon them the wheel of evils, that is, a punishment to be consumed with no end. To which wheel namely is contrary the crown of eternal life, which God has promised to those who love Him. [Proverbs 20:27] -- The lamp of the Lord is the spirit of man, etc. The illumination of the divine breath, when it has come into the mind of man, illuminating it to itself, shows it was bearing perverse thoughts before the coming of the Holy Spirit, and it did not know how to weigh them.

[Proverbs 20:29] -- The exultation of young men is their strength, etc. He calls gray hair wisdom. Then indeed the cities of each are well-ordered, then the affairs of the holy Church are rightly conducted, when the stronger men apply themselves to the necessary works with their powers: and the elders, endowed with greater prudence, wisely advise on what is to be done. [Proverbs 20:30] -- The blueness of a wound cleanses away evil, etc. For when we are struck outwardly, we are silently and afflictedly recalled to the memory of our sins. And through what we suffer outwardly, we grieve more inwardly for what we have done; thus it happens that among the open wounds of the body, the secret wound of the belly cleanses us more, because it heals the wickedness of a depraved work, the hidden wound of sorrow. For indeed the belly is often taken to mean the mind, because just as the belly consumes food, thus the mind by pondering digests cares.

Chapter 21

[Proverbs 21:1] -- Just as the divisions of the waters, etc. Why does he declare that the heart of the king, and not rather of all men, is in the hand of God, when it is written, "For in his hand are all the ends of the earth" (Psalm 94), unless perhaps he calls any holy person a king, who knows how to conquer the wars of vices within himself, to uproot the bushes of malice? For just as the Lord fills the ends of the earth far and wide with various divisions of waters, and also covers the heights of the heavens with waters; so he inclines the heart of the king wherever he wills, because just as he bestows the divisions of graces according to his will, both to angels and to men, so also he makes the hearts of the saints worthy of gifts wherever he wills. Nor does the Pelagianist have any place where someone can be saved without the grace of God.

[Proverbs 21:8] -- The perverse way of a man is foreign, etc. To live justly before the Lord is proper to the human condition. Hence elsewhere it is said, "Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiasticus 12). But he who lives perversely, indeed walks a path foreign to human nature. Therefore, perverse action is foreign and against nature. But he who is pure in work rightly carries out what he originally received by nature. [Proverbs 21:9] -- It is better to sit in a corner of the housetop, etc. It is so true that it is better to sit in the corner of the housetop, that is, in the secret height of a more continent life, than with a wicked woman in a house, which you share with her, so that even if the best woman is offered to you for marriage, it is better to lead a celibate life for the sake of the companionship of the Lamb, having despised marriage.

[Proverbs 21:13] -- He who stops his ear to the cry of the poor, etc. This sentence should be taken generally, and not only for the needy or physically infirm: for even he who, in the face of others' crimes, prefers to hold the judgment of a judge rather than to sympathize with the affection of mercy, shows himself not yet purified from the filth of vices, nor worthy to exist in the hearing of divine compassion. A hidden gift extinguishes anger, etc. He who desires to appease the anger of the strict judge, which he has earned by sinning, should give alms to the poor, and this without any delight in human favor, but solely out of love for the Creator, who looks upon the hidden things of the heart. For thus the hidden gift is made, thus it benefits to mitigate the wrath of the Creator, if it is given without any expectation of

external reward. Thus is fulfilled what he himself commanded: ”But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing” (Matthew 6:3).

[Proverbs 21:15] -- It is a joy to the just to do judgment, etc. The just man rejoices when he labors with good works, because he hopes to be rewarded with eternal good for these. But the reprobate, while they do evil things which they know God has forbidden, though they may carnally delight in the perpetration of their lust, cannot be free from the internal fear of the mind, because they do not doubt that they will suffer evil eternally for those things they have done temporally. [Proverbs 21:16] -- The man who strays from the way of doctrine, etc. He says that the giants are unclean spirits, about which the blessed Job says, ”Behold, the giants groan beneath the waters, and those who dwell with them” (Job 26:5), that is, proud and malevolent strong spirits of demons, together with the men whom they have deceived, tormented by inflicted punishments. For to this company will be joined those who have strayed from the way of truth, with the judge himself attesting, who predicted that he would say to them: ”Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41).

[Proverbs 21:18] -- The impious is given in place of the just, etc. The just and the upright seem to be the same; but there is a difference between the impious and the iniquitous, for all the iniquitous are reprobates; the impious, however, are those who, entangled in greater crimes, either never received the holy mysteries of the faith, or, after receiving them, returned to apostasy. Hence, in this place, the impious can be understood to mean all the persecutors of the faithful; furthermore, under the term iniquitous, all the wicked are generally designated. And the impious is given in place of the just, when the persecutor who gave him to death is punished for the martyr. The iniquitous in place of the upright, who, seeing their just life, did not wish to imitate them. Herod is condemned not only for the innocent whom he wickedly delivered to death; but also received the sentence of condemnation because he did not want to follow the faith of the Magi to seek the Lord, although he was among the Jews and knew the words of the prophets. Hence indeed the Lord says: ”The queen of the south will rise in judgment with this generation and condemn it, etc.” (Matthew 12:42). Not that she herself by her virtue and power will condemn, but because, by comparison with her, they will be condemned, who, knowing her devotion, when they could much more easily, neglected to have concern for wisdom.

[Proverbs 21:20] -- A desirable treasure, and oil in the dwelling of the just, etc. The cheerfulness of good works, always lovable to God; and the fatness of love shines in the church of the saints. This verse the blessed Pope Gregory in his Homilies on the Gospel placed according to the ancient translation: ”A desirable treasure will rest in the mouth of the wise.” But the reprobates not only do not attain virtues but also persecute, and as much as they can, hasten to overthrow the good. This verse can certainly be understood about any martyr, in whose dwelling, that is, body, the holy soul, namely the treasure of God, is kept, and the anointing of spiritual grace abounds. But the imprudent persecutor can break such a dwelling; but he cannot touch the treasure and the oil that was held in the dwelling. Hence

the Lord teaches not to fear those who kill the body, and after these things have nothing more they can do (Luke 12:4).

[Proverbs 21:22] -- The wise man ascends the city of the mighty, etc. The city of the mighty, he calls the world, which once, subjected to the tyranny of evil spirits, foolishly served, having confidence in the worship of those who are not gods, but the works of human hands (Psalm 115). This city was entered by the one born in the flesh, who is the power of God, and the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24). He destroyed through his preachers the worship of the gods, in whom they had trusted, ignorant of the truth, and taught that confidence should be placed in heavenly things, which could never be destroyed. But every day the wise man ascends the city of the mighty, and destroys the strength of its confidence, when any faithful teacher refutes the arguments of philosophers or heretics, or even the obstinate contradictions of carnal brothers, by which they strive to defend and alleviate their crimes, by the assertion of faith and the discipline of ecclesiastical correction, and, laying bare, annuls them.

[Proverbs 21:28] -- The false witness will perish, etc. He who testifies that he serves God, but does not follow through with deeds, will perish. But he who faithfully, as he promises, submits to divine commands, his speech reaches victory, because while he strives through obedience to conquer his desires, he later receives the palm of victory through the justice of the judge. [Proverbs 21:29] -- The impious man insolently stiffens his face, etc. Judas, because he was impious in heart, although reproved by the Lord himself, did not wish to restrain his evil beginnings; but Peter, because he was upright in heart, that is, a lover of uprightness, corrected himself at once with repentance when the Lord looked at him, having erred by denying. [Proverbs 21:30] -- There is no wisdom, no prudence, etc. Whatever the heretics counsel and think is nothing, and vain and useless. [Proverbs 21:31] -- The horse is prepared for the day of battle, etc. Indeed, it is man's duty to prepare a soul devoted to God in times of persecution, to offer the body to danger; but it is of divine assistance that to the effort of labor, the victory of the contest, and salvation succeed.

Chapter 22

[Proverbs 22:1] -- A good name is better, etc. He speaks of a good name, not one praised by the masses of the ignorant, but praised by the testimony of the faithful, even if few. For he did not shun having a good name, but sought to be praised only by the good, who says: If I were still pleasing men, I would not be a servant of Christ (Galatians I). Therefore, a good name is the name of religion, which is rightly preferred to worldly riches; for even if one were to gain the whole world, he would rightly despise it, only so that his name might be written in heaven, and his memory fixed eternally both among angels and among holy men. [Proverbs 22:1] -- Better than silver and gold is good grace. He signifies that grace when one is praised by the good for his good work, and indeed, for the conferred gifts of merit, the Father who is in heaven is glorified.

[Proverbs 22:2] -- The rich and the poor meet together, etc. Do not despise the rich because of their wealth and honors, nor the poor because of their poverty, but revere in each the merit that is the work of God, for they are made in the image and likeness of God. [Proverbs 22:3] -- The prudent sees danger and hides himself, etc. Many of the leaders believed in the Lord, but because of the Pharisees, they did not confess, so as not to be expelled from the synagogue: for they were prudent, seeing the danger of impending persecution, and they hid the faith of piety which they had briefly conceived. However, the innocent apostles continued on the straight path of profession which they had begun and were afflicted by scourging, chains, prison, and even sentenced to death. The example of both groups is followed even now by many, both in the struggle of faith and in common acts. Ancient translators rendered this verse more clearly but in a different sense: The wise seeing the wicked punished, learns much discipline; fools, however, passing by, are afflicted by loss.

[Proverbs 22:4] -- The reward of humility is the fear of the Lord, etc. By humility, he means the steadfastness of good works; by the fear of the Lord, he means that fear which remains forever. Since indeed the perfection of virtues is to ascend to this state of mind, by which we greatly fear to offend the grace of the Creator even in the slightest: preferring nothing at all to His memory, which elsewhere is called charity, casting out perfect fear (1 John IV), namely servile and beginning fear, by which anyone fears lest by sinning, he may deserve to be subjected to punishments. What he adds, Riches, and glory, and life, he signifies in the future. Therefore, the reward of humility is the fear of the Lord, riches, and glory, and life:

since indeed the perfection of virtues in this life is to fear the Lord with holy fear, that is, to worship Him with sincere love. The reward of virtues in the future is to receive from the Lord the riches of the promised inheritance of the heavenly kingdom, glory, and life without end. Hence Peter says: Whom having not seen, you love; in whom, though now you see him not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls (1 Peter III).

[Proverbs 22:5] -- Swords and arrows in the way of the perverse, etc. This is to be understood in two ways, because the perverse are always armed to harm their neighbors, either by word or wicked deed, and they themselves are always awaited by the prepared retribution of the divine judgment. But he who seeks to save his soul for eternity, far avoids such swords and arrows, for he restrains his mind and hand from harming his neighbors, and lest he be struck by the punishment of the strict judge, he cautiously avoids it with an attentive mind. [Proverbs 22:6] -- It is a proverb, Train up a child in the way he should go, etc. It is evident that many change from the vices they had as youths in old age, by the gift of the Lord, and conversely, some, by the Lord deserting them, abandon the virtues they seemed to have displayed in their youth. But because much more often each one is accustomed to follow the habits with which he was imbued from youth into the remaining time of his life, he says there is a proverb, because what anyone takes up in youth, he will not change in old age. However, he does not always confirm that it happens this way. Therefore, he posits this kind of proverb to persuade his listeners to pursue virtues from early age, lest perhaps in old age they are unable to learn pursuits which they despised to embrace in tender age. For 'What is once imbued in fresh clay will long preserve its scent,' and Greek history tells that Alexander, the most powerful king, ruler of the world, could not refrain in his manners and conduct from the vices with which he had been infected when he was still a boy by his tutor Leonidas.

[Proverbs 22:7] -- "A rich man rules over the poor," etc. It is clear according to the letter; but also the rich in virtues in the judgment of the secret inspector rule over those who lack the riches of virtues, indeed they are future judges of them. And whoever receives the word of salutary teaching from a teacher, is a servant of the same teacher, that is, a debtor to fulfill all that he [the teacher] rightfully commands by the authority of heavenly teachings. [Proverbs 22:8] -- "He who sows iniquity," etc. It is certain that he who teaches iniquity either by word or example, will receive vengeance; but because it follows, "And the rod of his anger will be finished," he seems to be speaking particularly of that iniquity which is perpetrated with a harsh and impious mind, such as practicing robbery, oppressing men with servitude, tearing them apart with tortures, killing them by death, taking a widow's ox as a pledge, refusing to avenge her from an adversary when possible. For such a one, by right, the rod of his anger will be finished; because, as the Lord says, "All who take the sword will perish by the sword" (Matt. XXVI, 52), that is, those who unjustly rage against others, procure their own destruction by the same cruelty. But since he spoke of the wicked, he follows contrarily of the pious:

[Proverbs 22:9] -- ”He who is kind-hearted will be blessed,” etc. This is similar to that of the same judge, who discerning the merciful from the impious, says: ”Come, blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food,” and so forth (Matt. XXV, 34, 35). But the bread given to the poor can be understood not only as carnal nourishment, but also spiritual doctrine, by which the soul is refreshed. [Proverbs 22:10] -- ”Drive out the scoffer, and strife will go out,” etc. Drive out the heretic whom you cannot correct from the Church; and when you take away his freedom to preach, you contribute to the peace of the Catholic Church. [Proverbs 22:11] -- ”He who loves purity of heart,” etc. He who rightly preaches with a pure heart will be numbered among those, about whom the prophet says to the same King and Creator of the ages: ”But to me, your friends, O God, are greatly honored” (Ps. CXXXVIII). For if anyone shows the grace of lips by preaching rightly, but neglects to keep the purity of heart, such a one is by no means to be considered able to enjoy the friendship of the eternal king.

[Proverbs 22:12] -- ”The eyes of the Lord keep knowledge,” etc. The divine inspection always keeps in the Church the knowledge of the truth which it taught; the words of heretics, indeed all speech contrary to piety and justice, because it is not preserved by the ruling Lord, is subverted along with its author. [Proverbs 22:13] -- ”The sluggard says: There is a lion outside,” etc. Often in his spirit, the one who is lazy in doing good works, timid in confessing the faith he holds in his heart, says: I dare not profess the faith I hold outside, lest the impious persecutor, hearing that I am faithful, should kill me. I fear to proceed in public to exercise acts of virtue, lest perhaps the adversity of the ancient enemy may tempt me more grievously; or also any perverse man with his crowd may mock me, confuse me with insults, afflict me with injuries; or consume me with tortures and death, as with many just ones, who disagree with his life. ”There is a lion outside,” he says, ”I shall be killed in the midst of the streets.” Which is to say openly. Both words and deeds of virtues, where they begin to be shown outside, are immediately accompanied by persecution either of men or of unclean spirits. And I am not able to resist the temptations, but in them, I am overcome in the undertakings of a good intention.

[Proverbs 22:14] -- ”A deep pit is the mouth of a strange woman,” etc. He who willingly embraces the words or kisses of a harlot, as if he already knocks at the door of the infernal pit, will soon be drowned if he does not withdraw his foot cautiously, if he does not restrain his other members from vices of the penal pit, into which no one falls unless he is a son of wrath. [Proverbs 22:15] -- ”Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child,” etc. We know many children endowed with wisdom; for Jeremiah undertook the ministry of prophecy as a child. And Daniel writes, ”Because God gave to the children abstaining knowledge and discipline in every word and wisdom” (Dan. II). Wherefore, it remains to understand that by children in this place he means not by age, but by sense, the little ones; such as the Apostle forbade the Corinthians to be, to whom he said: ”Do not be children in understanding; but in malice be children” (I Cor. XIV). For such children, that is, souls dedicated to foolishness, or to licentiousness, or to sloth, it is necessary that they be disciplined by youthful correction and guided by the vigor of the wise to the right path of life.

[Proverbs 22:16] -- He who oppresses the poor, etc. It is evident that the rapacious, those who take from the poor and also those who seem to justly possess what they have, lose everything equally, when, in the examination of the strict judge, they receive punishment for the things they have done. But even those who slander their brother, poor in spirit, by detracting from his virtues, in order to increase the wealth they desire, that is, the glory of human praise, appearing holier by his reproach; rightfully such a slanderer loses whatever good action he seemed to possess and will remain void of the fruit of virtues in the end. This is the furthest point reached by the title of the Proverbs of Solomon, set above; from which it is proven he assumed a new manner of speaking so that what he says appears not as if teaching someone else but as if reasoning alone with himself. Indeed, the first verse of these Proverbs is, A wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish son is a grief to his mother. This is the last verse to which we have explained down to here. From here, he returns to the previous manner of speaking to address a specific person to whom he gives instruction; which so begins, Incline your ear, etc. He sets a most beautiful beginning of the new speech, so that one whom he teaches, he bids to incline his ear to listen and his heart to understand what wise men say.

[Proverbs 22:18] -- Which will be beautiful to you when you keep it in your belly, etc. Often, the doctrine of wisdom seems harsh and undesirable to the foolish; but when one has perceived its power in the innermost heart, and learned to keep it with works, and also to share it with brothers by word, they will find this doctrine more beautiful than the others. [Proverbs 22:20] -- Behold, I have described it to you in three ways, etc. He delineated his doctrine to the listener in three ways: thinking, speaking, and executing it in works. With this threefold description, the whole little book shines richly if considered well. [Proverbs 22:22] -- Do not do violence to the poor, etc. It can be understood of any poor or needy person, of whom it is said: To you the poor man is left, you will be a helper to the orphan (Ps. XIX). Indeed, because it follows, And He will pierce those who have pierced his soul, it is better understood of Him who, though He was rich, became poor for us (2 Cor. VIII); nor only to become poor, to enrich us, but also to be crucified to redeem us. Wisdom thus forbids its listeners to bring violence and death to the Lord preaching in the flesh because undoubtedly certain destruction awaits those who did not fear to lay hands on the author of life.

[Proverbs 22:24] -- Do not be friends with an irascible man, etc. And although this can generally be taken of any irascible or raging person, yet nothing hinders from understanding it of those who raged with mad minds against the Saviour and His disciples; from whose friendship and company all believing in Him, caring for their salvation, were banned, so that also being neighbors to the wicked they themselves would not perish; which is proven to be possible in Judas Iscariot's case. Generally, it is said that, just as perfect men should not avoid perverse neighbors, because they often bring them to righteousness and are never drawn to perversity; so, those who are weak should avoid depraved society, lest the evil they often see and cannot correct they be tempted to imitate. [Proverbs 22:26] -- Do not be with those who bind their hands, etc. Do not be with those who, though free and keeping themselves available to themselves, bind themselves in the care of the salvation of the wicked,

promising to render an account to the Lord for their souls. If he for whom you stood surety does not have good works to make you free and secure of your surety, what good is it to you to be judged for his soul on the day of judgment and to lose the habit of righteousness with which you seemed to be clothed? Hence also the Lord: The harvest indeed is plentiful, but the laborers are few (Matt. IX).

[Proverbs 22:28] -- Do not remove the ancient landmarks, etc. Do not transgress the boundaries of faith established by the Catholic teachers from the beginning. [Proverbs 22:29] -- Do you see a man quick in his work, etc. Whomever you see quick in his work, that is, in his good work, which was his duty to do, diligent and attentive, know that he will stand in the presence of the apostles in the day of the last examination, who will sit with Christ to judge the world, because he kept their commands and avoided the error of the ignoble doctors, that is, he will not be placed at the left hand of the judge.

Chapter 23

[Proverbs 23:1] -- When you sit down to eat with a ruler, etc. All things are said through allegory: When you sit down to read with a teacher, to be refreshed by the bread of the word, diligently understand what is written, and maintain the discernment of sacred reading in your speech, if, however, you are such a one and so learned that you have in your power your soul, and not as an unlearned one in the mind of your teaching. For he placed the throat for speech, because the voice is in the throat; the knife, for discernment, as we prepare food with a cutting knife when we are refreshed. And sitting to eat, he places a knife to his throat, when he who diligently meditates on divine words brings forth discerning words from his mouth, and does not often revolve words on his tongue other than those of the heavenly oracle. This, however, is done by him who has his soul in his power, that is, who has learned to maintain the state of a wise mind unshaken among the errors of the deceivers. Hence he rightly adds:

[Proverbs 23:3] -- Do not desire his delicacies, etc. Which is to say openly, do not desire to listen to the words of him who is accustomed to deceive his listeners with the sweetness of false doctrines. [Proverbs 23:4] -- Do not labor to be rich. He signifies the riches of knowledge, which we are forbidden to seek beyond the measure of our capacity. [Proverbs 23:4] -- But set bounds for your wisdom. Namely that which is said above: Do not transgress ancient boundaries, which your fathers have set; that is, the boundaries of faith given by the fathers. [Proverbs 23:5] -- Do not lift your eyes to riches, etc. Do not lift your mind to search the secrets of divinity, which you cannot penetrate. For these are open only to the heavenly citizens. [Proverbs 23:6] -- Do not eat with an envious man, etc. Do not speak of Scriptures with a heretic, because he envies human salvation, preferring to deceive rather than correct; for just as a soothsayer and dream interpreter considers things he does not know, so a heretic presumes to interpret in the Scriptures as he pleases, things he does not understand.

[Proverbs 23:7] -- Eat and drink, he will say to you, etc. He says, Learn securely and do what I teach, while he himself does not have certain faith in what he teaches, knowing he has invented from his heart what he would teach. [Proverbs 23:8] -- The food you have eaten you will vomit, etc. The perverse thoughts you had learned from heretics, you must either abandon by correction through repentance, or after death be compelled to suffer punishment

for them, and lose the words of confession, by which, while they preached, you thought you should humbly favor them. [Proverbs 23:9] -- Do not speak in the ears of fools, etc. This is similar to that of the Gospel, Do not give what is holy to dogs, nor cast your pearls before swine, etc. (Matthew 7:6). Just as he previously admonished not to listen to the doctrines of heretics, so now he urges not to insert the secrets of truth into impure men, seduced by the love of vain glory.

[Proverbs 23:10] -- Do not touch the boundaries of the little ones, etc. He calls the Lord the near one of the little ones and orphans because, while in the flesh, he deigned to be a companion in faith more to the poor than the rich. Otherwise, the same Lord is of all, rich to all who call upon him. However, by the name of orphans and little ones, those can be fittingly designated about whom the Lord said: See that you do not despise one of these little ones who believe in me. For I say to you that their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven (Matthew 18). Whoever touches their fields and boundaries, that is, who harms their good conversation by disturbing them, will not evade the judgment of the Lord. [Proverbs 23:17] -- Do not let your heart envy sinners, etc. If throughout the whole day, that is, the whole time you dwell in the light of this world, you strive both to avoid the examples of sinners and to fear the Lord, you will have the hope of blessed reward at the last, that is, when you reach the end of this life, with him also attesting, who said: Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life (Revelation 2).

[Proverbs 23:20] -- Do not be among winebibbers, etc. For to bring meats to be eaten, is in conversation of derogation, to repeatedly mention the vices of neighbors, about whose punishment it is immediately added: [Proverbs 23:30] -- For those who tarry long over wine and go to seek mixed wine, etc. Symbol is a Greek name, and it means conference. There is a conference of words, as is usual in councils; there is also one of money or other things, as the present place teaches. Therefore, those who tarry long over wine indulge in speaking about the disgrace of another's life. But to offer a potluck is like contributing words in a conversation of slander, just as everyone usually provides food for a meal. But those who indulge in drinks and give potlucks will be consumed, because, as it is written: Every slanderer will be uprooted. [Proverbs 23:21] -- And dressed in rags will be the sluggard. For his death will find him despicable and devoid of all good works, as his languor occupied him here in seeking the crimes of another's life through slander.

[Proverbs 23:25] -- Let your father and mother rejoice, etc. Let God the Father rejoice over your righteousness; let the Church, your mother, also rejoice; and let the priest who regenerated you through the grace of baptism, and who educated you from childhood, rejoice in your good works. [Proverbs 23:29] -- Woe to whom? Woe to whose father? He asks, while disputing, for what crimes of men the greatest punishment from the Lord is reserved. And he himself responds through reasoning, that without any doubt, it is to those who, through drunkenness, fall into excess. To whom, he says, is woe? To whose father is woe? Woe is named as eternal destruction. About which the Lord says: Woe to the one through whom scandal comes (Matt. XVIII). And this father of whom is woe imminent, he either names

the man from whom someone receives the example of wicked deeds to sin externally, or certainly the devil, who pours the poison of pestilent suggestion into the heart internally. About whom it was said to the Jews: You are of your father the devil, and you wish to do your father's desires (John VIII).

[Proverbs 23:29] -- To whom quarreling? To whom a pitfall? Quarreling, because he who is rendered impotent of senses by drunkenness cannot maintain the harmony of peace; a pitfall, because he who cannot distinguish between good and bad, as if captivated in mind, does not tremble in falling into the mire of vices everywhere. And the drunkard often falls into that pitfall; about which it was premised: For a deep pit is the harlot; and a narrow well, the alien. [Proverbs 23:29] -- To whom wounds without cause? etc. Wounds without cause, because many, filled beyond measure with wine, have received wounds in their limbs out of fear, which they have endured for no cause; weakening of the eyes, because the immoderate drink of wine produces darkness to many physical sights and blindness of inner senses. [Proverbs 23:30] -- Is it not to those who linger over wine? etc. He does not forbid drinking wine for need, but lingering in wine beyond time and usefulness, and competing to empty each other's chalices; according to Isaiah: Woe to you who are mighty to drink wine, and valiant men in mixing strong drink (Isaiah V).

[Proverbs 23:33] -- Your eyes will see strange women, etc. It is a customary and almost natural vice to follow feminine lust after the poison of drunkenness spreads in the heart, accompanied by wickedness and foulness of words. [Proverbs 23:34] -- And you will be like one sleeping in the midst of the sea, etc. He sleeps in the midst of the sea, who, placed in the temptations of this world, neglects to foresee the movements of impending vices, as if neglecting the impending heaps of waves, and like a sleeping helmsman loses the rudder, when the mind, to govern the ship of the body, loses its diligence. [Proverbs 23:35] -- And you will say, They struck me, but I was not hurt, etc. The voice of one beaten and sleeping is expressed. The mind, indeed, sleeping from the care of diligence, is struck and does not hurt, because just as it does not foresee impending evils, so it also does not recognize what it has committed. It is dragged and does not feel, because it is led by the allurements of vices, and yet does not awaken to its own guard. It indeed wishes to wake up, to find wines again, because although it is pressed from its own guard by the sleep of stupefaction, it nevertheless strives to wake up to the cares of the world, so that it is always intoxicated with pleasures. And while it sleeps for that in which it should have vigilantly watched, it seeks to watch for that for which it could have laudably slept.

Chapter 24

[Proverbs 24:1] -- Do not emulate evil men, etc. Do not desire to imitate those whom you see entangled in the vices I have mentioned, but rather strive to devote yourself to wisdom. [Proverbs 24:4] -- In doctrine, the storehouses will be filled, etc. The storehouses are the hearts of the righteous, which will be filled with the gifts of virtues only by the doctrine of wisdom. [Proverbs 24:5] -- A wise man is strong, etc. Not everyone who is strong and wise, but everyone who is wise is to be called strong, because even if he is weak in body, if wisdom is present, he conquers all struggles of his adversary, that is, of the devil. [Proverbs 24:7] -- Wisdom is high for a fool, etc. A fool cannot attain wisdom. For it is high from him who lies in the depths of vices; who even if he thinks he has some knowledge now, at the gate of the city, that is, at the exit of this life, he will find that he knew nothing.

[Proverbs 24:8] -- He who thinks to do evil, shall be called a fool. Do not think that he whom you see to be dull and slow-witted should be considered a fool, he clearly shows that he should be called a fool who even consents to the suggestions of sin in thought, even if he seems sharp in intellect; but not him who, although he appears dull in sense, resolved to obey the commands of God, which he could learn. [Proverbs 24:10] -- If you despair, being wearied in the day of distress, etc. Nothing is more detestable than despair, which those who have, lose the constancy of fortitude both in the general labors of this life and, which harms most, in the fight of faith. [Proverbs 24:11] -- Deliver those who are being led to death, etc. It can be taken mystically. Deliver those who are deceived by heretics, by preaching the correct faith, by showing the examples of good works, liberate those who are being led to destruction by living evilly with Catholics. But also, if you see those fallen or about to fall in the struggle of persecution, strive to restore them to life with diligent exhortation; if you see those perishing from hunger, if you see those freezing, refresh them by giving food and clothing.

[Proverbs 24:13] -- Eat, my son, honey, for it is good, etc. It is very clear why he compares the doctrine of wisdom to honey and the honeycomb, because certainly, as the former surpasses foods, so the latter surpasses other teachings in sweetness. But there is a difference in the significance of each, because the honey, which is ready to eat, implies the moral surface of the letter; but the honeycomb, in which honey is expressed from the wax, figuratively denotes the allegorical speech, where, with the veil of the letter removed, the sense of spir-

itual sweetness is perceived with some labor or delay. [Proverbs 24:15] -- Do not lie in wait, nor seek impiety in the house of the just, etc. Do not seek any occasion by which you might slander a just man. For if he falls, he quickly removes his foot, so that he may be free from the vice that is not repeated in deed. But the wicked fall in such a way that they do not rise again, as he subsequently adds, saying:

[Proverbs 24:16] -- For the just man falls seven times, etc. But how is he called just, who is remembered to fall, that is, to sin? unless he speaks of the slight and daily sins, without which none of the just could exist in this life? For certainly through ignorance, through forgetfulness, through thought, through speech, through surprise, through necessity, through the frailty of the flesh, each day, either unwillingly or willingly, we frequently incur guilt. And yet the righteous rises again, evidently because he is righteous, nor does the fall of human frailty prejudice his righteousness. Hence, well, when speaking of the fall of the righteous, he did not add "into evil," because although it is evil that they fall, they are nevertheless not able to remain in evil, by promptly rising again they procure [their recovery]. But on the contrary it is said of the reprobates: "But the impious will fall into evil," because evidently the impious, when they fall, or worse, when they sin grievously, as Scripture says, that is, when they commit capital crimes, they so delight in their fall that they scorn to rise again by repenting.

[Proverbs 24:17] -- When your enemy falls, do not rejoice, etc. Earlier he forbade laying snares for the righteous; now, to perfect himself in all things, he also forbids insulting enemies when they sin or incur some adversity, lest perchance, if by the mercy of the Lord they return to repentance and the salvation of their souls and begin to have faithful friendship with you, you would then blush because you once despised those whom divine grace had reserved for life. But, as much as you can, commiserate with those who have fallen, and help them to rise again; and if your wish and endeavor follow through with success, you will rejoice over the one healed whom you had mourned for being ill; otherwise, however, you will not lack the fruit of your goodwill with God. Or certainly it should be said thus: Do not rejoice over the fall of your enemy, lest perhaps the Lord, casting down your pride, which undoubtedly displeases him, humiliates you by making you fall into sin while your enemy, repenting, gets healed.

[Proverbs 24:21] -- Fear the Lord, my son, and the king. Rightly as he himself said, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's" (Matt. 22). Neither is there any obstacle in the Lord and king to understand the Father and the Son being designated, who are to be worshipped with one and the same honor of divinity. For he who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him (John 5). And do not join with the detractors. Meaning those who, claiming to know God the Father, refused to receive the Son of God appearing in the flesh. [Proverbs 24:22] -- For suddenly their destruction will rise up, etc. He speaks of both the detractor and the one who, favoring him, was mixed up with him; the slanderers of Christ the leaders, and those

deceived by them the people; the tearers of the faith the heresiarchs, and their listeners the auditors.

[Proverbs 24:23] -- These things also to the wise. It is understood, are unknown, when each of the reprobates is suddenly snatched from the world by destruction. Or these things also are to be observed by the wise, which I have taught, not to be mingled with the detractors; because by this particular vice almost the whole human race is endangered. Hence, wishing to remedy this same vice, blessed Father Augustine had these verses inscribed on his table: Whoever loves to slander the life of an absent person with words, let him know that he is unworthy of this table. This verse is more clearly stated in the ancient edition: I say this to you who understand wisdom, for it can not incongruously be the principle of the following sentences. [Proverbs 24:23] -- To recognize a person in judgment is not good. He taught above to fear the king, and now forbids recognizing a person in judgment. Whence it is understood that subjects ought to render the debt of temporal obedience to princes, so that never out of respect for their reverence or fear they deviate from the path of truth.

[Proverbs 24:26] -- He will kiss the lips, etc. The kiss is a sign of peace and love. Therefore, he who answers correctly will kiss the lips, because whoever follows the words of justice alone, neglecting the acceptance of persons, though he may seem harsh and severe to the unwise, will yet find many prudent people with whom he has peace; many who embrace his sayings with love. Often, too, he will receive as friends and companions those whom he had endured as opponents to his right assertions, but who are afterwards converted to better things. [Proverbs 24:27] -- Prepare your work outside, etc. What is it to diligently cultivate the field with prepared labor, except to root out the thorns of iniquities and perfect our action for the fruit of retribution? And what is it to return to building the house after cultivating the field, if not that we often learn from good works how much purity of life we ought to establish in thought? For he builds well the house of the mind, who first clears the field of the body of the thorns of vices, lest, if the thorns of desires advance in the field of the flesh, the whole structure of virtues inside be destroyed as the famine of good increases.

[Proverbs 24:28] -- Do not be a witness without cause against your neighbor, etc. This also pertains to the cultivation of our field, that is, to the pursuit of good action, namely, not to harm an innocent neighbor with false testimony, not to give any sinner the confidence of sinning further by flattery; not to return evil for evil; for in this way, when you have first well composed outward actions, you will then reach to the cultivation of the purity of the inner man as well, and, as after the exercise of the field, you will begin to adorn and establish the habitation of the mind with pious thoughts. Because the reprobate neglect to do this, it is rightly added: I passed by the field of the lazy man, etc. To pass by the field and vineyard of the lazy and foolish is to see the life of any negligent person, which nettles or thorns fill, because in the heart of the negligent sprout itching earthly desires and the stings of vices. As it is written: Every slothful person is in desires. And the stone wall in the vineyard or field of the fool is broken down, when the beginnings of the defenses of

virtues, deceived either by the wickedness of evil men or by the clever persuasion of unclean spirits, any negligent person loses.

Chapter 25

[Proverbs 25:1] -- These are also the parables of Solomon, etc. Hence, he begins to speak in a new order, not as before, as if he were addressing the listener, but rather he himself, discussing what the reason of truth contains. In which, however, anyone reading or hearing may very clearly discern what to seek, or what to avoid. These parables are said to have been translated by the men of Hezekiah, because perhaps until his time they were scattered among many, as they were once received from the mouth of the wisest king; but by his diligence collected into one, they were inserted into the body of this little book. It is indeed to be noted that in these parables much more is said allegorically than in the others, by comparison of things which seem to be fitting to figures.

[Proverbs 25:2] -- The glory of the Lord, to conceal the word, etc. The glory of the Lord is more to show himself in the flesh of his humanity than in his divinity to the eyes of mortals, and to confess himself rather through the miracles of his works and mystical words, than through open assertions, the Word, that is, the Son of God. Hence, much more often in the Gospel he was accustomed to call himself the Son of Man rather than the Son of God. And the glory of his faithful disciples is to diligently investigate his word; by which, even when he does not say it openly, he mystically signifies God. Such as that, I and the Father are one (John X), and other such things. Finally, concealing the eternity of the word, and pretending the weakness of the flesh, he said: Who do men say that the Son of Man is (Matt. XVI)? To which the excellent of kings, having investigated his word, which he had often heard before, replied: You are the Christ, the Son of the living God (ibid.). Nor did he gain little glory from this investigation; for he immediately heard: Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona, and the rest (ibid.).

[Proverbs 25:3] -- Heaven above, and earth below, etc. Just as the height of heaven and the depth of the earth cannot be comprehended by men, so the knowledge of the prophets and apostles, who, by the Spirit revealing, knew the secrets of divinity, transcends the capacity of our frailty. [Proverbs 25:4] -- Remove the dross from the silver, etc. Remove the surface of the letter from the sacred word, and you will find the purest meaning hidden by the subtlety of the letter, and spiritual mysteries were concealed under the figures of carnal ceremonies. [Proverbs 25:5] -- Remove the impiety from the face of the king, etc. Remove the impiety of persecuting Christians from the mind of Saul, or of any other zealots of the law, and when

they begin to preach Christ, the justice of their doctrine will be established, which impiety previously drove to their ruin, as long as, opposing the justice of God, they strove to put their own first. Again, remove the impiety from the face of the king, and his throne will be established in justice. For those who rule over the people, if they want their throne to be firm, must always show faces full of cheerfulness and grace, lest, becoming more rigid through arrogance, they fall into the murmuring of the people.

[Proverbs 25:6] -- Do not appear glorious before the king, etc. He had previously warned the leader, now the subordinate: for, as he said there, Let him show cheerful faces to his subjects, so now he advises that he should not appear arrogant in the presence of the greater, but rather, placed in a moderate position, he should deserve to be called higher. Which is similar to that of the Lord: When you are invited to a wedding, do not sit in the first place, and so on (Luke XIV). We can understand, however, that the Lord is signified in the king and prince, in whose presence it is always necessary for us to be humble, as the apostle Peter advises, who says: Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in the time of visitation (1 Pet. V). [Proverbs 25:8] -- What your eyes have seen, do not quickly bring forth in a quarrel, etc. And in the Gospel, the Lord: If your brother sins against you, go and rebuke him between you and him alone, etc. (Matt. XVIII)

[Proverbs 25:11] -- Golden apples in silver settings, etc. The sacred words are most rightly compared to silver settings; settings, namely, because they provide rest for the souls of the listeners; silver, however, because they shine splendidly with the virtues of the fathers. Where it is written: The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth (Psalm XI). To the adornment of the readers, he adds golden apples, whoever explains and demonstrates these divine words, full of spiritual senses and mysteries. These senses are aptly called apples because they arise from the tree of life, that is, the wisdom of God. Aptly golden apples, because they infuse the mind with the knowledge and love of eternal clarity. Therefore, golden apples in silver dishes, he who speaks a word in due season, because whoever knows how to preach the word of God opportunely according to the capacity of the hearers, sometimes repeats the examples and sayings of the fathers, through whose guardianship eternal rest is reached, according to the letter; at other times, he reveals the sweeter fruits of spiritual senses in these, by which he satisfies the pious desires of the hearers, having removed the veil of the letter.

[Proverbs 25:12] -- A golden earring and a shining pearl, etc. Rightly, the humble listener is compared to a golden earring, because while he willingly lends his ear to the reproving and teaching, he already prepares himself to receive the clarity of heavenly wisdom, he already approaches the vision of the divine light. Rightly, the learned master is compared to a shining pearl, because while he shows the reform of morals, while he reveals the knowledge of the divine to the desiring and piously seeking souls, he adds a greater and more pleasing splendor of the burning gem to the golden ornament. [Proverbs 25:13] -- As the cold of snow in the day of harvest, etc. It seems altogether inopportune to snow in the time of harvest. For we read below: As snow in summer and rain in harvest, so is honor unseemly

for a fool. But nevertheless, in the very hot regions of Palestine, it is quite delightful to the reapers if, suddenly, cold, as it is wont to come with snow, arrives; which would somewhat cool the burning of the sun, wipe away the sweat of the laborers, and temper the burning breaths. To this cold, the faithful legate is rightly compared, because by acting prudently, he soothes the mind of him who sent him. Mystically, however, the faithful legate is the catholic teacher; and he who sends him, the Lord. Moreover, the day of harvest in heat is the time of preaching amid the furies of persecutors, about which it is said: The harvest indeed is plentiful (Matthew IX).

[Proverbs 25:13] -- The cold of snow in the harvest, etc. There is some quiet for those who preach from the persecution of the resisters. It is therefore rightly said, As the cold of snow in the day of harvest, so is the faithful legate to him who sent him; he makes his soul to rest. Because as it is desirable for the preachers of the word when they receive some refreshment from the rage of the infidels, nor is the ability to teach denied, so it is known to be pleasing to the Lord who sent them to preach, when they faithfully fulfill the commission received from him even amid the adversities of those who oppose. Finally, as Luke recounts, when the disciples returned from the office of preaching, exulting in the Holy Spirit, he gave thanks to the Father, saying: I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, etc. (Luke X).

[Proverbs 25:14] -- Clouds and wind, etc. This seems similar to what was said earlier, Do not beguile anyone with your lips. But that verse specifically contains this, that you do not promise to take a person in and then deceive by not fulfilling it; this verse, however, can both contain this, and that which the Apostle says, Having a form of godliness, but denying its power (II Timothy III). [Proverbs 25:15] -- By patience, a ruler shall be pacified, etc. Although you have offended the Lord by sinning, yet you can merit his clemency if you bear adversities imposed on you for your sins with patience, and with humble satisfaction render the hardness of your former stubbornness. [Proverbs 25:16] -- Have you found honey? Eat so much as is sufficient for you, etc. You have found the sweetness of heavenly understanding, which is ministered to you by the office of spiritual fathers, as the labor of most prudent bees. See therefore that you do not desire to know more than what is fitting to know, lest while you seek to understand the highest things beyond your strength, you lose even what you understood well. This verse can also be typically understood in what is aptly subjected in the following:

[Proverbs 25:17] -- Withdraw your foot from your neighbor's house, etc. Although you find the conversation or visitation of any neighbor sweeter than honey, it is better, nevertheless, that by coming less often, you make him always love your coming, than that you either stay with him too long at one time or come to him so often that he gets tired of seeing you and seeks that you do not return. [Proverbs 25:19] -- A rotten tooth and a stumbling foot, etc. And Jeremiah says: Cursed is the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm (Jeremiah XIII). He is rightly compared to a rotten tooth and a weary foot, because he who does not know that the unique good of man is to cling to God and put his hope in the Lord his God; this man can neither receive the food of life, nor reach the abode of desired salvation.

And such a person loses his cloak in the day of cold, because even if he seems to be clothed with the habit of religion in the serenity of the present life, yet when the strictness of the just judge threatens, he will appear naked in every way from the ornament of justice, and unworthy of the company of those of whom it is written: Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

[Proverbs 25:20] -- Vinegar upon niter, etc. Niter took its name from the province of Nitria, where it is especially accustomed to be produced; nor does it differ much from the appearance of ammoniac salt. For just as salt is made on the seashore by the heat of the sun, hardening the sea waters into rock, which the greater force of the winds or the heat of the sea itself hurls further onto the shore, so in Nitria, where the prolonged rains of summer soak the land, there is so much heat of the star, which coagulates the very rain waters through the breadth of the sands into a stone very similar to salt or ice in appearance, but having neither any cold rigor nor salty taste. Yet according to the nature of salt, it is accustomed to harden in the heat and to flow and liquefy in cloudy weather. The inhabitants take and keep this, and where it is needed, they use it for washing. Hence the prophet says to sinning Judah, "Though you wash yourself with lye, and use much soap, yet your iniquity is marked before me," says the Lord God (Jer. II). It fizzes in water like living glass, and it itself dissolves, but it makes the water suitable for washing. Solomon, seeing its nature and to whom it is aptly figured, says, "Like vinegar upon lye, so is he who sings songs to a heavy heart." For if vinegar is put into lye, it immediately bubbles up, and a perverse mind, when rebuked through chastisement, or persuaded to good by the sweetness of preaching, becomes worse through correction; and from that correction, incited to the iniquity of murmuring, it should have been restrained from iniquity.

[Proverbs 25:21] -- "If your enemy is hungry, feed him," etc. This can be understood both of physical food and spiritual nourishment. [Proverbs 25:22] -- "For you will heap coals of fire on his head," etc. It does not speak of the burning of punishments; for wisdom would not teach that you should minister good to an enemy for the cause of his destruction; but the coals upon his head signify the ardor of charity in his heart. For sometimes, an enemy, overcome by frequent benefits, with the rigor of hatred softened, receives in his mind the warmth of charity, and turns from an enemy into a friend, and begins to reclaim the one whom he unjustly hated. [Proverbs 25:23] -- "The north wind drives away rain," etc. If you listen with a cheerful face to a slanderer, you give him fuel for slandering; but if you listen with a gloomy face, as a certain man said, he will learn not willingly to say what he has learned is not willingly heard.

[Proverbs 25:24] -- "It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop," etc. A housetop is a high and secret place. For what in Greek is called doma, in Latin is called a roof. Accordingly, in the Acts of the Apostles, where it is written that Peter went up to the upper parts to pray, in Greek it is written doma for the upper parts. Therefore, it is better to remain in the height of virtues, free from the bonds of a wife, and the secret desires of this world, than to be afflicted by the daily insults of a wicked woman through the use of carnal pleasure.

[Proverbs 25:25] -- ”Like cold water to a thirsty soul,” etc. The Psalmist says: ”As the deer longs for the water brooks, so my soul longs for you,” and so forth (Psalm XLI). Therefore, cold water which quenches the thirst of the ardent, and the messenger who brings any new and unexpected joys from afar, is likened to it, because the sweetness of the divine vision consoles the soul long desiring, and renders it free from the heat of present tribulations; and angels daily come from a far country, that is, descending from the heavenly homeland into the world, and either strengthen the righteous in temptations with the hope of heavenly things, or lead the righteous through temptations to the palm of eternal reward.

[Proverbs 25:26] -- ”A muddied spring, and a corrupt fountain,” etc. The mouth and tongue of the just are the spring and fountain of life, which meditates wisdom and speaks judgment. And if it happens that this is overcome by the devil and brought to a fall, then rightly it is called a muddied spring trodden down by the adversary, and a corrupt fountain. For it often happens that those who shone with greater knowledge, in the end, wishing to be wiser than is allowed to human frailty, fall into the pit of folly. Hence it is added, [Proverbs 25:27] -- ”As he who eats much honey,” etc. For the sweetness of honey, if more than is necessary is consumed, where the mouth delights, from there the life of the eater is harmed. Sweet also is the inquiry of majesty; but he who seeks this more than the recognition of humanity allows, that same glory of it crushes him, because like honey taken immoderately, while it is not comprehended, it breaks the sense of the one investigating. However, not only should every wise person take heed not to seek things higher than themself, and not to examine things more powerful than their capacity, but also not to render to themselves things which could rightly and usefully be known, less useful by immoderate speech. Hence it is aptly added:

[Proverbs 25:28] -- ”As a city broken down and without walls,” etc. For if it does not have the wall of silence, the city of the mind lies open to the darts of the enemy. And as it casts itself outside through words, it exposes itself openly to the adversary; which he overcomes without effort, as much as the one who is conquered fights against herself through much talking.

Chapter 26

[Proverbs 26:1] -- Just as snow in summer, etc. This verse warns that the teaching honor should not be conferred on the unlearned. Snow in summer and rain in harvest represent the persecutions of the unbelievers at the time of the preaching of the gospel, which, when they perhaps more heavily pursue, impede the warmth of love in many and spoil the fruits of good work. Glory given to a fool is rightly compared to harvest because if the unlearned is given the chair of teaching, the church is equally harmed by the persecution of the unbelievers, which the disaster of the Arian tempest has proved to be very true.

[Proverbs 26:2] -- For as a bird flying to lofty places, etc. Words are rightly compared to birds because they fly through the air sounding, from the mouth of the speaker to the ears of the listener; but they differ in this, that it can happen that a bird flying anywhere settles where no necessity or use is served to it. However, the words we speak do not disappear and vanish dispersed anywhere into the wind, but all return to their author, and either benefit the speaker if spoken well or burden them if spoken poorly, so that we are forced to account for every idle word on the day of judgment. How much more do curses oppress not only those maliciously aimed at the innocent but even those indiscriminately uttered by negligent customary practice against anyone. For indeed, the revilers will not inherit the kingdom of God (I Cor. VI). Not without reason does he say, a curse uttered in vain, for there is also a curse not uttered in vain, but released in just wrath of divine strictness against the impious; as that of blessed Peter against Simon Magus, Your money perish with you (Acts VIII); and those pronounced against apostates and heretics by ecclesiastical censure, anathema [anathemas]; about which the Lord says to the same Church, Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven (Matt. XVI, and XVIII).

[Proverbs 26:4] -- Do not answer a fool according to his foolishness, etc. Answer a fool according to his foolishness, lest he be wise in his own eyes. These should not be seen as mutually contradictory, not to answer a fool according to his foolishness, and to answer a fool according to his foolishness: for both correspond according to the diversity of times and persons, while the fool is also disregarded because he does not receive wisdom, and foolish pride is checked by another kind of foolishness, just as the Apostle also says, I have become a fool, you compelled me (II Cor. XII). [Proverbs 26:7] -- Lame in his feet and drinking iniquity, etc. It may happen that any wise person sends a fool on a mission, not knowing that he is a fool;

yet he does not lose the glory of his wisdom, since he believed in the good from the unknown, which he had heard. But he who knowingly sends a heretic to preach to the people is lame in his feet and drinks iniquity, because he has lost both the outward walk of good work and the inner sense, being drunk on foolishness.

[Proverbs 26:8] -- As he who casts a stone into the heap of Mercury, etc. He who grants the honor of teaching to the foolish, that is, to the heretic, sins no less than he who worships the gods and idols of the pagans in vain. [Proverbs 26:9] -- As if a thorn should spring forth in the hand of a drunkard, etc. A thorn springs forth in the hand of a drunkard when, in his works, who serves carnal seductions, the pricks of sins arise. To these rightly is compared a parable which the foolish propose, for although the foolish may know how to utter wise words, they do not know how to avoid the pricks of sins by which they either lacerate themselves or their neighbor. For often indeed, the imprudent one, in saying good things, either secretly seeks his own praise from men or the censure of others.

[Proverbs 26:11] -- As a dog returns to his vomit, etc. When a dog vomits, he surely ejects the food that was weighing down his chest; but when he returns to his vomit, he is again burdened by what had relieved him; and those who lament their sins, surely confess and cast out the wickedness which was badly satisfying them and which was weighing down the innermost parts of their mind, which, after confession, they resume while they long for it. [Proverbs 26:12] -- Have you seen a man who thinks he is wise in his own eyes, etc. The Lord explaining this, says: For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind (John IX). [Proverbs 26:13] -- The sluggard says, A lion is in the way, etc. Many, when they hear words of exhortation, blame the devil, saying that they indeed wish to begin the path of righteousness, but are hindered by Satan so that they might not accomplish it; and thus, with such words of excuse, they always turn on the hinge of their own sloth like a door; proposing now to go out to work and now to return to rest, they never cease to lie in their own perversities.

[Proverbs 26:16] -- The sluggard thinks himself wiser, etc. He speaks of seven men delivering sentences, who, full of the sevenfold grace of the Spirit, have ministered to us the knowledge of holy Scripture. The fool thinks himself wiser than these because, often, some so turn aside their minds from performing what the Lord has commanded that they argue that not even all these things can be done or ought to be fulfilled by man. And as if wiser than those who have written the divine words, they claim that man cannot do what those, dictated by the Holy Spirit, have commanded man to do; indeed also what many men have been shown to have accomplished with the help of the grace of the same Spirit. [Proverbs 26:17] -- As he who takes a dog by the ears, etc. The Apostle says, Do not strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers (II Tim. II). Therefore, whoever is simple-minded, and if the ear of one of the two who are quarreling is captured by his biting word, he quickly begins to bark like a dog and generate contentions; but the wise man avoids this altogether.

[Proverbs 26:22] -- The words of a whisperer are as simple, etc. He calls the whisperer an instigator of strife and double-tongued, who pretends to praise words and seeks to hear that from which he can sow discord.

Chapter 27

[Proverbs 27:1] -- Do not boast about tomorrow, etc. Do not ever be secure about the future, because even if you see yourself serving the Lord today, you cannot at all foresee what you might become in the future or how you may end your life. For blessed is the man who is always fearful (Prov. XXVIII). [Proverbs 27:3] -- The stone is heavy, etc. It is indeed quite grievous for anyone to be weighed down by even a single capital crime, as if by the weight of a stone, or to be burdened by countless lighter sins, like pebbles or sand; but the anger of a fool is heavier than both, because these sins, once revealed as certainly evil as they are, more sharply prick the soul to chastise. Truly, because it is not a physical but a spiritual vice, the less it is perceived, the more it weighs down. Hence, he does not simply say anger, but the anger of a fool, is heavier than stone and sand. For the wise endeavor to examine and discipline their mental impulses as diligently as their actions and words.

[Proverbs 27:4] -- Anger holds no mercy, etc. This is not said of all anger, for of a most mild and modest man it is written that he went out from Pharaoh in great anger (Exod. X). But he speaks of the anger of a fool, which he mentioned in the preceding verse, which loses the bowels of compassion once it has flared up, only knowing to loosen its reins in its own fury. Otherwise, useful and necessary anger is meant, Better is anger than laughter (Eccli. VII), because by the sadness of the countenance, the mind of the delinquent is corrected. [Proverbs 27:5] -- Better is open rebuke, etc. Hidden love in this place is called improper love, such as adulterous love, which due to its shamefulness is rightfully hidden from the wise to avoid reproach; to which rightfully open rebuke is preferred, as it is undoubtedly better to rebuke someone openly with the intent of correction than to sin secretly out of a shared intent.

[Proverbs 27:6] -- Better are the wounds of a friend, etc. It is better to endure wounds and affliction from the Lord, who as a father instructs us as children, than to be deceived by the flattery of the devil, who, to deprive us of our heavenly inheritance, is accustomed to favor our errors, as if what we do is a light evil, and the tribulation we endure beyond the measure of our sins is inflicted by the Lord's discretion. [Proverbs 27:7] -- The soul sated will trample upon the honeycomb, etc. The soul of the rich, who have their consolation and are told by the Lord, Woe to you who are full, for you shall hunger (Luke VI), spurns the sweetness of the heavenly kingdom when preached; but the soul of those who hunger and thirst for

justice finds it sweet to endure even the adversities of the world for the Lord, indeed to suffer death itself, knowing that through the cup of bitterness they will come to the joys of eternal salvation.

[Proverbs 27:8] -- Like a bird flying away from its nest, etc. Just as a bird that neglects the eggs or chicks it was fostering and leaves them to be taken by other birds or animals, so indeed he who abandons the protection of the virtues in which he was progressing becomes a betrayer to the same virtues he seemed to possess, surrendering them to unclean spirits. Hence elsewhere it says: If the spirit of the ruler rises against you, do not leave your place. Which is clearly to say, If the temptation of the prince of this world, that is, the devil, presses upon you, be careful not to abandon the good work in which you were laboring. [Proverbs 27:10] -- Better is a neighbor close by, etc. It is better for you to have a neighbor who binds your soul with fraternal association than a brother who neglects to share common rights of faith and piety with you. The Lord clearly proved this in the parable of the wounded man by robbers, who was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho; and of the Samaritan, who took care of him.

[Proverbs 27:14] -- He who blesses his neighbor with a loud voice, etc. He who blesses his neighbor with a loud voice extols him with the favor of excessive praise; either by favoring his evil deeds against justice, or by praising his good deeds more than is just. But he is likened to one who curses, because he greatly harms him, to whom by praising he either gives confidence in an evil action or diminishes the simplicity of a pure heart in a righteous work: namely that the good, which he had begun with an eye to the heavenly reward, he completes for the love of transitory praise. [Proverbs 27:17] -- Iron sharpens iron, etc. The consultation and advice of the wise is quite good, where they instruct each other by consulting, iron sharpens iron. [Proverbs 27:20] -- Hell and destruction will not be full, etc. The torments of hell will not be filled, by receiving an end; similarly, the intentions of those who are wise in human matters are insatiable in the desire to sin. And hence they pay the penalties without end because they had the will to sin without end, if they had the nature to live without end.

[Proverbs 27:23] -- Diligently know the countenance of your flock, etc. It is said to the pastor of the Church: Diligently care for those who it happens to you to be in charge of. Know the minds and actions of each one, and if you find anything in them of defiling vice, remember to correct it swiftly. For you will not always have the power to feed the Lord's sheep, but the eternal crown is which you will receive, if you have served well the office entrusted to you in your time. [Proverbs 27:25] -- The meadows are open, etc. The pastures of the heavenly sacraments, which were long closed by legal types, are now open. The novelty of evangelical truth and grace has appeared; the writings of the old fathers are gathered into the pasture of the Lord's flock; indeed taken from the proud Jews by the sickle of divine retribution, and given to the humble people of the Church for spiritual sustenance; according to what the Lord said to them, The kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing its fruits (Matt. XXI).

[Proverbs 27:26] -- Lambs for your clothing, etc. He calls the innocent lambs, the penitent kids. You will be clothed with the fleece of the lambs, while you, the pastor, improve by the good manners of obedient disciples, and seeing their laudable deeds, you yourself will be more glorious both in the adornment of virtues and in the warmth of love. You will buy the field with the kids, while calling sinners to repentance, you acquire a higher place for yourself in the land of the living.

[Proverbs 27:27] -- Let the milk of the goats suffice you for your food, etc. Feed the flock entrusted to you with such diligence, that neither new milk in summer nor in cold will be lacking to you, but always it will suffice for you and yours; that is, insist so diligently on doctrine, that you also promote former penitents to the office of teaching; so that through them, who formerly seemed to be placed on the left side of the judge due to the foulness of vices, reasonable and sincere milk of the word may now be ministered to those with little understanding. The milk of the goats becomes food for the handmaidens, when those who serve the Lord not yet with perfect love, but still with servile fear, are refreshed with the example or words of those who have been saved through repentance, and are united to advance to the greater growths of virtues. Some have placed what is said: The meadows are open, and the green herbs have appeared, and the hay is gathered from the mountains: lambs for your clothing, and kids for the price of the field; thus, "The monuments are open, the revived bodies have appeared, the sinners are separated from the saints, hay to be burned from the high places. The lambs are separated to the right, the kids to the left: lambs for the king's clothing, because he said, I will inhabit in them; the kids are sold for the price of the saints whom they harmed (or killed?) by fire."

Chapter 28

[Proverbs 28:1] -- The wicked flee when no one pursues. He who is not strong in faith sometimes deserts faith of his own accord, even if no persecutor pursues him, when he renders himself similar to the infidel by thefts, perjuries, fornications, poisonings, and other such crimes. [Proverbs 28:1] -- But the righteous are as confident as a lion, etc. The lion does not tremble in the face of beasts because he knows he prevails over all. Thus, the security of righteous men is rightly compared to a lion, because when he sees anyone rising against him, he returns to the confidence of his mind, knowing that he surpasses all adversaries, for he loves only Him whom he cannot lose being invincible. [Proverbs 28:5] -- Evil men do not understand judgment, etc. The elect observe everything, that is, both the future distinction of universal judgment and by what deeds rest or eternal punishment will be repaid.

[Proverbs 28:10] -- He who deceives the righteous onto an evil path, etc. He who deceives the lovers of justice through heretical doctrine so that they deviate from the truth incurs the punishment he deserves for his evils; yet whatever good he was doing, whether by writing useful things or by living temperately, benefits others: to those, indeed, who, reading or hearing these things, take examples of salvation even from him whom they know to have perished. [Proverbs 28:10] -- In the exultation of the righteous, there is much glory. Certainly, they exult not over present riches, but over the eternal goods in the future. They rejoice not in the things of the world they see, but in the Creator of the world, whose vision they hope for; as the Psalmist says, Rejoice in the Lord, and exult, you righteous (Psalm 31). Or certainly, in the exultation of the righteous, there is much glory; because whenever the elect in this life exult for the prosperous events of the Church, much glory is given by the Lord from the faith and pious works of many.

[Proverbs 28:12] -- When the wicked rule, the people fall. Just as many begin to give glory to God when they see the righteous rejoicing in the progress of virtues, so whenever the wicked hold power, they expose many as accomplices in their infidelity. Which can rightly be understood of pagans, heretics, and evil Catholics. [Proverbs 28:14] -- ”Blessed is the man who is always fearful,” etc. The wrath of the upcoming judgment will then be so much stricter as it is now scarcely feared amidst sins. Hence, it is said elsewhere, ”In the day of prosperity, do not be unmindful of adversity; and in the day of adversity, do not be unmindful of prosperity” (Ecclesiasticus 11). Thus, both should be joined so that one always supports

the other. [Proverbs 28:15] -- "A roaring lion and a ravenous bear," etc. It can be understood of pagan and heretical princes who often test the patience or wisdom of the poor people, that is, the holy Church, with savage cruelty.

[Proverbs 28:17] -- "A man who slanders blood," etc. Whether the land of the field or the land of the body, whoever cultivates it shall be satisfied; one with grain, the other with virtues. Whoever despises both shall be filled with poverty. [Proverbs 28:20] -- "A man who hastens to be rich," etc. For surely, he who ambitiously seeks to increase wealth neglects sin, caught like birds, when he begins, eager for the bait of earthly things, he does not realize he is being strangled by the snare of sin; when he desires any goods of this present world, he does not know what losses he will suffer in the future.

[Proverbs 28:28] -- "When the impious rise, men hide themselves," etc. The same men whom he calls just, who indeed maintain the just and established order of human condition from God. Hence, in the book of the blessed Job, it is said of any penitent perverse person, "He will regard men and say, 'I have sinned'" (Job 33). This is openly to say, "He will regard those who rightly keep the nature of human creation, and recognize himself as having been likened to beasts by sinning." The sense is clear, therefore, that in the fervor of the impious persecution, the faithful often hide; either not daring or not permitted to go out publicly; the Lord saying, "When they persecute you in this city, flee to another" (Matthew 10). But where, after the destruction of the authors, the persecution has ceased, the glory of the faithful shines more brightly after the pressures. Yet many infidels, having seen the condemnation of infidelity, receive the grace of faith; as it is written, "When the pestilent is scourged, the simple becomes wiser" (Proverbs 19). You are proven to be naked of the ornament of virtues because what you promised to the Lord, you were unable to fulfill. However, this is said not so that you should not undertake the care of governing souls when it is regularly imposed upon you, but so that you should not rashly usurp the role of teacher and prelate, with no one commanding it.

Chapter 29

[Proverbs 29:5] -- The man who speaks with flattering and deceitful words to his friend, etc. He who praises his neighbor with deceitful words, indeed sets traps for him, so that by the danger of cautious work, as he becomes more careless with words, he may fall into them. But let us see whether the nets of the deceitful ensnare him whose steps they are spread before, or rather encompass the one who spreads them. It follows: [Proverbs 29:6] -- The trap will ensnare the sinful and unjust man, etc. Therefore, the trap of sinners does not harm the just man, even if it destroys him bodily. But the snares they prepare for their neighbors damn the reprobates themselves forever; while the just rejoice, praising the right judgment of the Creator either for their own deliverance or for the ruin of the wicked. Finally, the ancient edition clearly stated the conclusion of the previous verse as, The nets encircle his own feet. For from the ambiguous Greek, which is α το , it can be interpreted either way: for he who digs a pit for his neighbor will fall into it himself, as said elsewhere.

[Proverbs 29:9] -- A wise man contending with a fool, etc. A wise teacher, if he contends with an unbelieving and obstinate man, whether he speaks of the torments of the reprobates or the joys of the good, labors in vain against the senseless; whether he advises the coverings of repentance, or speaks of the rewards of good work, he is not heard by the fool. Hence the apostles also said to the Jews, We lamented to you, and you did not mourn; we sang to you, and you did not dance (Matt. XII). [Proverbs 29:11] -- The fool utters all his spirit. Driven by impatience, the whole spirit is uttered outwardly. It is thus more quickly expelled by disturbance because no inner discipline of wisdom restrains it. [Proverbs 29:11] -- But the wise man defers and reserves it for the future. For when harmed, he does not desire to avenge himself at present, because even while suffering, he chooses to endure, yet he does not ignore that everything will be avenged in the final judgment. The ancient translation has this passage thus: The impious man utters all his anger, but the wise man measures it out by parts, because surely the fool is inflamed by disturbance for his own vengeance; the wise man, however, gradually diminishes and expels it with the maturity of advice and moderation.

[Proverbs 29:13] -- The poor man and creditor meet each other, etc. The poor man is the humble listener of the word of God; the creditor, however, is he who commits the money of the same word by preaching to him; they meet each other when they converge into the

same grace of piety. And God is the illuminator of both, because neither that one could preach without divine piety, nor could this one believe. Indeed, the truthful sentence of Truth remains, which says, "Without me, you can do nothing" (John 15). [Proverbs 29:14] -- The king who judges the poor in truth, etc. And the Psalmist about Christ the king, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of equity is the scepter of your kingdom" (Psalm 45). [Proverbs 29:15] -- The rod and reproof give wisdom, etc. About this rod, the Apostle to the Corinthians: "Do you want me to come to you with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?" (1 Corinthians 4). For the child, whom he frequently admonishes to be corrected and instructed, is the people of God, who, if not chastised by the constant admonitions and rebukes of the priests, generates confusion for the Church, by those outside detracting from the religion of the Christian faith. Hence, it is rightly added:

[Proverbs 29:18] -- When prophecy fails, the people will be scattered, etc. Because indeed, when priestly instruction ceases, the discipline of the divine law will immediately dissolve, for the people ought to reach the rewards of blessedness. [Proverbs 29:20] -- Do you see a man quick to speak, etc. Indeed, stupidity is a grave vice, but verbosity is not lighter. For it often happens that a dull person, even one ignorant of letters, more quickly accepts the words of salutary reproof than one who, endowed with an abundance of speech, arrogantly prefers to spout what he knows or thinks he knows, rather than to listen to the words of the wise. [Proverbs 29:21] -- He who delicately nurtures his servant from youth, etc. He who delicately nurtures his body from youth, which he ought to have subjugated to the soul, will feel this lascivious and indomitable spirit when he reaches the years of adolescence. Another translation beautifully has this verse, "He who is indulged from youth will be a servant; in the end, however, he will be afflicted." For indeed, he who regrets his evils too late within himself, remembering that he was unwilling in his still tender age to restrain his pleasures by the rule of the prudent.

[Proverbs 29:22] -- An irascible man provokes fights, etc. The door to all vices is anger, which, if closed, will allow quiet for virtues within; but if opened, the mind will be armed for every crime. [Proverbs 29:24] -- He who associates with a thief hates his own soul, etc. Wisdom teaches its helper not only to abstain from sins but also to refrain from the company of sinners, lest he should deserve to hear from the strict judge, "If you saw a thief, you ran with him, and with adulterers, you placed your portion" (Psalm 50). For not only the thief himself but also he who is conscious of theft is liable, who, when the owner who lost the money seeks it, does not want to inform him, though he can. But lest anyone pleads fear of a more powerful person and claims he cannot separate from the company of thieves or reveal what he knows, it is openly added:

[Proverbs 29:25] -- He who fears man will quickly fall, etc. To whom fits the gospel saying, "Do not fear those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul" (Matthew 10).

Chapter 30

[Proverbs 30:1] -- The words of the Gatherer, the son of Vomenti. Hitherto are the Proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied. From henceforth, again, the words of Solomon, by himself, which is called in Greek Ecclesiastes, now translated into Latin under that name, is called the Gatherer. For the church is called a congregation. [Proverbs 30:1] -- The vision which the man spoke, with whom is God, etc. The vision, he said, which he spoke, because what he saw by contemplating the more secret things with God, he revealed to men by speaking outwardly. For whoever is strengthened by the Spirit of God, these things which follow, he speaks with a humble heart. [Proverbs 30:2] -- I am the most foolish of men, etc. For the sons of this world are wiser in their generation than the sons of light (Luke XVI). And the Apostle says, If anyone seems to be wise in this world, let him become foolish, that he may be wise (1 Cor. III). And he himself about himself and his fellows, in whom is God, We preach Christ crucified; to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Gentiles foolishness (1 Cor. I).

[Proverbs 30:3] -- I have not learned wisdom, etc. Solomon did not learn wisdom from man, but received it from God who freely offers, so that he might know the knowledge of the saints. But also the Apostle who says, We are fools for Christ's sake, he again says, We speak wisdom among the perfect; yet not the wisdom of this world, and the rest (1 Cor. II). [Proverbs 30:4] -- Who ascended into heaven, and descended? This is the knowledge of the saints, which is considered foolishness by the wise of this world, because evidently the Son of God, in assumed flesh, after His death and resurrection, ascended into heaven, and at the time of our resurrection will descend from heaven to judge the living and the dead. Who has gathered the wind in his hands? Every spirit, human and angelic, and of animals and storms, is contained by the power of God so that it may not fail.

[Proverbs 30:4] -- Who has bound the waters as with a garment? Gathering the waters of the sea as it were in a bottle. [Proverbs 30:4] -- Who has established all the ends of the earth? The Lord, who now gives life and growth to all living things and plants. And on the day of judgment, He will raise the entire human race from the four winds of heaven from death. [Proverbs 30:4] -- What is his name, and what is the name of his son, if you know? He speaks of the name of God the Father and the Son, whose mystery secular wisdom cannot naturally know. Although one can understand that there is one God, who has made all

things by observing what has been wonderfully done. If you know, he says, it is understood as you, who boast of your wisdom, presume to call the mysteries of our faith foolishness.

[Proverbs 30:5] -- Every word of God is a fired shield for those who hope in him. This all of Christ's Church knows, and especially those who, with God dwelling in them, despise earthly wisdom, because every divine word kindles the hearts of the elect with the fire of charity, and enlightens with the knowledge of truth, and consumes the filth of vices, and protects against the snares of enemies and all adversities. But it should be observed more attentively because the peculiarity of the Greek language, which is pepyromenon, is not explained in Latin by one word; hence it is now translated as ignitum, now as ignited by fire, as Your word is vehemently ignited (Ps. CXVIII), and Silver tried by fire (Ps. XI). Both of which are said in Greek by one word, pepyromenon. And what sounds very similar to this saying of Solomon is, The words of the Lord are tried by fire (Ps. XVII): that is, pepyromena. Therefore, purified as though melted, in fire, it is cleansed; for just as any metals melted by fire do not contain in themselves any foreign and useless dross, all that remains in them is true and perfect, and cleansed from all stain of faults; so the word of God, testifying the faith of eternal goods in itself. Hence it is that the Lord says, Not one iota or one apex will perish from the law until all things are accomplished (Matthew V). For all things are true, and outside of all ambiguity, kindled by superfluous vanity.

[Proverbs 30:6] -- Do not add anything to his words, etc. Do not corrupt the conversations of the holy Scriptures, which some heretics are known to have done so that they would not be convicted by them. [Proverbs 30:7] -- I have asked two things of you, do not deny them to me, etc. These things still a man with whom God is, his speech radiated by fire, addresses to the Lord himself with a converted voice, beseeching that he may never prefer the unity of the world or lying words to the truth of the heavenly Scripture; nor again, either through abundance or lack of passing things, may he fall into oblivion of eternal things. [Proverbs 30:11] -- A generation that curses its father, etc. When previously he asked for the purity of life to be given to him by the Lord, he suddenly turns his gaze to contemplate the wickedness of the perverse, how many miseries they are involved in, how far they are from the truth, insinuating that they do not honor their parents.

[Proverbs 30:12] -- A generation that seems pure to itself, etc. Because God scatters the bones of men pleasing to themselves. [Proverbs 30:13] -- A generation whose eyes are lofty, etc. As the Psalmist says: Lord, my heart is not exalted, etc. (Psalm CXXX). [Proverbs 30:14] -- A generation that has swords for teeth, etc. Concerning this the Psalmist, Sons of men, their teeth are weapons and arrows, and other things (Psalm LVI). These are the persecutors of the Church of Christ. But if you consider more diligently, you will find these generations to be the most wicked congregations of Jews and heretics. Therefore, the generation of the Jews curses its father, that is, him who says, Israel is my firstborn son (Exodus IV), when it denied his Son living in the flesh. And it did not bless its mother, namely the synagogue, whose former faith concerning Christ it took away, which it had from the fathers and prophets. The generation of the Novatians seems pure to itself, saying: They

do not need repentance. And yet it cannot be pure from the filth of sins, which, by denying the fountain of repentance to sinners, closes off forgiveness. Likewise, the generation of the Arians has lofty eyes, and eyelids raised above God, inquiring who was before, and saying there was a time when the Son was not, or what the power of the Holy Spirit is, whether equal or unequal. Likewise, the generation that has swords for teeth, is the congregation of the wicked, which strives to impart its perfidy to others; and just as bodies are wont to be cut down by swords, so it strives to subject the souls of those who hear the poison of its wicked speech to eternal death.

[Proverbs 30:15] -- The leech has two daughters, etc. The leech is the devil, who is incessantly inflamed with the thirst for sinning and persuading to sin. He has two daughters because there are two special allurements of the human race; they imitate the ardor of this ancient enemy, namely lust and avarice. For lust, the more its reins are loosened, the more noxious it becomes; and as one of the poets says, The love of money grows as much as the money itself grows. There are three insatiable things, etc. Fire does not say, It is enough; hell never overflows: similarly the nearby harlot, her body is not satisfied with delights; and the greedy man never says, It is enough. Some interpret hell as the devil, because he is insatiable in the seduction of humans. The mouth of the womb and the land, which are not satisfied with water, as above; fire that does not say, It is enough: the fire of hell, which never ceases, but with infinite ardor burns those who did not want to put an end to their sins.

[Proverbs 30:17] -- The eye that mocks a father, and despises the birth of his mother, etc. The perverse, while they reproach divine judgments, mock the Father; and any heretics, while despising the preaching of the holy Church with ridicule, despise the birth of the mother, because from her come those who speak against her. They went out from us, he says, but they were not of us (John ...). Whose intention, while the Catholic preachers rebuke them coming from the streams of the divine Scriptures, they pluck out the hateful eye of the raven from the torrents, and the sons of the eagle eat it. For the holy teachers are called ravens, because through the grace of humility, they confess the blackness of sin in themselves. But the sons of the eagle, because they are reborn through his grace, who in the habit of assumed flesh flies to the heavens. Hence elsewhere they are called the sons of the bridegroom.

[Proverbs 30:18] -- Three things are difficult for me, etc. As far as history is concerned, it is as it is written; but because he speaks through parables, the way of an eagle in the sky is difficult to find: that is, the subtlety of the enemy, which flies around the hearts of heavenly men, is discovered with great labor. Similarly, the way of a serpent on the ground, that is, the cunning of the poisonous enemy, never ceasing to lay snares for those he sees founded on the rock of faith. Likewise, the way of a ship in the midst of the sea, that is, the way of iniquity, which runs through the bitter waves of this world, driven by the blasts of unclean spirits, with such subtlety that its path can hardly or not at all be discovered. For that the eagle signifies the malicious enemy, the prophet testifies, who says: Our persecutors were swifter than the eagles of the sky (Lamentations IV), that is, men who persecuted us were

so cruel that they seemed to be more savage than the demons themselves. That the serpent often signifies the devil is proven both in the transgression of the first man and when a wise man said, Flee from sin as from the face of a serpent (Ecclesiasticus XXI). The ship, which signifies lightness, indicates those who are tossed about by every wind of doctrine, as the prophet demonstrates when he says, "And the Chaldeans in their ships glorifying" (Isa. XLIII);

that is, the unclean spirits exalting themselves from the fragility and instability of the human mind, and rejoicing as victors over its ruin. Just as those things are so pure that they cannot be found, so is it difficult to comprehend how a youth who has deserted the way of truth can deviate with a wandering mind into countless thoughts every hour. Such is also the way of an adulterous woman, who eats and wipes her mouth and says, "I have done no wickedness. The adulterous mind is always unstable and wandering like those mentioned above. Whoever can conceal the vile act that they committed denies having done any crime.

[Proverbs 30:24] -- Four things are the smallest on the earth, etc. The righteous often seem smaller on the earth than the wicked, that is, humbler and more despised by this world; but yet they are wiser than the worldly-wise, in that they savor eternal and heavenly goods, and for the sake of desiring these which the others do not know, they strongly desire to endure all the adversities of the world. [Proverbs 30:25] -- The ants, a people not strong, etc. And the people of the Church show themselves weak temporally amidst raging adversaries in order to maintain mental fortitude; with the Lord saying through the Gospel, "But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matt. V). Those who prepare the fruits of good works in this life, by which they may merit to have eternal life.

[Proverbs 30:26] -- The coney, a weak people, etc. And this too denotes the people of the Church, who are called weak; either because, as we said earlier, they do not seek to avenge their own injuries; or because they have learned not to trust in their own strength, but to hope for salvation in the aid of their Redeemer. And this is to place their habitation in the rock, to say to the Lord, against the assaults of life, with the Psalmist: "Be to me a rock of refuge, a strong fortress to save me; for you are my rock and my fortress" (Psalm. . . .). Instead of coney, the ancient translation used "chirogrillus." It is an animal not bigger than a hedgehog, resembling a mouse and a bear, abundant in the regions of Palestine; and they habitually live in rock crevices and earth holes. It should be noted that in the psalm, where we sing, "The rock is a refuge for the hedgehogs" (Psalm CIII), in some manuscripts we find coneys, in others chirogrillus. And even in this saying of Solomon, some manuscripts have hedgehog instead of coney. For in the book of Hebrew names, we find the same Hebrew word, sapham in Jeremiah, translated as chirogrillus, coney, and hedgehog by Saint Jerome.

[Proverbs 30:27] -- The locusts have no king, etc. Some interpret the locust as the people of the Gentiles, who once existed without a king, that is, without Christ, without a prophet, without a teacher, and now gathered into the unity of faith, they hurry to a spiritual battle against the devil. But in the locust, the harmonious unity of hermits can also be understood,

who, though governed by no human preceptor in their retreats, nevertheless customarily fight for Christ in tireless persistence in their respective places and consume the pernicious seeds of carnal desires. [Proverbs 30:28] -- The lizard advances with its hands, etc. The lizard advances with its hands because it does not have wings to carry it. And it dwells in the king's palaces, signifying the humility of those who, though naturally slow in intellect, by the diligence of their effort, either to the knowledge of divine Scriptures or to the grace of virtues, attain the entrance to the kingdom of heaven. Many times indeed birds, elevated by their wings for flight, dwell below. And the gecko, which does not have wings to fly, clings to the building of a king with its hands: because indeed often some clever people, while they become sluggish through negligence, remain in depraved acts, and the simple ones, who are not aided by the wings of intellect, are lifted to the walls of the eternal kingdom by the virtue of their actions.

[Proverbs 30:29] -- There are three things which go well, etc. In this place, a lion is introduced, about whom it is written, "The lion of the tribe of Judah has conquered" (Revelation 5). He is called the mightiest of beasts, because in him what is weak of God is stronger than men (1 Corinthians 1); he fears no encounter; for he says, "The prince of this world is coming, and he has nothing in me" (John 14). The rooster girded with loins, that is, the holy preachers announcing the true dawn among the darkness of this night; who are girded with loins, because they restrain the flowing of luxury from their members. And a ram, and there is no king who resists him. Whom else do we accept in this place as the ram, if not the order of priests first within the Church? About whom it is written, "Bring to the Lord the sons of rams" (Psalm 29), who lead the flock of sheep following them by their examples; to whom, living spiritually and rightly, no king at all can resist, because any persecutor who confronts them cannot impede their intention. And because after these, even the Antichrist will appear, he adds this fourth saying:

[Proverbs 30:32] -- And the fool who appears after he has been raised on high, etc. For he indeed will be lifted on high when he will falsely claim to be God. But raised on high, he will appear as a fool, because in his very exaltation, he will fall by the advent of the true judge; if he had understood this, he would have put his hand over his mouth, that is, if he had foreseen his own punishment when he began to grow proud, he perhaps would not have been lifted in such boasting of pride. Let it not disturb you what was said earlier, the fourth one that walks successfully: for he said that three walk well, and the fourth successfully; for not everything that is successful is good; nor in this life is everything that is good, successful. For the lion, the rooster, and the ram walk well, but not successfully here, as they endure wars of persecutions; but the fourth one walks successfully, and not well, because the Antichrist walks in his deception, but for the short time of the present life, that deception prospers for him.

[Proverbs 30:33] -- But he who presses the breasts strongly to extract milk, etc. We press the breasts strongly when we ponder the words of sacred speech with subtle understanding, by which pressure while we seek milk, we find butter, because while we seek to be nourished

even with slight understanding, we are anointed with the richness of internal abundance: which is not to be done excessively nor always, lest while we seek milk, blood follows from the breasts, because while the words of the sacred text are dissected more than they should be, they fall into carnal understanding. For he who milks vehemently draws blood, because what is perceived from excessive examination of spirit becomes carnal. [Proverbs 30:33] -- And he who provokes anger, etc. What the preceding parable signified literally, it reveals, because he who speaks to his neighbor with modest words receives a pleasant response, as if he extracts butter from the breasts in which he was seeking milk. But with an inept word, he provokes anger and discord from a brother's heart, as if extracting words excessively results in finding blood instead of milk.

Chapter 31

[Proverbs 31:1] -- The words of King Lemuel, etc. Lemuel is interpreted as, "in whom is God." And he is the same who is spoken of above, called by the same name translated into Latin, "The vision which the man spoke, with whom is God." But the mother, who taught him this vision, is understood no better than as divine grace, which invisibly instructed him in the heart with the understanding of wisdom which he himself would minister outwardly to men. Although even his physical mother, Solomon, can rightly be understood to have taught him this when he was a child. Which indeed he, because he knew it to be wisely spoken, wanted to mix into the work of his parables. And therefore rightly, after it is said in the title, "The words of King Lemuel," it is immediately added, "The vision with which his mother instructed him," because when he was anointed to the kingdom, he received the spirit of wisdom, he saw in the same spirit how prudently his good mother had taught him.

[Proverbs 31:2] -- What, my beloved; what, beloved of my womb? You understand, "What shall I say to you, my son, who was born from my womb, chosen for the kingdom?" [Proverbs 31:2] -- What, beloved of my vows? That is, who was chosen in this that I desired with all devotion. [Proverbs 31:3] -- Do not give your substance to women. The sense of the letter is clear, but we are also forbidden to contaminate the substance of our virtues with the corruptions of vices. [Proverbs 31:3] -- And your riches to destroy kings. He gives his riches to destroy kings, who corrupts the hearts of men with earthly delights, so that they do not seek the heavenly goods, in which they can reign perpetually with Christ. For kings are destroyed by riches, when anyone joined to the body of the highest King through faith, nonetheless deserves to be eradicated from the land of the living by the allurements of the world. Do not give wine to kings, O Lemuel, do not give wine to kings. And the following things are clear according to the letter. But allegorically it commands not to intoxicate the minds of the faithful, who are members of the eternal King, with wine in which there is luxury; because there is no secret where drunkenness reigns; nothing about secrets is considered where carnal pleasure reigns; but only carnal things, which are visible, are scrutinized.

[Proverbs 31:5] -- Lest he drink and forget judgments, etc. Lest, intoxicated by earthly allurements, he forgets the poor of Christ, who himself became poor for us. [Proverbs 31:6] -- Give strong drink to those who are sorrowful, etc. Let them drink and forget their poverty,

and remember their sorrow no more. Strong drink and wine in this place signify the supernal consolation of divine wisdom, which is to be exhibited to those hearts that refuse to be consoled in low things, and receive whatever occurs in the present with a bitter soul, clinging wholly with their minds to the joys of heaven which they do not yet see; according to the one who said, "My soul refused to be comforted; I remembered God and was delighted" (Psalm 76). Likewise, "Give strong drink to those who are sorrowful, and wine to drink to those who are bitter of soul," and so forth (Proverbs 31). To those who are oppressed with mourning and sadness for the fullness of their past deeds, abundantly pour the joy of spiritual knowledge, like wine that gladdens the heart of man, and refresh them with the intoxication of the saving word, lest perhaps overwhelmed by the continuity of mourning and deadly despair, they are swallowed up by more abundant sadness, who are such.

[Proverbs 31:8] -- Open your mouth for the mute, etc. For the cause of the poor, who cannot speak for themselves in judgment, remember to speak, and take care to defend those who, with the view of the heavenly fatherland, strive to pass more quickly through this life's way. Otherwise, it commands to open the mouth for the mute people of the nations to preach the word of faith, who previously did not know how to sound the divine words, and to expend care for the salvation not only of the Jews but also of all nations throughout the world. [Proverbs 31:9] -- Open your mouth, judge justly, etc. Just as in the previous verse he commanded to open the mouth for the cause and liberation of the poor, so in this one he admonishes to justly chastise and judge the poor themselves when they err. As Moses also said: "You shall not show pity in the judgment of the poor" (Exodus 23); which the prophet suggests is done by the Lord when he says: "He will judge the poor with righteousness, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth" (Psalm 72).

[Proverbs 31:10] -- Thus far the words of Lemuel. Hence the wisest of kings, Solomon, celebrates the praises of the holy Church in a few verses, but with the fullest truth. For it is established that the same poem consists of 22 verses, according to the order and number of the Hebrew letters, so that each verse begins with distinct letters. By the most perfect order of this alphabet it is typically indicated how extensively the virtues and rewards of either each faithful soul or the whole holy Church, which is completed from all chosen souls as one catholic, are here described.

[Proverbs 31:10] -- Who can find a strong woman? etc. The strong woman is called the Catholic Church: a woman, namely, because she customarily gives birth to spiritual children to God through water and the Holy Spirit; strong, because she despises all adversities and prosperities of the world for the faith of her Creator, whom, when He appeared in the flesh, He found weak, but by His finding, that is by His pious visitation, made her strong. Hence, after His redemption returning to the heavens, rejoicing with the heavenly citizens, He said: "Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep which was lost" (Luke 15). Therefore, seeing the human race entangled in innumerable errors, and that for its salvation, no patriarch, no prophet, no elect at all was sufficient, except the only Mediator of God and men, Solomon said: "Who can find a strong woman? Her price is far above rubies. As if he

openly, admiringly, confessed the future grace of the Lord, saying, ”Who is of such virtue, who of such merit, who from so many unbelieving and wicked nations of the world would gather one Church of the elect for himself, which by His grace He makes strong and invincible against all adversaries? Surely, no one similar to us, nor is anyone in our time coming, but at the end of the ages, God is descending from heaven as man, who redeems us by His passion. This is what he says, ”Her price is far above rubies.

Far, indeed, in the state of time, which intervened from the days of Solomon up to the birth of the Virgin. However, from the utmost ends, because ”His going forth is from the end of heaven” (Psalm 19), He who offered nothing else for our redemption but himself. Whence the Apostle says, ”Who loved us, and gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma” (Ephesians 5). And although it can rightly be understood this way, that the price of the holy Church was placed far off, because the incarnation, the conversation of the Word of God among men, passion and resurrection were far removed from the condition of our nature; for He, when He willed, was born from whichever mother He willed, and lived sinlessly in the world; and when He willed, and by whichever death He willed, He departed from the world. He also had in His power the time of His resurrection and ascension, and things of this sort; in which as far from us as heaven is from earth. But because the Lord redeemed the Church, He not only gave her the word of salvation to receive but also the enduring certitude to contend for it, and this to preach throughout the world. Rightly, therefore, it is added:

[Proverbs 31:11] -- ”The heart of her husband trusts in her,” etc. The husband of the holy Church is her Lord and Redeemer, who also deigned to become her price. Whence the Apostle also says to the believers, ”For I have betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11). Therefore, what he says, ”The heart of her husband trusts in her,” is undoubtedly drawn from human practice; just as he who has a strong, faithful, and chaste wife, confidently trusts in her because she can do nothing against his will, nor be contaminated even by adulterous thought, she would gladly endure all adversities for his love and desire to convert anyone to his friendship, thus undeniably does our Lord and Redeemer trust in the Church. For He knows the spirit of grace which He gave, He knows the power of charity which He infused into her breast. Therefore, He does not doubt that she will not only be incorruptibly firm in the integrity of faith but will also continually strive to gather more into the unity of that same faith. For this is what follows, ”And she will not lack gain,” the Church spoils the devil when through her preachers, she calls back those whom he had deceived to the path of truth. And well it is said, ”Will not lack gain,” for the Church will never cease to restore souls freed from the diabolical deceit to the faith of Christ until, with the completed course of the world, the fixed number of her members is also completed. However, because whatever good the holy Church or any faithful soul achieves, it receives it from above, it is rightly added,

[Proverbs 31:12] -- ”She brings him good, and not harm,” etc. For the soul renders good to Christ when, receiving the gifts of life from Him, it responds by living rightly, when it strives

to impart to others that which through His help it can know or do. But well after saying, "She brings him good," immediately added, "And not harm," because surely there are those who, receiving good things from the Lord, repay evils, either by polluting the mysteries of faith which they received with heretical corruption, or by blaspheming the faith which they serve with false deeds; or by corrupting the good morals with which they serve with right faith through evil conduct. For neither do they return the good they received to the Lord, who do not care to persist in good beginnings until the end of the current life. Whence rightly after saying, "She brings him good, and not harm," to show the necessity of perseverance in good, it is added, "All the days of her life." Similar is the evangelical saying, "That we might serve Him in holiness and righteousness before Him, all our days" (Luke 1). By which proper duties, or by which fruits of justice or holiness, it is fitting for him to especially persist who diligently strives to repay the good he received from the Lord, it is subsequently shown when it is said:

[Proverbs 31:13] -- "She seeks wool and flax," etc. The beginning of this verse, the strong woman, that is the holy Church, customarily takes and observes even according to the letter; according to the prophetic saying, "When you see the naked, cover him, and do not hide yourself from your own flesh" (Isaiah 58). However, she works not with superfluous and blind labor, but certainly with that counsel, that she may deserve to hear from her own husband, namely the Lord Christ, in judgment, "I was naked, and you clothed me" (Matthew 25); and "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Ibid.). But she works with the counsel of her own hands, that is, those persons, through whom she distributes alms to the poor. In this devoted work, he very profitably uses this advice, that when dispersing he gives to the poor, he is not praised by men at that time, but his righteousness endures from generation to generation, his horn is exalted in glory (Psalm III). Mystically, however, everything of simplicity and piety which we bestow on our neighbors can be received in the wool, which is the clothing of sheep. As punishment of our flesh can be indicated in the linen, which greenily springs from the earth but loses its native moisture through long and numerous exercises and reaches the grace of new whiteness.

While we boil out the ingrained filth of vices through continence, we indeed make it worthy to be donned by Christ, according to that of the Apostle, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians III). Therefore, the strong woman seeks wool and linen and works with the counsel of her hands, when the holy Church diligently seeks what fruits of piety she may exercise, how to cleanse herself from carnal allurements. And she does both of these with the most prudent counsel, that is, only in view of the reward of modernity. This reward is also more openly remembered in the following verse, when it is added, "She is like the merchant ship, etc. He calls the merchant a trader, who is so called by the ancients because he diligently attends to acquiring and multiplying goods. Therefore, the strong woman becomes like the merchant ship, for just as the merchant ship, laden with merchandise that is more abundant in its homeland, seeks other lands by sea so that, selling what it had brought, it may bring back more expensive goods home, so indeed the holy Church, thus every perfect soul rejoices to be laden with the riches of virtues, by which

it may purchase greater gifts of divine grace. For it is an excellent commerce when the good deeds we are able to perform first receive this reward from the Lord, that we always progress to greater deeds, then also receive eternal life.

Therefore, the holy soul becomes like the merchant ship, which crosses the waves of the present world by desire, and solely hopes to receive eternal joys in heaven, meditates on these, and strives to perform whatever it is capable of to acquire these more abundantly, to boldly overcome whatever adverse circumstances it encounters. Rightly it is said that she brings her food from afar, because in everything she does temporally good, she expects only the eternal reward, desires only the satisfaction of the living bread, indeed of Him who mercifully and powerfully promises his hearers, ”Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew XI). But on the contrary, he receives his bread nearby and does not bring it across seas from afar, who appears to live justly purely for human approval. By no intuition of enduring life does he strive to surpass and trample upon those things that are slipping away excessively. Of such people, He himself terrifyingly thunders, ”Verily I say to you, they have received their reward. And she rises while it is still night and gives prey to her household, etc. Just as the whole course of the fading world is varied by the alternating presence of day and night, and indeed, the day is naturally made for working, not resting, so the whole time of the present Church is distinguished by a certain dual state of rest and work.

It is as if she rests at night when some of her faithful, having momentarily dropped external concerns, begin to care for themselves spiritually or secretly exercise themselves in studies such as sacred readings, orations, and tears. But she rises while it is still night, when she earnestly girds herself in the same faithful to also care for others, which work of brotherly administration she customarily exercises in two ways, both by calling those who wandered outside to the grace of faith, and by continually stirring those who are already imbued with the sacraments of faith to more diligently insist on good works. Hence it is well said, ”She gave prey to her household, and food to her maidservants. She gives prey to her household when she is able to teach to snatch them from the old enemy, reconciling them to the society of those who preceded them in faith. She also gives food to her maidservants, when she refreshes the humble and those maintaining a due fear, with the reminder of the heavenly reward, lest they grow weary under pious labor.

[Proverbs 31:16] -- ”She considers a field and buys it, etc. The field means the possession of the heavenly inheritance. About which the patriarch blessedly speaks to his son Isaac: ”Behold, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord has blessed” (Genesis XXVII). For the odor of the saints is as the odor of a field which the Lord has blessed, because with the whole intent of their mind they contemplate what the fullness of blessing is in the homeland of the heavenly kingdom. Therefore the Church considered the field and bought it, because she diligently learned what are the joys of eternal life, and strove to labor whatever she could for their attainment. She even planted a vineyard from the fruit of her hands, because she established holy scripture from the fruitful deeds and words of her faithful,

through which to strengthen the minds of her listeners in faith and love of their Redeemer. Nor is it irrelevant if by the name of vineyard we understand it to represent the Church itself, which is designated by the strong woman, and the offspring of the vineyard are the sons of the woman. The woman planted the vineyard when the early Church widely spread the seeds of faith through the world by sending out preachers. For she considered the field when she saw that the entire world, horrid with the thorns of vices, needed a spiritual cultivator.

She indeed bought it when, sending teachers everywhere, she conferred the talent of the word on listeners, so that by believing she may subject them to the most blissful servitude of Christ. Moreover, she planted a vineyard in that field when she founded the Church among the newly believing peoples by the full instruction of evangelical truth. Which vineyard she planted from the fruit of her hands, because the apostles and their successors not only instructed the peoples verbally, but also joined the testimony of good works and the signs of miracles to their words of doctrine. But even up to this day and indeed until the end of the world, a strong woman considers a field and buys it, and from the fruits of her hands she plants a vineyard, because the holy Church is always diligently searching whom it can convert to the faith. And whoever it finds to be receptive, it buys them with the money of the word, into the service of Christ; and in them it strives to plant the vineyard of Christ, or rather to make them the vineyard of Christ. And because anyone who desires to teach another should first abstain from evil himself and exercise himself in good deeds, it is rightly added:

[Proverbs 31:17] -- ”She girded her loins with strength,” etc. Therefore the Church girded her loins with strength when, intent on the desires of the heavenly, she scorned to succumb to carnal allurements; she strengthened her arm when she prepared herself to perform works of virtue. And it is well said first to gird the loins with strength and then to strengthen the arm, because the action of a good work can in no way be acceptable to the Lord if one does not first restrain oneself from the indulgence of lust, in both body and mind. Hence the prophet says, ”Cease to do evil, learn to do good” (Isaiah I). And the Lord Himself says, ”Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning” (Luke XII). By this, having girded loins signifies to not succumb to lust; by burning lamps signifies to shine with good works.

[Proverbs 31:18] -- She tasted and saw that her trading was good, etc. What he says, ”Her trading,” surely refers to that field which he mentioned above: ”She considered a field and bought it.” Therefore, the holy Church tasted, a perfect soul tasted, that is, recognized from the innermost desire of the mind, that the trading of everlasting life is good, which we merit in heaven by forsaking temporal allurements. She tasted, that is, she clearly learned that it is good through the insistence of preaching to lead as many as possible into the way of truth. And therefore, the lamp of her devotion cannot be extinguished by any darkness of tribulations, nor even by death itself. For their lamp is extinguished in the night, even though it seems to burn by day, who, as the Lord says: ”For a while believe, and in a time of temptation fall away” (Luke VIII); but even their lamp is extinguished at midnight who,

when the judge comes, are found to have no oil of charity in the vases of their hearts, while, having lost the boast of false virtues, they undergo the torments of real darkness. But if we wish to interpret night here as rest, as is said above, "She rose from the night," that is, she prepared herself to work after rest, it is aptly said that the lamp of the holy Church is not extinguished in the night because even when she rests from the business of action, she is more freely devoted to the light of heavenly contemplation. While she ceases from public works, she takes care to more ardently dedicate herself either to the hearing of sacred readings or divine praise: like the example of the industrious woman who not only tends to necessary labors by day but also often at night, by the light of the burning lamp, takes equal care of the household.

[Proverbs 31:19] -- She put her hand to strong things, etc. By strong things are meant the perfect works in the charity of Christ, to which the Church joyfully subjected herself in the expectation of certain heavenly reward; for example, "You have heard that it was said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you," etc. (Matthew V); and concerning the preservation of virginity: "He who can accept this, let him accept it" (Matthew XIX); and concerning the disdain of riches: "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have," etc. (Ibid.). For the people of the Synagogue, to whom it was said, "If you are willing and obey me, you shall eat the good things of the land" (Isaiah I), were much weaker in the work of justice, the less they were elevated by the hope of eternal reward. But the Church, which heard from the Lord, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near" (Matthew III), rightly endures anything difficult for the sake of receiving it. Therefore it is again said of her strength, "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force" (Matthew XI). And her fingers, he says, grasp the spindle. Women are accustomed to hold the spindle in the right hand and the distaff in the left.

For the wool wound on the distaff, which must pass into the spindle to be spun into thread, is often referenced in the Scriptures as the right hand signifying eternal life, and the left hand signifying the present gifts of God, namely, the abundance of things, peace of times, health of bodies, knowledge of the Scriptures, and understanding of heavenly sacraments. When we receive these and similar goods from the Lord, it is as if we carry the wool wrapped on the distaff in the left hand. But when we begin to practice them wholesomely for the love of the heavenly, we transfer the wool of the spotless Lamb from the distaff to the spindle, from the left to the right, because from the gifts of our Redeemer, from the examples of His works, we make for ourselves the robe of heavenly glory and the wedding garment of charity. The fingers, by which it is said she grasps the spindle, signify the very intent of discretion with which one works, for there is no part of our body more divided by joints and apt for flexing than the fingers. Therefore, whoever can truly say with the Apostle, "Our citizenship is in heaven" (Philippians III), from where also we eagerly await our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, surely the fingers of his right hand grasp the spindle, for by careful discernment, he has learned to labor for eternal goods.

And well does he say ”grasp,” to emphasize more vivaciously with how much zeal and haste we must act during this uncertain life for the sure rewards with the Lord. What the strong woman, that is, the holy Church or any perfected soul, has wrought by the intellectual spindle is subsequently revealed:

[Proverbs 31:20] -- ”She opened her hand to the needy,” etc. This can indeed be understood concerning works of alms which are generally done for the poor, but it is better understood concerning the word of the Lord, which confers the garment of salvation upon souls. Of this the blessed Job boasts, saying: ”I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my judgment was like a robe and a diadem” (Job XXIX). The Church opened her hand to the needy when she revealed the mysteries of faith to the ignorant through the workers of truth; she extended her palms to the poor when she sent preachers far and wide to teach nations in need of eternal salvation.

[Proverbs 31:21] -- She shall not fear for her household from the snows. The cold of snow is the hearts of the reprobate, rigid with the numbness of their own treachery. Of whom the Lord says, ”And because iniquity has abounded, the charity of many will grow cold” (Matthew 24). These indeed are oppressed by that most wicked snow, which, falling from heaven due to the merit of original pride into the depths of darkness, still presumptuously shows itself to fools as an angel of light, and offers to the ignorant the habit of its merits similar to the whiteness of snow. It is proper for the Lord and his angels to signify the brightness of their virtue in a snowy garment. However, the Church will not fear for her household from the cold of the aforementioned snow, because she believes the Lord’s promise that the gates of hell will not prevail against her. For all her household are clothed with double garments: wisdom, to reveal the heretical doctrines of false brethren, and patience, to endure the battles of open enemies. Or certainly, they are clothed with double garments because they have the promise of life both present and future. Now, in the temporal pilgrimage, they are aided by divine assistance so that they do not fail; then, in the eternal habitation of the homeland, they are uplifted by the vision of divine grace to live happily forever. Likewise, her household is clothed with a double garment:

one of works, the other of faith of the mind, having the coverings of deeds, and imbued and informed by the sacraments of their Redeemer and his examples. Thus it becomes as the Apostle says, ”For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Galatians 3). The cold of snow can also be understood as eternal torments, which we read are near both fire and cold; when it is said, ”There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 8). For indeed, fire and smoke produce weeping in the eyes, while cold usually causes gnashing of teeth. Hence the blessed Job speaks of the eternal punishments of the reprobate, saying, ”They pass from the waters of snow to excessive heat” (Job 24). But from these, the Church will not fear for her household, because whoever perishes did not belong to her household, nor were they clothed in her spiritual garment; although for a time they seemed to be instructed in her mysteries. Indeed, we read in the Gospels that a man who presumed to enter the house of that feast with the filthy garments of works was cast out into

the outer darkness, where there would be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Rightly indeed, he was bound to the cold of punishment, because he had neglected to have the garments of piety.

[Proverbs 31:22] -- She made herself a striped garment, etc. A striped garment, which is usually made very strong by varied weaving, signifies the strong works of the Church and her diverse ornaments of virtues. Of which the prophet, in the praise of the supreme king, namely that man, sang: "The queen stood at your right hand in a garment of gold, clothed with variety" (Psalm 45). Fine linen and purple are her clothing; fine linen, in the whiteness of pure conscience and conversation; purple, in the shedding of precious blood. For fine linen is of a white color; and purple, made from the blood of a creature called purpura, has the appearance of blood itself: hence it was beautifully said by the Fathers that the Holy Church, blooming with the flowers of the elect, has lilies in peace, and roses in war. Likewise, because fine linen, which grows green from the earth, through long and varied exercises, loses its moisture and native greenness, is brought to the adornment of a white garment. Purple, however, is the royal attire. The Church is clothed with fine linen when the elect chastise their bodies and subject them to servitude; with purple, when they exercise the same continence, not for popular favor, but to acquire the blessedness of the eternal kingdom. But this habit of virtues in the present indeed seems contemptible to the ignorant, but in the future, what it was will be clearly evident. Hence, John beautifully reports in his Apocalypse that he heard the voice of the saints saying, "Let us rejoice and exult, because the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his wife has prepared herself, and it was given to her to be clothed with bright, clean fine linen" (Revelation 19). For fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

[Proverbs 31:23] -- Her husband is known in the gates, etc. The husband of the holy Church, the Lord, is the husband of every faithful soul. He who seemed ignoble when he stood before the governor's tribunal, when he accepted reproaches, scourges, spit, and even the death of the cross; but he will appear noble when he comes to judge the world in righteousness, and all his angels with him. Then he will sit, he says, on the throne of his majesty, and all nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate them from one another, and so forth (Matthew 25). Her husband is noble in the gates, because the ancients used to sit at the gates to judge, so that those coming to the city from elsewhere would immediately receive the ready response of the judge. Neither would the unusual buildings of the city astonish rustics or shepherds, nor would the frequent disputes of litigants defile the inner peace of the city. Therefore, the Lord will be noble in the gates of his city, because he who is now thought to be contemptible by many, when the end of the world has come, when the entrance to the heavenly homeland has appeared to the elect, he will already be sublime to all. But he will sit with the senators of the earth. Amen, I say to you, that you who have followed me, in regeneration, when the Son of Man will sit on the throne of His majesty, you also will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew XIX).

[Proverbs 31:24] -- She made a fine linen garment, and sold it, etc. In the weaving of fine linen is symbolized the holy preaching in which one softly rests, because the mind of the faithful is refreshed by a heavenly hope. Thus also animals were shown to Peter in a linen cloth, because the souls of sinners, mercifully gathered, are contained in the gentle rest of faith. Therefore, the Church made and sold this linen garment, because the faith, which it had woven by believing, it learned by speaking, and receives from the faithful the life of righteous conduct. And it gave a girdle to the Canaanite woman, because through the strength of demonstrated justice it extinguished the loose works of paganism. So that what is commanded may be held by living: Let your loins be girded (Luke XII). Indeed, well by the name of Canaan, who also begot the Gentile people and is interpreted as changed, the Gentile populace converted to faith is designated; which by a most blessed change, migrated from vice to virtues, from the devil to Christ. Hence also the forty-fourth Psalm is written in his praise, whose title is: To the end, for those who shall be changed, a song of the sons of Korah; moreover the sons of Korah are interpreted as the sons of Calvary, who are the sons of the Lord's cross, saying: But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ (Galatians VI). As for how they are changed, the following of the same psalm teaches, where the Beloved Himself, that is, the Church's Lord, says: Hear, O daughter, and see, and incline your ear, and forget your people and your father's house (Psalm XLIV). For He desires her to be changed, whom, so that she may be called a daughter, He orders to forget the house of her prior father, that is, the ancient foe.

[Proverbs 31:25] -- Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she will laugh at the last day. Strength, to endure the harshness of the wicked; dignity, to exercise the grace of virtues. Dignity, because she works justice; strength, because she suffers persecution for justice (Matthew V). And therefore she will laugh at the last day, that is, she will rejoice in the recompense of the heavenly kingdom, who grieved in the struggle of present life. It is indeed customary in Scripture to put laughter for joy; as the Lord says: Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh (Luke VI). And blessed Job: But the mouths of the righteous will be filled with laughter (Job...). The prophet indeed sets a similar sentiment regarding the Lord and Savior of this most powerful woman, saying: The Lord reigns, clothed in majesty, the Lord is clothed with strength, etc. (Psalm XCII). For when He preached the Gospel of the kingdom, He pleased some, displeased others; some spoke well of Him, others detracted, lacerated, bit, and calumniated Him. To those therefore whom He pleased, He was clothed in majesty, to those whom He displeased, in strength. Therefore, imitate your Lord, that you may be His attire; be with dignity among those who are pleased by your good works; be strong against detractors.

[Proverbs 31:26] -- She opened her mouth with wisdom, etc. She opened her mouth for this only, to teach wisdom, according to that of the Apostle: Let no evil word proceed from your mouth, but only that which is good for the edification of faith, that it may give grace to the listeners (Ephesians IV). Or certainly she opened her heart, to learn inwardly from wisdom itself the truth which she would teach others outwardly. To both these senses, because the Church does both, appropriately applies what follows; And the law of kindness is on

her tongue, namely this, that she did not immediately punish sinners in the manner of the Mosaic law, but mercifully called them to the medicine of penance. An example of this kindness she received clearly from the wisdom of God Himself, our Lord and Savior, when the adulterous woman was brought before Him: He said, If any of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her (John VIII); and so, having shown mercy under the condition that she sin no more, He absolved her from the crime she had committed.

[Proverbs 31:27] -- She considers the ways of her household, etc. She considers the ways of her household, because she carefully investigates all the thoughts of her conscience. She does not eat the bread of idleness, because what she has perceived from understanding the sacred word, she shows by her works before the eyes of the eternal Judge. Again, the house of the strong woman is the dwelling of the heavenly country; the ways of that house are the commands of justice, by which one arrives at the mansion of eternal life. Indeed, the soul well considers these ways, when both it diligently examines by what acts it should arrive at the higher, and does not cease to zealously practice what it has learned must be done. She does not eat the bread of idleness, when receiving the sacrifice of the Lord's body, she strives to imitate in action what she celebrates in ministry, being very concerned not to eat and drink the Lord's bread and cup unworthily, lest she eat and drink judgment upon herself; but that by suffering for Christ, and shedding tears, persisting also in good deeds, she may follow the examples of His passion as much as she can. It can also be simply understood that the strong woman does not eat the bread of idleness; according to that saying of the Apostle: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat (II Thessalonians III). And he himself said of himself, "Because for what I needed, and for those who are with me, these hands have ministered" (Acts 20). Hence, rightfully reproving luxurious widows, he adds: "Besides, they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but also gossips and busybodies" (1 Tim. 5).

[Proverbs 31:28] -- "Her children rise up," etc. Knowing this would certainly come to pass, he speaks prophetically as if it were already done. For the children of the church shall rise, namely all the elect in the end, endowed with the immortality of the flesh; and then they proclaim that their mother, who bore them to God from water and the Holy Spirit, is most blessed, even though she is now despised as wretched by the faithless. And truly, as the Apostle says: "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Cor. 15). But because we strive for another life in the present, when it appears what we shall be, we shall deservedly proclaim our mother, who, gathered from all the righteous, is called the one dove of Christ, the bride and friend, as most blessed. Her husband will also rise and praise her, saying in judgment: "Come, blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me food," and so on (Matt. 25). Although he himself rose as the firstfruits of the sleeping from the dead, in the day of judgment he will more plainly demonstrate to all, whom he will judge worthy of his praise, how great is the glory of his resurrection.

What is said, "Her children rise up and call her blessed," can also be fittingly understood in this time, when any of the faithful, having passed through the afflictions of the world, are led to the heavenly kingdoms. For to sit often pertains to humility, to rise to glory. Hence it is said: "Formerly sitting in ashes and sackcloth they repented" (Luke 10), that is, they were humbled. And the prophet: "I sat alone because of your hand, for you have filled me with indignation" (Jer. 15). And the Psalmist: "It is vain for you to rise up early; rise up after you have sat down, you who eat the bread of toil" (Ps. 127). This is plainly to say, "Why do you seek to rejoice in the present, which is reserved for the elect in the future? For you cannot in this life, that is, before the dawn of supernal retribution, possess the glory of true happiness; rather, after you have been humbled here for a time, there you should hope to be truly exalted forever; for you, to whom everything that seems sweet and pleasant to the lovers of the world is bitter. Therefore, the children of the Church rise and proclaim her most blessed when, exalted with heavenly goods, they see how great is the beatitude of that homeland to which they have merited to belong. And they celebrate her with due praise in the divine vision. Her husband praises her when he rewards the good deeds he has given.

By what words he praises her is subsequently shown, when it is said:

[Proverbs 31:29] -- "Many daughters have gathered riches," etc. He calls many daughters the churches of heretics and crowds of the wicked; and the daughters of the Catholics or of Christ or the Church, for they too are reborn through the sacraments of the Lord, and received the adoption of children, which they did not preserve. Hence John says: "They went out from us, but they were not of us" (1 John 2). They have gathered riches, namely, the works of good deeds, fastings, alms, affliction and chastity of the flesh, restraint of the tongue, meditation on the Scriptures, and the like. These are true riches of the Spirit where they are conducted with the pure sincerity of mind; but where they are done without faith which works through love, they benefit nothing to those who do them. But even those daughters have vainly gathered riches; of whom the Lord says: "Many will say to me in that day: Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and done many mighty works in your name? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you" (Matt. 7). But the Catholic Church surpasses all such daughters, which follows the footsteps of its Redeemer with pure faith and perfect works.

[Proverbs 31:30] -- "Grace is deceitful, and beauty is vain," etc. "Grace" is the praise that a person receives from men is deceitful, and "beauty" of chastity or good works which the soul shows to men is vain if it lacks the fear of God. But that conscience is truly worthy of praise, which in all things keeps the fear of God. For he is the beginning and guardian of all virtues, as Scripture says: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. 111; Prov. 1, 9; Ecclus. 1). And again: "He who fears the Lord neglects nothing" (Sir. 7). For this reason blessed Job, both in prosperity flourished incomparably in virtues, and in adversity remained an insuperable enemy, because he could truly say: "For I always feared the Lord like waves swelling over me, and I could not bear his weight" (Job 31). Hence, the grace of dissemblers is deceitful; the decoration of the work of fools is vain. But the Church, which

lives temporally in the fear of its pilgrimage, because it will offer burning lamps of virtues to its coming Judge and Husband, rightly praised by him, will enter with him the gate of the heavenly kingdom. How he praises her is taught in the concluding verse:

[Proverbs 31:31] -- "Give her of the fruit of her hands," etc. These are indeed the words of that man of whom it was said: "Her husband, and he praised her," that is, of our Lord and Savior, who will command the angels at the end to lead the Church, after the struggle of this life, after the threshing of earthly afflictions, to the joys of the heavenly kingdom, and to gather it together as a companion of immortal life, according to that evangelical saying, "Gather the wheat into my barn" (Matt. 13). "Give her," he says, "of the fruit of her hands," because she has taken care to bear the fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, modesty, self-control, faith, patience. For this, give her the due recompense, and let her works praise her in the gates, that is, in judgment or in the entry to the heavenly homeland. Not the superfluous praises of men, but the very works she has done, examining, approving, and rewarding him whose gracious gifts these are, so that we may deserve to be praised by him in the future, may he graciously grant us to praise him worthily in the present life with appropriate services. Amen.

Source. English translation: an older public-domain translation as collected in the Writings-Database (HistoricalChristianFaith), mostly from the Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers and similar nineteenth-century editions. SermonIndex has only divided it into chapters and short sections; the wording is the translator's own. Square brackets, Greek or Latin words and footnote-free text are as the source file prints them, and a transcription error may remain. No Greek or Latin text is shown beside it yet, and no modern English version has been made.