

(Verse 29). *For whilst they trust in idols, which are without life, with regard to life; though they swear amiss, concerning the thing by which they swear, because by an idol, and concerning the thing for which they swear, because it is false, against Jeremiah 4:2: 'You shall swear: the Lord lives in truth and in judgment and in justice'. They look not to be hurt, that is, they are not afraid. But how is it that they are not afraid when they believe them to be genuine gods? It must be said that while they worship them as gods, they do not think there is omnipotence in them; or they do not believe that they punish the sins of humans. And indeed they cannot harm them because of what Jeremiah 10:5 says: 'Therefore, fear them not', namely, idols, 'for they can neither do evil nor good'; but they will be punished by God for the sin of perjury.*

(Verse 30). So he continues: *But two things shall happen to them, namely, the evil of sin, because they were allowed to swear wrongly; and the evil of punishment, because they shall be punished for this; shall happen I say, justly, namely, as merited; Revelation 22:11: 'He that is filthy, let him be filthy still'. Because they have thought not well of God, giving heed to idols, that is, by giving divine worship to idols, when they swear by an idol. And have sworn unjustly on an idol, in guile despising justice, namely, by swearing to what is unlawful or false, and so they err or sin in a double way, namely, because they swear by what they should not swear, and because they swear what they should not swear; Exodus 23:13: 'By the name of strange gods you shall not swear'.*

(Verse 31). *For it is not, as if to say: and they indeed sin by swearing in this way; for it is not the power of those who swear, that is, a virtuous or meritorious work; but the punishment of sinners, that is, the sin itself, that also is a punishment of the preceding sins and the guilt in it. The transgression always progresses, namely, from bad to worse, of the unjust, that is, of unjust things, namely, of the commandments of God; 'For sin that penitence does not wash soon, by its own weight, drifts towards another'; so Psalm 34:6: 'Let their way become dark and slippery and let the angel of the Lord pursue them'.*

END OF WISDOM 14



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THE BOOK OF WISDOM



CHAPTER 14

THE BOOK OF WISDOM—A PROLOGUE BY SAINT JEROME

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.

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

Chapter 14

Secondly, the renunciation of idols is discussed under four headings

Again, another designing to sail, and beginning to make his voyage through the raging waves, he calls upon a piece of wood more frail than the wood that carries him. After the description of the multiple errors of idolaters, here it treats of the renouncing of idols, and, firstly, from the uselessness of idols; secondly, from the offences to the Creator: *But to God the wicked and his wickedness are hateful alike*; thirdly, from their newness and the way in which they were found: *For they were not from the beginning, neither shall they be forever*; fourthly, from the resulting human corruption: *And it was not enough for them to err*.

For the worship of abominable idols is the cause, and the beginning and end of all evil. Here is shown that idolatry is the cause of this corruption; and he shows, firstly, how idolatry is the cause of all evils in idolaters; secondly, why, since it comes from a hope of immunity: *For whilst they trust in idols, which are without life, though they swear amiss, they look not to be hurt*; thirdly, he shows that this in fact is a cause of punishment for them: *But for two things they shall be justly punished, because they have thought not well of God, giving heed to idols, and have sworn unjustly, in guile despising justice*; fourthly, he shows what that punishment is, namely, an occasion for falling into other sins: *For it is not the power of them, by whom they swear, but the just vengeance of sinners always punishes the transgression of the unjust*.

(Verse 27). *For the worship of abominable idols* etc. I have said this, namely, that idolaters make so many and such great evils; *for the worship of abominable*, namely, heinous, named unworthy, according to Psalm 15:4: 'Nor will I be mindful of their names by my lips'. I say, *the worship of abominable idols is the cause of all evil*, namely, by blinding the mind and subverting the will; *and the beginning*, namely, as the commencement of a work; and the *end*, by its completion just as faith and the worship of God are the cause of all good, as the Apostle proves in Hebrews 11:1 where he says: 'Faith is the substance of things to be hoped for'.

But contra: Sirach 10:15: 'Pride is the beginning of all sin'; also, 1 Timothy 6:10: 'The desire of money is the root of all evils': therefore, it is not said correctly here that unfaithfulness is the beginning of all evils. It has to be said that it is not out of order for many things to be beginnings of evils from different points of view – just as for one thing there are four causes, namely, efficient, material etc., and yet the thing is of one kind – so the beginning of evil can be partially from rational unfaithfulness, partially from greedy desire, partly from irascible pride.

(Verse 28). *For either they are mad when they are merry*; 'In feasts and games', and this regarding evil in affection; *they are mad*, he says, because irrational joy is madness, just like the laughter of the delirious; Hosea 9:8: 'Madness is in the house of God'. *Or, certainly, they prophesy lies*, namely, by prophesying falsehoods, and this concerning evil in thought; 1 Kings 22:22: 'I will go forth and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all the prophets'. *Or they live unjustly*, and this with regard to evil in speech; Ecclesiastes 7:16: 'A wicked person lives a long time in wickedness'. *Or forswear*, or swear falsely, and this with regard to a sin in speech: *quickly*, that is, easily, out of an evil habit; for this reason Sirach 23:9 says: 'Let not your mouth be accustomed to swearing, for in it there are many falls'.

Firstly, an idol is to be despised because of its uselessness

(Verse 25). I have said well: *And all things are mingled together*, namely, *blood*, mutual wounding; so Isaiah 1:15: 'Your hands are full of blood'; also Hosea 4:2: 'Blood has touched blood'. *Murder*; so Micah 7:2: 'Every one hunts his brother to death'. *Theft*, Isaiah 1:23: 'Your princes are faithless, companions of thieves'; Psalm 49:18: 'If you saw a thief, you ran with him'. *And dissimulation*, namely, deceit; 'For deceit is when something is done but something else is alleged or pretended'.

Corruption. Here he treats of sins of the heart, namely, of the power of desire: Psalm 13:1: 'They are corrupt and are become abominable in their ways; there is none that does good, no not one'. *And unfaithfulness*, namely, mental; so Jeremiah 7:28: 'Faith is lost, and is taken away out of their mouth'. *Tumult*, namely, of the power for being angry; so Isaiah 57:21: 'There is no peace to the wicked, says the Lord God'. These are the three evils of the heart.

Then he treats of three evils of speech saying: *And perjury*, namely, either assertive as in false declarations, or promising as in false promises against which Leviticus 19:12 says: 'You shall not swear'. *Tumult*, namely, in disputes and disagreements; so Isaiah 3:5: 'The child shall make a tumult against the ancient'.

(Verse 26). *And forgetfulness of the good things of God*, that is, ingratitude because they do not give praise for God's gifts; so Luke 17:18: 'There is no one found to return and give glory to God, but this stranger';

Psalm 30:13: 'I am forgotten as one dead from the heart'. These are the three evils of speech: firstly, against God and a neighbour; secondly, against a neighbour; thirdly, against God, namely, by omission.

(Verse 26) *Defiling of souls, changing of nature, disorder in marriage, and the irregularity of adultery and uncleanness*. Here he treats of carnal sins, firstly, sins of interior passion; secondly, of unnatural unions, as: *Changing of nature*; thirdly, bigamy: *Disorder in marriage and the irregularity of adultery*; fourthly, fornication: *And uncleanness*. – Therefore, he says: *Defiling of souls*, namely, by internal passion; so Matthew 5:28: 'Has already committed adultery with her in his heart'; Jeremiah 4:14: 'Wash your heart, O Jerusalem, that you may be saved'; Titus 1:15: 'Both their mind and their conscience are defiled'. *Changing of nature*, that is, of nature or of a natural practice; Romans 1:26: 'Women have changed the natural use into that use which is against nature'. *Disorder in marriage*, namely, by accepting and changing wives as they wish when they should 'be two in one flesh', Genesis 2:24; also Matthew 19:6: 'What therefore God has joined together, let no one put asunder'. *And the irregularity of adultery*, that is, adultery against the order of marriage, contrary to Exodus 20:14: 'You shall not commit adultery'.

And uncleanness, namely, fornication, against what Romans 13:13 says: 'Not in chambering and impurities'.

In the first part he shows the uselessness of idols by using the example of sailors at sea who get no help when calling on idols for help. He shows that this lack of power is to be despised, firstly, from the fragility of a powerless idol; secondly, from the power of God who saves even without a boat: *However, your providence, O Father, governs it, for you have made a way even in the sea, and a most sure path among the waves*; thirdly, from the usefulness of a boat: *But that the works of thy wisdom might not be idle, therefore men also trust their lives even to a little wood, and passing over the sea by ship are saved*; fourthly, from the example of the ark of Noah saving the human race: *And from the beginning also when the proud giants perished, the hope of the world fleeing to a vessel, which was governed by your hand, left to the world seed of generation*.

(Verse 1). Therefore, he says: *Again, another designing to sail* etc., as if to say: not only do people ask idols in vain for help on earth, but *again*, on water, *another*, namely a human being, *designing to sail*, that is, intending to sail, *through the raging dangerous waves*; so Psalm 92:4: 'Wonderful are the surges of the sea'; also Sirach 43:26: 'Let them that sail on the sea, tell the dangers thereof'. *Beginning to make his voyage*, namely, by carrying out his intention, *through the raging waves, he calls upon a piece of wood more frail than the wood that carries him; for help, he calls upon a piece of wood*, namely, an idol, *more frail than the wood that carries him*, that is, than the ship.

(Verse 2). *For this*, namely, the wood of an idol, *the desire of gain devised*; so in Ephesians 5:5 it is called: 'a serving of idols'. *And the workman built it by his skill*; he says: *his*, as if to say: not divine, but 'earthly, sensual, devilish'; Isaiah 45:16: 'The forgers of error are gone together into confusion'; and Job 13:4: 'Having first shown that you are forgers of lies'; 'When one who makes something is greater than what is made, it is folly to adore what was made'.

(Verse 3). *However, O Father*, as if to say: they call upon an idol for guidance on a journey; *however* for but; *Father by your creation*; Isaiah 64:8: 'And now, O Lord, you are our father, and we are clay, and you are our maker, and we are all the works of your hands'; also by providing; so Matthew 6:9ff.: 'Our Father who are in heaven ... give us our bread' etc. You *govern*, all things, namely, by *providence* which, 'is the care of God for everything'; Judith 9:5 says of this: 'In your providence you have placed your judgments'.

It is clear from what has been said that in the world nothing happens by chance or luck, because, it is impossible for anything to attain becoming therefore, 'Things that come from providence are better governed than what comes from chance; but the world is excellently governed: therefore' etc.

For you have made a way even in the sea, as if to say: it is clear that *you govern* all things *by providence*; *for you have made*, namely, for the children of Israel, *a way even in the sea*, by bringing them out of Egypt through the midst of the dry sea, as is clear in Exodus 14:21ff.; *a most sure path among the waves*, namely, of the river Jordan, as in Joshua 3:15ff. Of both, Psalm 76:20 says: 'Your way is in the sea, and your paths in many waters'; 'Divine power led the Israelites through the Red Sea on a dry path and divided the waters of the Jordan'.

(Verse 4). *Showing*, namely, by this, *that you are able to restore out of all things*, namely, in dangers and emergencies, or better, according to another version, to save even without a raft, that is, a boat, *yea though a man went to sea*; Isaiah 43:2: 'When you shall pass through the waters, I will be with you, and the rivers shall not cover you'; so 'Jesus, lest Peter sink when walking upon the water, held him up', as is clear in Matthew 14:28ff.; 'he delivered Paul three times from drowning in the sea, as is clear in 2 Corinthians 11:25.

(Verse 5). *But that the works of your wisdom might not be idle*, rather necessary for human use, that is, devised by your wisdom; Psalm 103:24: 'You have made all things in wisdom'. *Therefore people also trust their lives*, that is, their bodily life, *even to a little wood*, namely to a small boat; *and passing over the sea*, in which indeed there are innumerable dangers, *by ship are saved*; 'The Creator gave knowledge to creatures by which they might be mindful of and serve their Creator'.

In an allegorical sense the *little wood* can be said to be the cross of Christ because of his humiliation and abasement; 1 Corinthians 1:23: 'We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews indeed a stumbling block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness'. To this wood, *people trust their lives*, namely, by believing in Christ crucified and by adoring the One in whom they believe. *And so passing over the sea*, of this world, namely, by the power and imitation of the cross, they are delivered by a boat and reach the harbour of eternal salvation.

(Verse 23). He says, therefore: *For either they sacrifice their own children*, according to Psalm 105:37: 'And they sacrificed their own sons and daughters to devils'; Ezekiel 16:20-21: 'Is your fornication small? You have sacrificed and given my children to them, consecrating them by fire', 'In the sacred rites of Saturn, out of hatred for Jupiter, they sacrificed their children without attention to duty'. *Or use hidden sacrifices*, hidden, that is, at night as was done, 'in the rites of the Egyptian Isis and of Ceres, which rites they used celebrate by the throwing of flaming pine-torches'. *Or keeping night-watches full of mad raving*, for in the mystery rites of Bacchus and of Cybele, Mother of the gods, 'they themselves used to sport wantonly, following the example of the gods, who, sated with feasting, would pass the whole night in dalliance'.

Psalm 39:5 says against this: 'Blessed is the person whose trust is in the name of the Lord and who has no regard to vanities and lying follies'.

(Verse 24). *So that now they neither keep life*, namely, their own undefiled, because 'God gave them up unto uncleanness', Romans 1:24; nor marriage undefiled, against Hebrews 13:4: 'Marriage honourable and the bed undefiled'; *they neither keep*; 'because', 'they think they please the gods by license and uncleanness', and the more wicked it was, they thought it was that much more pleasing to their god. *But and one kills another through envy*, namely, envy of the person, as Cain with Abel, Genesis 4:8, and the Jews with Christ, Matthew 27:23-25. *Or grieves the other by adultery*, namely, adultery against the person with whom one is united; he says *grieves* because a breaking of the marriage bed is a significant cause of sadness; so permission is given in civil law to a man to kill an adulterous man or woman found in the very act of adultery.

And all things, namely, vices, *are mingled together*; so Hosea 4:2: 'Cursing and lying and killing and theft and adultery have overflowed'.

Blood. Here he treats, firstly, of some spiritual sins; secondly, of some carnal sins: *Defiling of souls* etc. – In the first part, he treats, firstly, of some evils deeds; secondly, of some evils of the heart: *Corruption and unfaithfulness*; thirdly, some evils of speech: *And perjury*. – He speaks of four evil deeds, namely, wounding when he says: *Blood*, killing when he says: *Murder*; theft when he says: *Theft*, fraud, when he says: *and dissimulation*.

But contra: Because the divine name is attributed to Christ the man; so in Philippians 2:9: 'gave him a name which is above all names'.

But it must be said that the name is not attributed to one who did not have it previously, but is attributed in a different way than previously; this name applies to a person, not to a nature, namely, a human nature, but it is given to a person who has a human nature.

To the objection: 'God has given him a name etc'; it has to be said that the giving here is taken to mean a proclamation. Or: has given it to him in his human nature when he already had it in the divine nature.

Fourthly, an idol is to be detested from the double effect of human corruption

And it was not enough for them to err about the knowledge of God, but whereas they lived in a great war of ignorance, they call so many and so great evils peace. Here, he treats of the final reason for detesting idols, taken from the effect of human corruption; and, firstly, he treats of the blinding of the mind in idolaters; secondly, the corruption in what is done: *For either they sacrifice their own children*; thirdly, the reasonableness of the blinding and the corruption: *And all things are mingled together*; fourthly, the cause of both: *For the worship of abominable idols is the cause, and the beginning and end of all evil.*

(Verse 22). He said, therefore: *And it was not enough for them to err*; 'With a false religion they submitted themselves to every vice'; *to err*, I say, namely, about the knowledge of God, that is, faith; above in Wisdom 13:1: *But all people are vain, in whom there is not the knowledge of God. But whereas they lived in a great war of ignorance*, that is, of infidelity, by which infidelity they wage war against God; so Job 24:13: 'They have been rebellious to the light'. *They call so many*, in number, *and so great*, in intensity, or in the quality of their duration; *evils*, in deformity; *so many*, I say, *and so great evils*, in which they live, *they call peace*, according to Job 30:7: 'They counted it delightful to be under the briers'; Jeremiah 6:14: 'Saying: Peace, peace and there was no peace'; 'Subject to various vices under the reign of the devil they were not able to have true peace'.

For either they sacrifice their own children, or use hidden sacrifices, or keep watches full of madness. Here, he lists the evils by which they were corrupted in what they did: firstly, the evil committed directly against God; secondly, committed specifically against themselves and against their neighbour: *So that now they neither keep life, nor marriage undefiled, but one kills another through envy, or grieves the other by adultery.*

'The cross is the resurrection of those asleep, the staff of the weak, the rod of the shepherds, the help of those being converted, the perfection of the proficient, the health of soul and body, the turning away of all evils, the teacher of all that is good, the destruction of sin, the tree of resurrection, the wood of eternal life'. In these words: *A little*, is indicated, firstly, the humility of the cross, when he says: *A little wood*; secondly, its veneration and dignity when he says: *People trust their lives*, that is, rational beings who say with blessed Andrew: 'Take me from among people'; thirdly, its necessity when he says: *And passing over the sea*, namely, of this world, of which Psalm 103:25 says: 'This great sea which stretches wide its arms'; fourthly, its power and value when he says: *by ship are saved*; 1 Corinthians 1:23 and 18: 'We preach Christ crucified' etc.; and: 'The wood of the cross, to them indeed that perish, is foolishness; but to them that are saved, that is, to us, it is the power of God'.

And from the beginning also when the proud giants perished, the hope of the world fleeing to a vessel, which was governed by your hand, left to the world seed of generation. Here, the value of the ark of Noah is shown first; secondly, it is praised in the words: *For blessed is the wood, by which justice comes*; thirdly, an idol and its maker are censured: *But the idol that is made by hands, is cursed, as well it, as he that made it; he because he made it; and it because being frail it is called a god.*

(Verse 6). *And from the beginning* etc, as if to say: God delivers not only from danger at sea, but also from a flood, and this is what he says: *And from the beginning*, namely, in the beginning of the second age, that is, in the time of Noah, Genesis 6:13ff. *When the proud giants perished*, namely, in the flood, as related in Genesis 6:4; *the hope of the world*, namely, of the future; 'The nursery of the human race', namely, eight persons, of whom 1 Peter 3:20 says: 'In which a few souls were saved by water'; *fleeing to a vessel*, 'that is, the ark' made to the pattern of a boat, because its length was longer than its width, Genesis 6:15; *left to the world*, namely, the future world after the flood, *seed of generation*, both of people and beasts, as is clear in Genesis 6:19ff. *Which*, namely, the ark, *by your hand*.

'By power or by the Son', according to Psalm 143:7: Put forth your hand from on high, take me out, and deliver me from many waters, from the hand of strange children'; *was governed*, because it had no director other than God or God's Angel, when all those left outside were dead, and those still living were closed in.

(Verse 7). *For blessed is the wood*, namely, the ark of Noah, *by which justice comes*, namely, the deliverance of the just, and with evils drowned as was just. Of this wood he says above in Wisdom 10:4: *For whose cause, when water destroyed the earth, wisdom healed it again, directing the course of the just by contemptible wood.*

This wood can be called, in an allegorical sense, the wood of the cross, of which is said in 1 Peter 2:24: 'Who his own self bore our sins in his body upon the tree'. By this wood *justice comes*, because 'there is given to everyone what is theirs'. For sin was destroyed by this wood, according to the song of the Church: 'Death is then dead, when on the wood life was dead';

Hosea 13:14: 'O death, I will be your death' etc. Also, by it the devil was conquered, according to a text of Saint Gregory: 'He who was overcome by the wood, would overcome by the wood'. Also people are reconciled by it; Colossians 2:14: 'Blotting out the handwriting of the decree that was against us, which was contrary to us, fastening it to the cross';

also in Colossians 1:20: 'Making peace through the blood of his cross'. Also, hell is robbed; Colossians 2:15: 'Despoiling the principalities and powers, he has exposed them confidently in open show, triumphing over them in himself'. Also, heaven is opened; so there was said to the thief: 'This day you shall be with me in paradise', Luke 23:43; Isaiah 22:22: 'I will lay the key of the house of David upon his shoulder'. Also, Christ is exalted; Philippians 2:9: 'For which cause God also has exalted him, and has given him a name which is above other names'.

(Verse 8). And I have said well that *blessed is the wood by which justice comes; for meaning but; an idol, made by hands, namely, of workers, is cursed, as well it, namely, the idol, as he that made it, namely, the worker.*

But how can an idol, something lifeless, be cursed? It is because this curse is understood either because of sin which does not exist in an idol, or because of punishment, and so it has to be imposed because of sin.

It must be said that two things have to be kept in mind regarding idols, namely, the presiding spirit and the figure of wood. The evil spirit is cursed with a curse of sin and punishment; but the wood, with a curse of abhorrence and disgrace, as a type of punishment, not because it is a subject of sin, for which reason it has to be inflicted with punishment, but because it is the material or occasion of sin.

'For the devil has to be punished because it usurped for itself divine honour; and also the man who gives honour to a creature rather than to the Creator'.

He because he made it, namely, an idol, and so is rightly cursed; Isaiah 44:11: 'Behold, all the partakers thereof shall be confounded'. And it, namely, an idol, because being frail, since it is made of frail material; is called a god, namely, only in name, not in truth; for this reason it is rightly cursed.

(Verse 18). *And to worshipping of these, namely, the idols, the singular, namely, the excellent, diligence also of the artificer helped to set forward the ignorant, that is, ignorant and rough people; of the artificer, I say, who makes and adorns it carefully and devotedly, according to Jeremiah 10:4: 'He has decked it with silver and gold'; also Isaiah 44:13: 'He has made the image of a man as it were a beautiful man dwelling in a house'.*

(Verse 19). *For he, the artificer, being willing to please him that employed him, that is, engaged him to make the idol; this is an evil courtesy of which Psalm 52:6 says: 'God has scattered the bones of them that please men'; also Galatians 1:10: 'If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ'. Laboured with all his art to make the resemblance, that is, the image, in the best manner, that is, in the best way he could; Isaiah 44:12: 'The smith has wrought with his file'; Baruch 6:8: 'Their tongues are smoothed by the carpenter, and they themselves are overlaid with gold and silver'.*

(Verse 20). *And the multitude of people, namely, the foolish; Ecclesiastes 1:15: 'The number of fools is infinite'; carried away, namely, by truth, by the appearance of the work, that is, its beauty; Proverbs 31:30: 'Favour is deceitful and beauty is vain'; Daniel 13:56: 'Beauty has deceived you'; took him now for a god, honouring him with an honour of worship, that, add: a little, before, was but honoured as a man, namely, with an honour of reverence.*

(Verse 21). *And this was the occasion of deceiving human life, that is, the reason for the deception, which reason, I say is double, as if death has a double door, namely, love and fear, Psalm 79:17: 'Things set on fire and dug down shall perish at the rebuke of your countenance'. For people serving either their affection, namely, in a proper honouring of friends, or their kings, in veneration of the powerful; 'In this way various sacred objects are taken by people and regions, namely, for the sake of honouring or from fear, 'when people want to show gratitude to their rulers'; people, against 1 Corinthians 7:23: 'Be not made the bondslaves of people', serving, that is serving with devotion. Gave the incommunicable name: 'of God almighty', because the form implied in the name God cannot be attributed to creatures, while it is attributed to the divine persons; to stones and wood, against the precept of Exodus 20:7: 'You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain'.*

But contra: Exodus 7:1: 'Behold, I have appointed you the god of Pharaoh'; also in Psalm 81:6: 'I have said, you are gods and all of you the children of the Most High'; therefore, the name of god is attributed to creatures.

It has to be said that the name God can be taken in three ways: from nature, adoption, and a naming. In the first way it cannot be attributed to creatures; in the second and third ways it can be attributed to creatures.

(Verse 15). *For a father being afflicted with bitter grief*, namely, at the death of a child, just as David mourned at the death of Absalom, 2 Samuel 18:33, or at the death of the child who was the first from Bathsheba, 2 Samuel 12:16ff., *made to himself the image of his son who was quickly taken away*, that is, taken away by the violence of death; 'People have made for themselves images of dead friends and have had some comfort from reflecting on them'. *And him who then*, that is, recently, *had died as a man*, who by nature is mortal, according to 2 Samuel 14:14: 'We all die and like waters that return no more, we flow down into the earth'; *he began now*, that is a little later, *to worship as a god*, something even less excusable: 'And moving further away, they began out of love to worship the memory of the dead'. *And appointed him rites*, namely, incensations and praises, *and sacrifices*, namely, by immolating animals, *among his servants*, who obeyed him from fear not from reason. However, the first - as Saint Isidore says in Luke 11:15: 'He casts out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils' - was Ninus, king of the Assyrians, who made an image of Bel, his dead father, and he honoured it with such veneration as even to pardon the guilty who fled to it; for this reason ignorant people began to worship the statue of Bel as a god and to make more images. Some called the idol Bel, some Baal, some Baalim, and some Beelzebub.

(Verse 16). *Then in process of time*, that is, a delay of time, *wicked custom prevailing*, which should rather be stamped out than upheld because the length of time does not diminish sin but rather increases it; *this error*, namely, of worshipping idols, *was kept as a law*, that is under a command; Jeremiah 10:3: 'For the laws of the people are vain'; also Isaiah 10:1: 'Woe to them that make wicked laws'! *And by the commandment of tyrants*, that is, of evil rulers, *statues were worshipped*; so Antiochus imposed the practices of the nations upon the Jews, 1 Maccabees 1:43ff.; and Nebuchadnezzar forced them to worship his statue, Daniel 3:4ff.

(Verse 17). *Those whom people could not honour in presence*, that is, in their presence, *because they dwelt far off*, namely, in place, *they brought their resemblance from afar*, that is, in a painting, *and made an express image*, that is, a sculptured image, I say, *of the king whom they had a mind to honour*, that is, giving honour to humans. 'The life and common practice of people undertook with gifts to extol to the heavens excellent citizens with fame and gratitude'. *That by this their diligence, they might honour as present, him*, that is, the king, *that was absent*, but still alive. 'Because of the foolishness and perversity of people who live a rustic life without a guide, they have honoured this king and all people with the highest praises, so that they even called them gods either for their outstanding virtue, or for benefits or for adulation'. *Those whom people could not honour etc.* The text is to be understood as follows: People made a clear image, in a form adopted from afar, by which they wanted to honour those whom they were not able to honour publicly, that is, in their presence, add because they were far away; they did this, I say, *that by their diligence, they might honour as present, him that was absent*.

Secondly, an idol is to be detested because of an offence against the Creator

But to God the wicked and his wickedness are hateful alike. Here he touches on the second reason for detesting idols, coming from the offence against the Creator; and, firstly, he treats of the sign of the offence, namely, the idol, and the punishment of one who commits idolatry; secondly, that the punishment cannot be remitted: *Therefore there shall be no respect had even to the idols of the Gentiles*; thirdly, the reason concerning the idol: *Because the creatures of God are turned to an abomination, and a temptation to the souls of men, and a snare to the feet of the unwise*; fourthly, the reason from the point of view of one committing idolatry: *For the beginning of fornication is the devising of idols and the invention of them is the corruption of life*.

(Verse 9). I have said well that both are cursed etc.; *however*, for because; *to God the wicked*, namely, idolatry, because it denies the piety of divine worship, *and his wickedness are hateful alike*, that is, the material of his impiety, namely, the idol, that is a demon presiding in an idol; Sirach 12:3: 'The Most High hates sinners'. And note that the hatred of God does not represent or echo an affect in God but the effect in the one whom God hates.

(Verse 10). *For that which is made*, namely, an idol, *together with him that made it*, that is, with the worker of the idol, *shall suffer torments*.

This is clear concerning idolatry; but concerning an idol, how can it be true, namely, that it suffers torment, since it is inanimate?

It has to be said that an idol is spoken of because of the evil spirit presiding in it, not because of the shape or material of the idol itself.

But contra: An idolater does not make an evil spirit preside.

It has to be said that while he does not make the spirit in itself, he is, however, the reason for a spirit presiding in an idol; just as we say that God is exalted and magnified, not in the Godhead itself, but in us; Psalm 33:4: 'O magnify the Lord with me and let us extol his name together'. Therefore, both are to be punished; Sirach 14:20: 'Every work that is corruptible shall fail in the end, and the worker thereof shall go with it'; and in Sirach 27:3: 'Sin shall be destroyed with the sinner'.

(Verse 11). *Therefore*, namely, because they are hateful to God, *and*, that is, also, to the idols of the Gentiles, that is, to the spirits presiding in the idols of the Gentiles, of which Psalm 95:5 says: 'For all the gods of the Gentiles are devils, but the Lord made the heavens'; *there shall be no respect had*, namely, of clemency; this is against Saint Origen who said Christ, at the end, would suffer for the demons in the atmosphere, and so they will be saved; this is against what is said in Sirach 39:33: 'There are spirits that are created for vengeance, and in their fury they lay on grievous torments'. *Because the creatures of God are turned to an abomination*; and rightly, *because the creatures of God*, that is, made by God like gold and silver; so Hosea 2:8 says: 'I multiplied her silver and gold which they have used in the service of Baal'; *are turned to an abomination*, namely, irascible, so that people hate God just like the demons of whom Psalm 73:23 says: 'The pride of them that hate you ascend continually'. *And a temptation to the soul of men*, that is, desirable, so that people would subject themselves willingly to any powers in accord with the will or suggestion of their gods. *And a snare*, that is, a deception of a rational person, and it is called a snare as an instrument for catching mice: *to the feet*, namely the interior feet which are the soul, not the exterior feet of the body; *of the unwise*, that is, of unbelievers; Job 18:10: 'A snare is hidden for him in the earth'; also Jeremiah 5:26: 'For among my people are found wicked men, that lie in wait as fowlers, setting snares and traps to catch men'.

(Verse 12). *For the beginning of fornication is the devising of idols and the invention of them is the corruption of life*. I have said well that *the creatures of God are turned to an abomination*; *for the beginning of fornication*, namely, spiritual fornication which is to draw away from God, *is the devising of idols*; The worst kind of fornication is that by which a soul draws away from God and fornicates with idols'; so Jeremiah 3:9: 'She played the harlot with stones and with trees'. Such are lost or destroyed by God according to Psalm 72:27: 'You have destroyed all them that are disloyal to you'. I say, *the beginning of fornication is the devising of idols*.

But contra: Sirach 10:15: 'Pride is the beginning of all sin'.

I reply: It is not a question here of a fornication which is any withdrawing from God, as in any mortal sin, but a withdrawing that goes away from God with a total departure, namely, even to the subversion of faith which is the foundation of the whole spiritual edifice; Hebrews 11:1: 'Faith is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not'; also 1 Corinthians 3:11: 'For other foundation no one can lay but that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus'.

And the invention of them is the corruption of life, namely, in behaviour; Romans 1:24: 'Wherefore God gave them up to the desires of their heart, unto uncleanness'; Psalm 27:4: 'Give them according to their works and according to the wickedness of their inventions'.

Thirdly, an idol is to be detested because of its novelty and how it is found

For they were not from the beginning, neither shall they be forever. Here, the third reason for detesting those idols is treated, namely, from their newness and the way: firstly, the diligent leisure of people; secondly, the affection of parents for dead children: *For a father being afflicted with bitter grief*; thirdly, the fear of tyrants: *Then in process of time, wicked custom prevailing*; fourthly, the reverence and honour given to rulers: *And those whom men could not honour in presence*; fifthly, the diligence and care of workers: *And to worshipping of these, the singular diligence also of the artificer helped to set forward the ignorant*; sixthly, he puts a summary of the main reasons: *And this was the occasion of deceiving human life*.

(Verse 13). I have said well: *The devising of idols and the invention of them* etc.; they were not from the beginning, that is, idols, which is clear because they are not a Creator; so Jeremiah 10:11: 'The gods that heaven and earth have not made, let them perish from the earth'; nor are they a creature, because every creature is from God, but idols are not from God as they are a human product; for this reason 1 Corinthians 8:4 says: 'An idol is nothing in the world', namely, in relation to divine being, which idolaters believe is in it. *Neither shall they be forever*, rather they will be destroyed, as people convert to the worship of the one God; Isaiah 19:1: 'Behold the Lord will ascend upon a swift cloud, and will enter into Egypt, and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence'.

(Verse 14). *For by the vanity*, that is, the leisure, *of men this came*; Sirach 33:29: 'Idleness has taught much evil', namely, the lazy who do not want to work in searching for the one true God so as to worship worthily; *into the world*, for no such error ever existed in heaven. *And therefore*, namely, because they were not always, *they shall be found to come shortly to an end*, namely, by the wise. They were quickly deserted by the children of Israel in the time of Moses and by Christian people in the time of Christ and of the new law; Jeremiah 10:14-15: 'Every artist is confounded in his graven idol; they are vain things and a ridiculous work; in the time of their visitation they shall perish'.