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THE BOOK OF WISDOM



CHAPTER 7

The Book of Wisdom never existed among the Hebrews. Its style has rather the fragrance of Greek eloquence. The Jews claim that it is a work of Philo; it is then said to be a work of Wisdom because in it the coming of Christ, the Wisdom of the Father, and his passion are clearly expressed. This is the Prologue Jerome put before the Book of Wisdom; he shows firstly the origin of this book saying: 'The Book of Wisdom never existed among the Hebrews. Its style, that is, its language is so elegant that it 'has rather the fragrance of Greek eloquence', that is, its taste is more Greek than Hebrew. The Greeks are more eloquent and deeper in their statements than the Hebrews. So, since this book has a most elegant style with the deepest teachings, it is clear that it was written in Greek rather than in Hebrew. Secondly, Jerome names its author when he says: 'The Jews claim that it', namely, the Book of Wisdom 'is a work of Philo' as its compiler but that Solomon was the person who discovered it. While Philo was a Jew he was highly skilled in the Greek language. Jerome says of him in the book *De viris illustribus* that 'he was a Jew of Alexandria of the class of priests'. Thirdly, he gives the reason for the title when he says: 'it is then said to be a work of Wisdom because in it the coming of Christ, the Wisdom of the Father, and his passion are clearly expressed'. The translation is based on the Douay Rheims version of the Bible.

END OF WISDOM 7

'I myself also am a mortal man, like all others, and of the race of him that was first made of the earth, and in the womb of my mother I was fashioned to be flesh.'

**THE COMMENTARY ON THE CHAPTERS OF THE BOOK OF WISDOM
ARE THE INTERPRETATIONS OF THE SERAPHIC DOCTOR SAINT BONAVENTURE, OFM**

Chapter 7

**Secondly, from his own example he gives a reason for exhorting
to wisdom**

I myself also am a mortal man, like all others, and of the race of him that was first made of the earth, and in the womb of my mother I was fashioned to be flesh. Above, he warned rulers to acquire and love wisdom by an argument taken from the danger of their office, but now he argues from his own example. He shows, firstly, how he received wisdom, namely, in the present chapter; secondly, how much he loved it, in chapter eight; thirdly, how devoutly he begged it from God, namely, in chapter nine.

He shows, firstly, how he acquired wisdom

In the first part, as he comes to the topic, he describes, firstly, the trouble of human weakness, and how this prompted him to acquire wisdom: *Wherefore I wished, and understanding was given me, and I called upon God, and the spirit of wisdom came upon me;* thirdly, he shows by whom he was taught: *God has given to me to speak.*

For God loves none but those who dwell with wisdom. – Contra: Below in Wisdom 11:25 he says: *You love all things that are*, even though not all things dwell with wisdom.

But it has to be said, that there he is speaking of natural love while here he is speaking of gratuitous love.

For she is more beautiful than the sun, and above all the order of the stars: being compared with the light, she is found before it. Here he treats of the beauty of wisdom, preferring it to the beauty of the sun, and he states, firstly, a comparison; secondly, the proof of the comparison: *For after this comes night.*

(Verse 29). I have said well that *God loves none but those who dwell with wisdom*, and rightly. *For she*, namely, wisdom, *is more beautiful than the sun*, because spiritual beauty excels bodily beauty; above in verse 10 of this chapter: *I loved her above health and beauty; than the sun*, namely, the material sun because it is the beauty of *the Sun of justice* of which Malachi 4:2 says: ‘Unto you that fear my name, the Sun of justice shall arise’. *And above all the order of the stars*, repeating the words: *is more beautiful*. For she made the stars, Genesis 1:16; and she is constant because she has retained for herself more beauty than that given to the stars; so above in Wisdom 4:1:

O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory, namely, the glory of wisdom. *Being compared with the light*, namely, both of the sun and of the stars, *she is found before it*, namely, in eternity, dignity and causality; so Sirach 24:6: ‘I made that in the heaven there should rise light that never fails’;

‘Bodily light that now sets, now rises, when compared to spiritual light, is like a sparkle. Christ also far transcends the brightness of the Saints’.

(Verse 30). *For after this*, namely after bodily light, *comes night*, according to Genesis 8:22: ‘Night and day shall not cease’; also Isaiah 21:12: ‘The morning comes, also the night’. But night does not follow spiritual light; so there follows: *but no evil*, spiritual darkness, *can overcome wisdom* which is spiritual light, so John 1:5: ‘The light shines in the darkness’.

Firstly, on the trouble of human weakness

In the first part he treats, firstly, of the imperfection of human nature; secondly, of the lowly nature of human conception: *in the womb of my mother I was fashioned to be flesh*; thirdly, the circumstances of birth: *I was nursed in swaddling clothes*; and fourthly, that all share this trouble: *none of the kings had any other beginning of birth*.

(Verse 1). *I myself also am a mortal man, like all others, and of the race of him that was first made of the earth, and in the womb of my mother I was fashioned to be flesh*. I advised you to accept the discipline of wisdom *by my words*; and you can do this not only by my words but also by my example, because *I am also*, that is, certainly, *a mortal man*, like yourselves;

I say, I am *mortal* that is, able to die from the first condition, but having to die because of the first sin; humans are rational but mortal animals; also Romans 8:10: ‘The body indeed is dead because of sin’, that is, committed to the necessity of dying. *Like all others*, others in this condition of mortality; 2 Samuel 14:14: ‘We all die and like waters that return no more we fall down into the earth’. *And of the race of him*, namely of Adam the transgressor, *that was first made*, namely, from the earth; so Genesis 2:7: ‘The Lord God formed man of the slime of the earth’; also 1 Corinthians 15:47-48: ‘The first man was of the earth, earthly’ and ‘Such as is the earthly, such also are the earthly’. *And in the womb of my mother I was fashioned to be flesh*. For, according to Saint Augustine in his book *Eighty-three Different Questions*, for the first six days the seed was like milk; after nine more days the milk changes into blood; after twelve more it takes on the shape of a body; after a further eighteen it is formed into an organic body. And then about the forty fifth or forty sixth day a soul is put in the body. During all the time remaining after the infusion of the soul in the body it is living and growing.

(Verse 2). *In the time of ten months I was compacted in blood, of the seed of man*, according to the philosophers of nature, ‘The seed of a woman is full of blood, the seed of a man is white; from a mixture of these, one acting as passive, the other as active, curdling takes place’; Job 10:10: ‘Have you not milked me as milk and curdled me like cheese?’ However, this curdling takes place in the first part of the ten months while the whole time of the development is nine months.

But contra: Because the normal time for formation is nine months; 2 Maccabees 7:27: 'My son, have pity upon me that bore you nine months in my womb'.

'Some are born in the seventh month, some in the eighth, some in the ninth; but those born in the tenth month are said to be more perfect, healthy and vital'. However, Christ, was in the womb of his mother 'for nine months and six days'; so when it says: *ten months*, it is understood as synecdoche; 'for it was from twenty fifth March until twenty fourth of December'.

And the pleasure of a dream concurring, or concurring in the pleasurable act of a husband and wife sleeping together. This pleasure is compared to the pleasure of a dream because it covers reason and quickly passes, like the pleasure of a dream.

(Verse 3). *And being born I drew in the common air* necessary for breathing; Ecclesiastes 3:19: 'All things breathe alike'. *And fell*, from the womb of my mother, *upon the earth that is made alike*, namely, by God as in Genesis 1:1; this is necessary for life and nourishment. *And the first voice which I uttered was crying as all others do*, namely, those being born. Augustine says that 'a child by its crying begins to be a prophet of its fate'; 'they report, that is, they say, that Zoroaster, king of the Bactrians, was the only child to have laughed when he was born'. Also only John the Baptist, against the law of birth, anticipated his birth with joy and exultation; Luke 1:44: 'The infant in my womb leaped for joy'.

(Verses 4, 5, 6). *I was nursed in a covering*, namely, in swaddling clothes; Luke 2:7: 'She wrapped him in swaddling clothes'. And with great care, 2 Maccabees 7:27: 'I gave you suck for three years and brought you up to this age'.

For none of the kings had any other beginning of birth, for in what concerns nature there is no difference between kings and subjects, only in what concerns fortune.

For all have one entrance into life, namely, through such a poor temporal birth, as it is said; *and the like going out*, through such a bitter death as described in Ecclesiastes 12:3ff. Also, *one entrance*, by a poor birth; *and the like going out*, by the poorest death; Job 1:21: 'Naked came I out of my mother's womb and naked shall I return thither'; Ecclesiastes 5:15: 'A most deplorable evil; as he came, so shall he return'.

But if *she can do all things*, therefore she is able to deceive and to die, which is wrong.

It must be said that she can do all things that are not contrary to her goodness, or that a power is able to do, not powerlessness.

And remaining in herself the same, namely, unchanging, according to James 1:17: 'With whom there is no change, nor shadow of alteration'; *she renews all things*, namely, temporal things by a continuous generation; Ecclesiastes 1:4: 'One generation passes away and another generation comes'; and she renews spiritual things by a spiritual regeneration; 2 Corinthians 5:17: 'If then any be in Christ a new creature, the old things are passed away'; Revelation 21:5: 'Behold, I make all things new'. *And through nations*, carnal or rather spiritual, of which John 3:5 says: 'Unless a person be born again of water and the Holy Spirit, the person cannot enter into the kingdom of God'. *Conveys herself into holy souls*, that is, into souls clean of sin, by the spiritual coming of grace into the soul; John 14:23: 'We will come to that person and will make our abode in that person'. Note, she is said to *convey* herself not by taking a new position or by changing places, but by a new effect; so he adds: *So she makes the friends of God*, by inflaming the affections, *and prophets*, by enlightening the mind; John 15:15: 'I will not now call you servants, for the servant does not know what the Lord does. But I have called you friends, because all things whatsoever I have heard of my Father I have made known to you'.

(Verse 28). *For God loves none but those who dwell with wisdom*, namely, by remaining with God, and who 'shall meditate day and night on the law of the Lord',

Proverbs 8:12: 'I wisdom dwell in counsel, and am present in learned thoughts'. And if *God loves none but those who dwell with wisdom*, then 'blessed is the person who shall continue in wisdom', Sirach 14:22.

By reason of her purity, that is, its distance from every dreg of matter, for, because it is completely immovable, it cannot be enclosed, according to Saint Damascene.

(Verse 25). *She is a vapour of the power of God*, that is, it emanates from God just as vapour rises from heat; : 'That is, for warming the cold of our unfaithfulness'; Sirach 24:21: 'My dwelling is as the frankincense not cut'. *And a certain pure emanation of the glory of the almighty God*, that is, emanating from God the Father just as brightness emanates from light, namely, to enlighten the darkness of our mind; Hebrews 1:3: 'Who being the brightness of God's glory and the figure of God's substance'; also Isaiah 62:1: 'Till the just one comes forth as brightness'. *Certain*, with no mixture of darkness; 1 John 1:5: 'God is light and in God there is no darkness'. This process in no way lessens, or separates, the substance of the Father, for the Persons remain distinct, : 'Without confusion of Persons or separation of substance'. And because it comes out like light, it cannot be stained; *therefore no defiled thing comes into her*, namely, neither by a culpable nor natural defilement; *comes into her*, namely, uncreated wisdom; : 'Evil does not come close to the highest good'.

(Verse 26). Indeed, *no defiled thing comes into her. For she is the brightness of eternal light*, namely, the purest light from eternal light, proceeding from the Father; so there is sung: 'O Christ, you have appeared as light from light'. Eternal light is seen in this light, according to Psalm 35:10: 'In your light we shall see light'; also John 14:9: 'The one who sees me, sees the Father also'. *She is*, therefore, *the brightness of eternal light*, by her representation of wisdom, and the unspotted mirror of God's majesty by her representation of divine majesty and power, according to John 5:19: 'What things so ever the Father does, these the Son also does in like manner'. I say *unspotted* because Christ 'did no sin'. *And the image of God's goodness*; 'That is, a total representation of God's goodness; Colossians 1:15: 'Who is the image of the invisible God'.

Note, that the *image* is the Son of God, immaculate in action and potential. An Angel is a pure and most bright *mirror*, but while being immaculate in what it does, it has at least a remote possibility of being stained. The human spirit is a *mirror* from which a divine image shines out, Genesis 1:26, but stained in both action and potential.

Also, every creature is called a *mirror* because the invisible things represent footprints of God; Romans 1:20: 'For the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen'; 1 Corinthians 3:12: 'We see now through a glass in a dark manner'. Sacred Scripture is a *mirror*; James 1:23: 'They shall be like those who look at the face of their birth in a mirror'.

(Verse 27). And being but one, namely, in essence with the Father, according to John 10:30: 'I and the Father are one'; *she can do all things*, that is, she has the same power as the Father; so below in Wisdom 18:15: *Your almighty word leapt down from heaven from your royal throne*.

He shows, secondly, that by this he is directed to wisdom

Wherefore I wished, and understanding was given me, and I called upon God, and the spirit of wisdom came upon me. Here he shows that this has directed him to acquire wisdom; and he treats, firstly, of receiving the desired wisdom; secondly, his judgment on the wisdom received: *and understanding was given me*, that is, wisdom; thirdly, his love for what he has judged: *I loved her above health and beauty*; fourthly, the sharing of what he has received and loved: *Which I have learned without guile, and communicate without envy, and her riches I hide not*.

(Verses 7, 8). *Wherefore*, that is, urged on from reflecting on the aforementioned misfortunes, *I wished*, namely, for wisdom. *And understanding was given me*, that is, wisdom; Proverbs 10:24: 'To the just their desire shall be given'. *And I called*, 'on the Lord'; James 1:5: 'If any of you want wisdom, then ask God for it'. *And the spirit of wisdom came upon me* while I was asking, according to Psalm 118:131: 'I opened my mouth', in prayer, 'and attracted the spirit'; also Sirach 15:5: 'In the midst of the church she opened his mouth and filled him with the spirit of wisdom'.

And I preferred her, namely by calculating her value, *before kingdoms*, that is, the grandeurs of kings, *and thrones*, that is, the grandeurs of judges; and rightly because Proverbs 8:15 says: 'By me kings reign'. *And I esteemed riches nothing in comparison of her*, Proverbs 3:15: 'She is more precious than all riches'. 'What does it avail a fool to have riches, seeing the fool cannot buy wisdom?'

(Verse 9). *Neither did I compare unto her any precious stone*, that is, by price or excellence; Psalm 118:127: 'I loved your commandments above gold and topaz'; also Job 28:16: 'It shall not be compared with the dyed colours of India, or with the most precious stone sardonyx or the sapphire'. 'The topaz of Ethiopia shall not be equal to it'. *For all gold in comparison of her, is as a little sand, and silver in respect to her shall be counted as clay*, as if to say: and rightly because *all gold*, that is, all the gold in the world, *in comparison of her, is as a little sand*, namely, unfertile land; 'What is gold other than red earth?' *A little sand*, that is, of slight weight; Job 28:15: 'The finest gold shall not purchase it'. *Shall be counted as clay*, that is, of no value; Job 28:15 'Neither shall silver be silver, and her frit that all the best and purest gold'. *Clay* is compared to silver because it stains the hands and soul; Habakkuk 2:6: 'How long does he load himself with thick clay?'

Note, that wisdom is preferred to silver, gold and every earthly treasure,

firstly, because of its origin, for earthly treasure is of the earth; Job 28:1: 'Silver has beginnings of its veins and gold has a place wherein it is melted', indeed, according to blessed it is 'of the earth'; but wisdom is from heaven as is clear in James 3:17.

Secondly, because of its nature, for earthly treasure is something bodily, while wisdom is spiritual; so Isaiah 11:2: 'The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom etc.'

Thirdly, because of its power, earthly treasure is limited while wisdom is finite; so further on in this same chapter he says: *For she is an infinite treasure to people which they that use become the friends of God.*

Fourthly, because of its mode of acting, for earthly treasure can do but few things while wisdom can do everything; below in chapter 8:5 he says: *What is richer than wisdom, which makes all things?*

Fifthly, because of its value, for treasure is valued while wisdom is not; Job 28:16: 'It shall not be compared with the dyed colours of India or with the most precious stone sardonyx or the sapphire'.

Sixthly, because of its usefulness, for wisdom without wealth is a benefit, but riches without wisdom are of no benefit but do harm; so Ecclesiastes 5:12: 'Riches kept to the hurt of the owner'.

Seventhly, because of its duration, for, as in Wisdom 6:13: *Wisdom is glorious, and never fades away*; but riches are destroyed; so James 5:2: 'Your riches are corrupted'; also James 1:11: 'The rich shall fade away in their ways'.

Eighthly, because of its movement, for wisdom which is from above lifts upwards, while gold and silver draw one down, namely, to the earth; so Baruch 3:18-19: 'They that hoard up silver and gold, wherein people trust, are cut off and are gone down to hell'.

I loved her above health and beauty, and chose to have her instead of light: for her light cannot be put out. Here he shows a love for the wisdom he has valued. Firstly, he shows the extent of his love; secondly, its cause: *Now all good things came to me together with her, and innumerable riches through her hands.*

For wisdom is more active than all active things and reaches everywhere by reason of her purity. Here he shows that wisdom by its nature and by the power within it can be a medium by which we are taught. And to illustrate this he states, firstly, its activity; secondly, its purity: *reaches everywhere by reason of her purity*, thirdly, its power: *And being but one, she can do all things*; fourthly, its beauty: *For she is more beautiful than the sun.*

(Verse 24). I have said well that there is *in her is the spirit of understanding: holy, one, manifold, subtle, eloquent, active, undefiled, sure, sweet, loving that which is good, quick, which nothing hinders, beneficent.* *For wisdom is more active*, in every kind of movement whether it be in substance, in quality, in quantity, or local motion; *wisdom is more active*, that is, it works more swiftly; 'Nothing is more subtle and active than wisdom for it created, rules and orders all things'; *more active*, I say, not because it is moved but because it moves all things while remaining still, 'Remaining steadfast you give movement to all things'. Also Acts 17:28: 'For in God we live, and move, and are'.

However, it reaches everywhere by reason of her purity. Here he shows its purity, firstly, from the fact that it comes, or emanates, from the purest source; secondly, because it reflects in itself the brightness of the source: *For she is the brightness of eternal light, and the unspotted mirror of God's majesty, and the image of God's goodness.*

I have said that *wisdom is more active than all active things*; nor only; *and for but*; but what is more, she *reaches everywhere*, that is, from the supreme creature to the last creature; Saint Ambrose in *Hexaëmeron* says: 'Divine wisdom has penetrated even to a shell-fish'.

But contra: Job 28:14: 'The depth says: It is not in me; and the sea says: It is not with me'.

The reply is that he is speaking there not of creatures but of the vices of creatures. Or it should be said in a better way that God is not in the abyss or in the sea by being contained in it, since God cannot be contained, but is there by presence, according to Psalm 138:8: 'If I ascend into heaven, you are there, if I descend into hell, you are present'.

Having all power. Here he shows its universal sufficiency, firstly, in goodness; secondly, in wisdom: *overseeing all things*; thirdly, in power: *and containing all spirits*.

He says, therefore: *Having all power*; in Psalm 32:6: 'All the power of them by the spirit of the Lord's mouth'. But contra: Because one does not have faith since faith is an obscure knowledge and an imperfect power.

It must be said that he is speaking of every power, understood not of any but of perfect power.

Overseeing all things; Job 37:3: 'God beholds above all the heavens, and God's light is upon the ends of the earth'; also Hebrews 4:13: 'For all things are naked and open to God's eyes'. *And the One who contains all spirits*, namely, angelic spirits, 'because they go from within God to wherever they are sent', on Luke 1:19: 'I am Gabriel who stand before God'. The Angels are called spirits because of their substance and nature; *intelligible* because of their power, or because by their nature they cannot be joined to bodies;

Or: *Containing*, that is, enables one to contain, *all spirits*, that is, all the gifts of the Holy Spirit, of which Isaiah 11:2 says: 'The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: the spirit of wisdom, and of understanding, the spirit of counsel, and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and of godliness'. *Pure*, namely, from purity of innocence; the Angels are 'pure and clearest mirrors'; and he adds: *pure*, in contrast to unclean spirits, that is, demons.

Subtle, from a keenness of understanding; or: *subtle*, from wisdom; 'What is it they are not to see who, when looking, see everything?' Some books have *is pure, subtle*; pure is the spirit of wisdom because it is without the dregs of matter; *subtle*, because it is pure form. But the first version is more exact.

Or: the spirit of wisdom is said to be *pure* because it cleanses from past sins and protects from future sins; or because it purifies from sin in the present and in the future from punishment; *undefiled*, because it can incur uncleanness neither from itself nor from another; *subtle*, because it penetrates everything, or because it causes in us a subtlety of affection from the gift of wisdom and of the mind by the gift of understanding or discernment.

(Verse 10). *I loved her above health*; 'of the body' namely, interior: Psalm 59:13: 'For human help is vain'; *and beauty*, 'Of what concerns the body', namely, exterior beauty, because, Proverbs 31:30 says: 'Favour is deceitful and beauty is vain'; *I loved her*, namely, wisdom, because to the degree that spirit is better than body and should be loved more dearly, to that degree spiritual concerns should be loved better and more than bodily concerns. And I loved it so much that *I chose to have her instead of light*; I say, compared to bodily lights she is the most beautiful, most delightful and best, according to Saint Augustine; in this way wisdom, in spiritual matters, is the light of the soul; Sirach 51:26: 'In its wisdom my soul bewailed and it enlightened my ignorance'; and Wisdom 7:29: *she is more beautiful than the sun*. The text continues: *For her light cannot be put out*, namely, in itself, as stated in Wisdom 7:29-30: *Being compared with the light, she is found before it, for after this comes night*.

(Verse 11). *Now all good things came to me*, namely, of graces totally within me; *together with her*, that is, with uncreated wisdom, the Son of God; so Romans 8:32: 'He that spared not even his own Son but delivered him up for us all, how has he not also, with him, given us all things?' 'Whoever seizes hold on Christ, has also grace and life eternal in the future'. Or: *With her*, that is with created wisdom because it is the most perfect gift. 'Solomon experienced this when, on asking for wisdom, the Lord added riches and glory'. *And innumerable riches*, externally in comparison with others, *through her hands*, that is her works; add: come to me; Wisdom 10:10: *Made him honourable in his labours and accomplished his labours*.

(Verse 12). *And I rejoiced*, filled with joy, *in all these*, namely, with spiritual gifts; Sirach 4:12: 'Wisdom protects those who seek after her, and will go before them in the way of justice'. This is the column of fire and the cloud that led Israel by night and day, Exodus 13:21. *And I knew not*, namely, before having her;

'He understands from a practice of meditation that he has advanced to the point where he now thinks of his former knowledge as ignorance when compared to the latter knowledge'. I say, I knew not that she was the mother of them all, namely, the good things; Sirach 24:24: 'I am the mother of fair love and of fear and of knowledge and of holy hope'; also Sirach 24:25: 'In me is all grace of the way and of the truth, in me is all hope of life and of virtue'.

(Verse 13) *Which I have learned without guile*, that is, with all my heart, knowing that *‘the holy spirit of discipline will flee from the deceitful*, as above in Wisdom 1:5; also Proverbs 2:4-5: ‘If you shall seek her as money and shall dig for her as for a treasure, then shall you understand the fear of the Lord and shall find the knowledge of God’. *And communicate without envy*, namely, by not hiding what are useful, as above in Wisdom 6:25: *Neither will I go with consuming envy*; also Proverbs 5:16: ‘Let your fountains be conveyed abroad’. *And her riches I hide not*, that is, her beauty by covering her with obscure words; Sirach 4:28: ‘Hide not your wisdom in her beauty’; also Sirach 20:32: ‘Wisdom that is hid, and treasure that is not seen, what profit is there in them both?’

(Verse 14). *For there is an infinite treasure*, in her, *for people*, and so there is no limit to how much can be given; that knowledge is a noble treasure of the soul that is increased as it is shared while a covetous owner is shamed; unless treasure is made public, it disappears. ‘Every good thing is not diminished by sharing; if it is possessed and not shared, is not yet possessed as it should be’. Sirach 1:21: ‘She shall fill all her house with her increase, and her storehouses with her treasures’. *Which*, namely, the treasure of wisdom, *they that use*, by guiding themselves by her, *become the friends of God*; so below in Wisdom 7:27: *She makes the friends of God and prophets. Being commended for the gift of discipline*, that is, of wisdom which they do not get by their own efforts but as given by the Holy Spirit, according to 1 Corinthians 12:11: ‘All these things’, namely, the gifts of grace, ‘one and the same Spirit works, dividing to every one according as the Spirit wills’. *Being commended*, that is, made commendable to God and people; 2 Corinthians 10:18: ‘For not those who commend themselves, are approved, but those whom God commends’.

Thirdly, he shows from whom wisdom is learnt

And God has given to me to speak as I would, and to conceive thoughts worthy of those things that are given me: because God is the guide of wisdom, and the director of the wise. Here he shows from whom wisdom is learnt; and he shows, firstly, who taught him; secondly, what kinds of things he was taught: *God has given to me to speak*; thirdly, by what medium he was taught: *The worker of all things taught me*.

Undefined, sure. Here he describes the goodness of its nature and, firstly, its absolute goodness in itself; secondly, its goodness in comparison to us: *loving that which is good*; thirdly, its firmness in both: *steadfast*. He touches on its absolute goodness in three things, namely, in its purity when he says: *undefined*; in truth: *sure*; in its tranquility when he says: *sweet*.

Therefore, he says *undefined*; : ‘That is, without stain’, and so it cleanses stains in baptism; John 3:5: ‘Unless a person be born again of water and the Holy Spirit, the person cannot enter the kingdom of heaven; also in Titus 3:5: ‘By the washing of regeneration, and renovation of the Holy Spirit’. *Sure*; ‘It neither deceives nor is deceived’; so in John 16:13 it is called: ‘The Spirit of truth’. *Sweet*, namely, tranquil with no trace of harshness; ‘Kind and merciful’; below in Wisdom 12:1: ‘O how good and sweet is your spirit, O Lord, in us!’ *Loving that which is good, quick, who nothing hinders, beneficent*. Here he shows its goodness in comparison to us, firstly, in a love for good; secondly, in promoting goodness: *who nothing hinders*; thirdly, in communicating or sharing itself: *Gentle*; fourthly, in communicating what it has: *kind*.

He says, therefore, *loving good deeds*; 1 Corinthians 13:6: ‘Rejoice not in iniquity but rejoice with the truth’; *who puts no obstacle to doing good*, but rather gives help; Romans 8:26: ‘The Spirit helps our infirmity’; Proverbs 3:27: ‘Do not withhold a person from doing good who is able; if you are able, do good yourself too’.

(Verse 23). *Gentle*: ‘Common to all’; Acts 10:34: ‘In every deed I perceive that God is not a respecter of persons’. Or: *Gentle*, that is, sympathetic of which the sign is what is said in Romans 8:26: ‘The Spirit asks for us with unspeakable groanings’. Or: *Gentle*: that is, living willingly among people; Proverbs 8:31: ‘My delights were to be with the children of the human race’. *Kind*, that is, liberal ‘from innate goodness’; above in Wisdom 1:6: *The spirit of wisdom is benevolent* etc.; also: *Kind*, by forgiving evils, by giving good things, by guiding to the fatherland; so, in Galatians 5:22, gentleness is said to be a fruit of the Holy Spirit. *Steadfast*, namely, in itself, remaining steadfast etc.; also, giving steadfastness in the gifts promised. Nor is it surprising that he speaks here of *steadfast* and above in the same chapter of *active*, because here he is speaking of its diverse effects, of which in Psalm 39:3 we read: ‘He set my feet upon a rock, and directed my steps’. Or: *Active* in active works, *steadfast* in contemplatives; or: *steadfast* in Christ, *active* in other Saints; John 1:33: ‘Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending’. Or in this way: *steadfast* in good; *assured*, that is, constant in truth; *secure*, from evil, according to Psalm 90:10: ‘No evil shall come to you’. And just as it is *steadfast* and *assured* and *secure* in itself, so in those in whom it dwells it makes them *steadfast* in good, *assured* in truth, *secure* from evil; Colossians 1:23: ‘In the faith grounded and settled, and immovable from the hope of the gospel’.

Thirdly, through what medium he was taught

For wisdom, the worker of all things, taught me. Here he shows by what medium he was taught, namely, by uncreated Wisdom begotten from the Father; and for what he had been able, what he knew and wanted to teach, what he had been shown, firstly, by the Holy Spirit who comes from uncreated Wisdom; secondly, by the nature and virtue which is in it: *For wisdom is more active than all active things and reaches everywhere by reason of her purity.*

In the first part he touches on the procession of the Holy Spirit from uncreated Wisdom; secondly, the multiple effect of the Spirit in us: *holy, manifold* etc.; thirdly, the goodness of the nature of wisdom: *undefiled*; fourthly, its overall sufficiency: *having all power*. Its effect touches us, firstly, interiorly, secondly, exteriorly: He treats of the interior effect in four ways, namely, the correcting of sin, when he says: *holy*; the multiplying of grace, when he says: *manifold*; the unity of agreement, when he says: *one*; the subtlety of understanding, when he says: *subtle*. He treats of the exterior effect in three ways, namely, modest, when he says: *Modest*; eloquence, when he says: *eloquent*; obedience, when he says: *active*.

(Verse 21– continued). There is shown *the worker of all things*, of all that is above, in the middle and below; the worker is God as in Hebrews 11:3. *Wisdom taught me*, that is, I was taught by wisdom; ‘Because knowledge of truth is given by it’, because a human being can teach externally, but not internally; : ‘Unless one who teaches is an inner person, externally the person works with the tongue of a doctor but into a void’.

(Verse 22). *For in her is the spirit of understanding*, as if to say: she was well able to teach me; *for in her*, namely, in wisdom *is the spirit of understanding*; in her by dwelling in the humanity; Isaiah 11:2: ‘The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him’; it is in her by the divinity emanating from her. I say, she is the giver of *the spirit of understanding*; Job 32:8: ‘The inspiration of the Almighty gives understanding’. *Holy*, : ‘Making all things holy’; above in Wisdom 1:5: *The holy spirit of discipline will flee from the deceitful*. ‘Giving manifold graces’; 1 Corinthians 12:4, 11: ‘And there are diversities of graces, but the same Spirit. But all of these things one and the same Spirit works, dividing to everyone according as the Spirit wills’. *One*, ‘Uniting good people’; Ephesians 4:3: ‘Careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace’. *Subtle*, namely, enabling one to penetrate hidden things; 1 Corinthians 2:10: ‘The Spirit searches all things’, that is, enables all things to be searched, ‘even the deep things of God’. Also *subtle*, namely, by providing stability or giving clarity of understanding; so it is called ‘the spirit of understanding in Isaiah 11:2. Namely, teaching everything in a kindly way; Philippians 4:5: ‘Let your modesty be known to all people’. *Eloquent*, namely, by making people eloquent; below in Wisdom 10:21: *She made the tongues of infants eloquent*. *Active*, namely, by making people active through obedience; Ezekiel 1:20: ‘Wherever the spirit went, the wheels also were lifted up, and followed it: for the spirit of life was in the wheels’.

Firstly, who did the teaching

(Verse 15). *And God has given to me to speak as I would*. I have said well: *She is an infinite treasure to people which they that use become the friends of God*; but I have been used; *and*, for because;

God has given to me to speak, that is, not only to know but also to teach; Isaiah 50:4: ‘The Lord has given me a learned tongue that I should know how to uphold by word him that is weary’. *To speak*, I say, *as I would*, that is, with a sure opinion; Proverbs 12:19: ‘The lip of truth shall be steadfast for ever’;

Psalm 36:30: ‘The mouths of the just shall meditate wisdom and their tongue shall speak judgment’, that is, a sure opinion. *And to conceive thoughts worthy of those things that are given me*.

Note that there is an arrogant presumption of which Judith 6:15 says: ‘You humble those who presume of themselves and glory in their own strength’. But there is a presumption of confidence in divine power and mercy, of which Judith 6:15 says: ‘You do not forsake those that trust in you’; also Judith 9:17: ‘Hear me a poor wretch, making supplication to you, and presuming on your mercy’.

And to conceive thoughts, that is, to carry out with confidence, *worthy*, that is, works of *those things that are given me*, that is, strenuous and upright works according to the gifts given to me; ‘to whom more is given, more will be required’.

Because God is the guide of wisdom; ‘That is, author’; Sirach 1:1: ‘All wisdom is from the Lord God’. Also God gives wisdom; James 1:5: ‘If any of you want wisdom, ask for it from God who gives to all abundantly’.

And the director of the wise, that is, the corrector; Revelation 3:19: ‘Such as I love, I rebuke and chastise’, namely, if it should happen that they fall into error. ‘Sometimes the good Homer sleeps’.

Also Saint Augustine: I will be able to err, but I will never be a heretic.

(Verse 16). *For in God's hand are both we, and our words, and all wisdom, and the knowledge and skill of works.* I have said well that *God is the guide and the director of the wise, for we are in God's hands*; 'That is, in God's power'; *both we* who have wisdom, Jeremiah 18:6: 'As clay is in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel'; also Proverbs 21:1: 'As the divisions of waters so the heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord'. *And our words*, Proverbs 16:1: 'It is the part of mortals to prepare the soul, and of the Lord to govern the tongue'; Matthew 10:20: 'For it is not you that speaks but the Spirit of your Father that speaks in you'. *And all wisdom* which is knowledge of divine matters, *and of works*, namely, human works, *the discipline of knowledge*; Isaiah 26:12: 'You have wrought all our works for us'.

Secondly, what kinds of things he was taught

For God has given me. Here he shows what and what kinds of things God taught him, and firstly, that God taught him knowledge of temporal causes; secondly, of temporal changes: *The beginning, and ending*; thirdly, of temporal workings: *The natures of living creatures.*

(Verse 17). *For God* who alone teaches hearts, according to the words of Saint Augustine: 'God who teaches hearts on earth has a chair in heaven'; *has given me the true knowledge of the things that are*, namely, the existence of things because there can be no knowledge of what does not exist; so as Saint Augustine says: 'What does not exist cannot be known'. Also as he says: 'As anything is in relation to being so is it in relation to truth'. *True knowledge*, namely, sure knowledge with no mixture of error; 1 Kings 4:29: 'God gave to Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much'. *To know the disposition of the whole world*, namely, the whole world under the encompassing sky; Sirach 24:8: 'I alone have compassed the circuit of heaven'; *and the virtues of the elements*, namely, the qualities, seminal reasons, mixtures or connections, and harmonies of the elements; Proverbs 8:27: 'When the Lord prepared the heavens, I was present, when with a certain law and compass the Lord enclosed the depths'.

(Verse 18). *The beginning, and ending, and midst of the times*, namely, the four seasons or parts of the year which are caused by the movement of the sun, according to the four quarters of the zodiac; *the alterations of their courses*, that is, of the successions of days and nights by which the quality of the atmosphere is changed from brightness to darkness and the reverse; *and the reckoning of seasons*, that is, of both the solar and lunar months. Some add here: *changes of behaviour and divisions of times*; *changes of behaviour*, namely, of human customs, according to the diverse states of people; *divisions of times*, that is, of the ages of the world and of people.

(Verses 19, 20). *The revolution of the year*, namely, the whole time caused by the movement of the sun through the zodiac; Genesis 1:14: 'Let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years'. *And the dispositions*, in the quality of the nights, *of the stars*, namely, as distinct from the sun; in Psalm 135:9: 'The moon and the stars to rule the night'.

The natures of living creatures, namely, tame animals, *and the rage of wild beasts*, that is, the movement of savage animals such as the lion and similar animals. Note that he says: *The natures of living creatures, and rage of wild beasts* with reference to living substances. Then he adds with reference to inanimate things: *the force of winds* which are twelve, four main and eight collateral winds; these are of great strength as is clear in Job 1:19 and Exodus 14:21 in the drying up of the sea and in many other places. *And reasonings of people.*

Contra: Only God knew human hearts, so in 1 Corinthians 2:11 we read: 'For who knows the things of a person but the spirit within the person', as if to say: No one other than God.

It must be said that here he is speaking of conjectural knowledge, not knowledge of certitude. Or it has to be said that by the revelation of Scripture they can be known by human beings, not by nature or by their own efforts. *The diversities of shrubbery*, namely, of plants, and the virtues of roots, namely, of crops; 1 Kings 4:33: 'He treated about trees from the cedar that is in Lebanon unto the hyssop that comes out of the wall'.

(Verse 21). *And all such things as are hid, or concealed*, from its causes, *and not foreseen*, by people, *I have learned*; Ecclesiastes 7:26: 'I have surveyed all things with my mind, to know, and consider, and seek out wisdom'. 'What is gold other than red earth?' *A little sand*, that is, of slight weight; Job 28:15: 'The finest gold shall not purchase it'. *Shall be counted as clay*, that is, of no value; Job 28:15: 'Neither shall silver be weighed in exchange for it';

Proverbs 3:14: 'The purchasing of her is better than the merchandise of silver, and her fruit than all the best and purest gold'. *Clay* is compared to silver because it stains the hands and soul; Habakkuk 2:6: 'How long does he load himself with thick clay?'