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Proverbs III. 6. "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy steps."

The inspired ~~King~~ of Israel, to whom the Book of Proverbs is attributed, had been endeavoring to impress upon the mind of his son, by earnest & repeated exhortations, the great importance of laying up a store of "wisdom". He had been contrasting the results, to which the possession of this wisdom leads, in the character & condition of men, - with those results which spring from the possession of an opposite quality: & from the value & the infinite importance of the former, - & from the intrinsic ^{worth} value of this wisdom in itself, - he exhorts, & entreats his son to "seek for it as silver, & search for it as for hid treasures." (Prov. 2:4) He then goes on to specify in general terms, in what this wisdom consists. "My son, forget not my law: but let thine heart keep my commandments: for length of days, & long life, & peace, shall they add unto thee. Let not mercy & truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the tables of thy heart: so shalt thou find favor."

"and good understanding in the sight of God & man. Trust in the Lord with all
"thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways
"acknowledge him, & he shall direct thy steps."

That there is a God, who formed the Universe, & preserves it in ex-
tence, & directs all its changes, — is a truth which is irresistably brought home
to the ^{conscience} heart, ~~if not to the understanding~~ of every individual of the human
race, who possesses the common faculties of his species. The human mind can-
not look abroad over this vast creation with all its mighty movements, &
wondrous connexions, without believing, ^(practically, at least) that there is a Cause above all other
causes, — a Power above all other Powers, — that ^{unless} guides ~~rules~~ the whole.
There is no human intellect, however ~~degraded~~ ^{degraded} by the ferocity ^{of savage life,} ~~of savage life,~~
— or however borne down by the various ^{hardships & unceasing} ~~of bondage,~~ ^{that cannot or that does}
not recognize in the things that are made, the hand of ^{him who made them} ~~the Maker~~ — "even his
eternal power & Divinity" (Rom. 1:20.) They may not, & they do not give to
him the ~~proper~~ appellations or attributes of God — because their foolish heart
is darkened; — but they feel that he exists, & regulate their actions in ac-
cordance with this feeling. It is a feeling which is inseparable from the human
heart. Even the proud sceptic, who doubts of every thing, & professes to believe that
this universe, with all its suns & stars, — & all that lives & moves in all its vast ex-
tent, — & even the human soul, with all its ~~hopes~~ ^{desires} & hopes & lofty aspira-
tions, — are but the chance result of a fortuitous concourse of atoms, — ^{even this sceptic} let but
his dice be thrown a few successive times alike, — & even he will tell you, —
there is design, — there is fraud. — In all that is around us there are exhibitions
of design, — there is ^{constant} uniformity, beautiful, striking, & incontestible. From every
tree & every plant, there falls a seed, — ^{from} that seed ^{there} springs ~~up~~ ^{into} a tree or
plant, precisely similar ^{from} ~~to~~ ^{the seed had fallen} ~~from~~ which ~~produces~~ ^{it} ~~birth~~. But all this unifor-
mity the sceptic says, is chance, — mere chance. ^{he affirms} Chance ^{may reign} throughout
the universe, & may give birth to an endless series of combinations, — no matter how com-
plicated, which shall yet be uniform; — but let that uniformity ~~be found~~ ^{be found} in
the ^{his} ~~sceptic's~~ dice-box, — & it is no longer chance. Strange perversion of the human in-

tellect! - Strange corruption of the human heart! to deny an overruling power in the minds & the waves, - in the suns & in the stars, - ^{to deny it in the movements of worlds} - ~~but~~ acknowledge it in the cast of a die!

The humble & reflecting mind, recognizes this overruling power in all that ^{meets its view} beholds, & comes to the conclusion that God ^{is omnipotent, & that "his kingdom} indeed ^{ruleth over all."} (Ps. 103:19). The possessor of such a mind, beholds God in the light & in the darkness, - in the sun-shine & in the storm, - in the thunder that rattles in the heavens, & in the dews that glitter in the morning sun, & sprinkle with gems the forests & the fields. But to those, my ^{bro}, upon whom the ^{light of the} everlasting gospel has ~~shined~~, - the evidence of God's existence, & the greatness of his attributes & character, shine forth with a brighter & a purer splendor. In that gospel, we learn - from the intelligence which it communicates, & the emotions which it inspires - that God not only exists, as the Creator & the Supreme Governor of all things, & of all events, which occur in the material world, - but also that "it is God that worketh in us, both to will & to do of his own good pleasure": that the soul of man, with all its powers & faculties, is under the control of God, & constituted by him a moral agent, & ~~is~~ ^{is} placed here in a state of probation, to form its own character & destiny for another & an endless state of being, - & is commanded to work out ^{here} its own salvation in that other world, "with fear & trembling." (Phil. 2:12). In that gospel we are taught all that the human soul can know of God, & more. We are taught & we believe that all we know of God, is utterly imperfect; - & the more we reflect, the more deeply do we perceive & feel the narrow boundaries within which human reason is confined, - the more deeply do we perceive & feel that his "judgements are unsearchable this way, ^{in respect to all that we behold,} past finding out" (Rom. 11:33.) - & the more ready are we to exclaim, "Lo! there are parts of his ways; but how little a portion is heard of him."

Standing as we do, my ^{bro}, in the relation of entire dependence on this great & Holy ^{Beneficent} Being - it becomes us, - it becomes all rational creatures, to tremble, - & adore, - & love. "In all our ways, let us acknowledge

him, — "For he will direct our steps". The propriety of thus acknowledg-
ing God, & the encouragements for so doing, will be the objects of our
contemplation, on this solemn & interesting occasion.

I. It becomes us to acknowledge God as our Creator.

Without the light of revelation, we stand upon this globe, not
knowing whence we came, or whither we are ^{to go} ~~going~~. We know indeed
that the generations of men, like the leaves of the forest, have existed, &
have passed away forever. But our souls — whence came they? Whence
~~shall~~ ^{shall} this incomprehensible existence, — which ~~departs~~ ^{appears} when the breath ceases
~~from~~ ^{from} our nostrils, — & yet is agitated with so many hopes & fears, & long-
ings after immortality. These are questions to which ~~no~~ ^{even revelation} gives no other
answer, — than that our souls & all that is within us come new & freshly for-
med from the hand of God. Here we must rest, — nor shall we, nor can we dis-
cover aught beyond, — until we shall have passed the narrow door, that
leads from time to eternity. Then perhaps we shall be made to know the
methods of the Divine proceedings. But as it is, we feel that our souls
have had a beginning, — we know that they will never have an end. We
see around us multitudes of human beings daily entering upon existence
& opening their eyes on immortality. We know that God is infinitely
good, & that he exerts his creative power, — his life-giving energies, from
the impulse of beneficence. From all we know of God & of his designs, from
his works & from his word, we believe that ^{the} existence which he thus bestows, is
a blessing, — & that it is capable of being improved, by all who have rec^d
it, to the possession & the fruition of the highest possible degree of happiness —
even immortal joys at the right hand of God on high. Even in this pre-
sent state — fitful & transitory as it is — & chequered with ~~the~~ ^{alternations} of joy
& sorrow — how few can be found, who in their right minds, would
voluntarily cease to exist: — who would ~~voluntarily~~ ^{willingly} embrace annihilation?
Nay, how poor, — how vain, — how debasing, are the ^{highest} ^{earthly} enjoyments here
compared with those which the Lord hath promised to them that love him?"

when they shall have put off these tabernacles of clay, & have entered into that eternal city, "which hath the glory of God" (Rev. 21:10) - where stand the "tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations" (Rev. 22:2), "which hath need of no sun, nor moon, to shine in it; for the glory of the Lord doth lighten it; & the Lamb is the light thereof" (Rev. 21:23). Let us then, as the possessors of an existence that admits us to hopes so bright & glorious - acknowledge, & adore, & praise the Lord - as our Creator; - let us worship him in that he has created all things above us & around us, & beneath us, - & connected us with them by so many & such ^{wonderfully} ~~admirable~~ relations; - that he has formed us with powers capable of comprehending & enjoying these relations & of looking ^{abroad} through all his works, & of discerning so often the chain which links them to each other, - & of tracing it in so many of its convolutions as to determine with fixed conviction, that ^{and its beginning are both from God} ~~its origin & termination are both from God~~ ^{at the place} ~~where it first forth, even at the~~ ^{source} ~~of God.~~

III. It becomes us to acknowledge God as our Preserver.

Without the sustaining power of God, - the gift of existence ^{could be} ~~is~~ no blessing; - it could have no duration, - it must have begun & terminated at the same moment. Did not God preserve, as well as create, - the universe which sprang from nothing, - would instantaneously have returned ~~to~~ ^{to} nothing. When God said "Let there be light," & there was light, - a gleam would have flashed over chaos - & then, darkness & silence & confusion ^{must} ~~would~~ have resumed their empire. Indeed, when properly considered, - the power that sustains the universe, seems no less essentially to involve the idea of Omnipotence, than that which first called it into being. According to the language which we are forced to employ, these powers are different in their kind; - but we can form of ^{neither of any} ~~them~~ ^{adequate} conceptions; - we are lost in the contemplation of the magnificence & immensity of the attribute; - & if our hearts are in a proper frame, we shall feel that it becomes us to wonder & adore, though we cannot comprehend.

Man, in every moment of his life, is dependent for that life, on God. In the air that he breathes, - in the food that he eats, God has made the most

wonderful ^{provision} for his ^{preservation} & ^{substance}. These things are so constant & so certain, that we receive them not as favors - they seem so connected with existence, that we forget that ^{the} one is dependent on the other. "The ox knoweth his owner & the ass, his master's crib." (Ps. 100) but our supplies are dealt out with a hand so bountiful & so regular - that we forget that they may be withdrawn - we forget that they are provided by the God of the whole earth.

The air which we breathe is made up of various component parts - each of which by itself, ^{& if the due proportion of each be destroyed in the compound, we die.} is destructive to life; ~~but~~ ^{consistently} these are all in a state of constant production, in the laboratory of nature, - & yet, that ^{due} proportion is ^{never} destroyed! How constant, how uniform, & how ^{beneficent} that Providence, - thus constantly at work for the preservation of the life he has bestowed.

The sustenance of our ^{heavily} bodies is derived from that portion of ~~the~~ ^{adjuncts} ~~of~~ our globe, in which there is ~~constant~~ ^{continual} change; - a state of constant decay & constant reproduction. Of the three great kingdoms of nature, - the mineral - the vegetable - & the animal - ^{only} the two latter admit of change - & they alone furnish food for man. Here there is a great & magnificent exhibition of sustaining energy on the part of our Preserver. Let but the vegetable cease to spring & flourish - & all the tribes of animals must perish, - & man must die. Yet - every breath we draw - & every morsel that we taste, is the immediate gift of the Deity - & ought to remind us of him, & call forth our acknowledgments & our praise. How often are we thus called to remember him. If our breath be stopped for a few moments - it is gone forever: if our food be withheld for a ~~little~~ ^{short} while - we pine away & die. How vast the provision of Divine mercy, that in every portion of our globe, - beneath the snows of Lapland, or on the burning sands of Africa - wherever life exists - ~~there~~ ^{food} ~~is prepared~~ ^{is found} sustenance is found to support it. How great the motive to "sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving; to sing praise upon the harp unto our God: who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains. He giveth to the heast his food, & to the young ravens which cry." (Ps. 146: 7-9.) All things that have life, "wait upon thee," O Lord, "that thou mayest give them their

"meat in due seasons: that thou givest them, they gather: thou openest thine hand,
"they are filled with good: thou hidest thy face, they are troubled; - thou takest
"away their breath, they die, & return to their dust: - thou sendest forth thy Spirit,
"they are created; & thou renewest the face of the earth." (Ps. 104: 27-30) Let us "sing
unto the Lord" our preserver, "as long as we live; let us "sing praise unto our God,
while we have our being." (Ps. 104: 33.)

III. It becomes us to acknowledge God as our Governor, - ~~the~~ ^{sovereign}
~~Director~~ ^{Disposer} of all ~~the~~ events.

"The Kingdom of the Lord ruleth over all". It is God, - not only who
created & who preserves us, - but who disposes of all things & all events, - both in
the material & the moral world, - for the promotion of his ^{own} great & benevolent de-
signs. "With him is strength & wisdom - he hath counsel & understanding." "He breaketh
"down, & it cannot be built up again; - he shutteth up a man & there can be no
"opening. - He withholdeth the waters, & they dry up; - also he sendeth them out, &
"they overturn the earth." He leadeth counselors away spoiled, & maketh the judges
"of fools. He looseth the bond of kings & girdeth their loins with a girdle. He ^{honesty} ~~leadeth~~
"princes ~~away spoiled~~, ^{& weakeneth the strength of} ~~the~~ the mighty." He discovereth deep things out of
"darkness, & bringeth out to light the shadow of death. He increaseth the nations, &
"destroyeth them: he enlargeth the nations, & straiteneth them again." (Ps. 124: 1-3)

Since, then, all things are thus ordered by the deep counsels
of God, & we are all, ^{they} dependent on his will for life, & breath, & all things,
it becomes the duty of all, - of individuals & of nations, - to ~~present~~ ^{present} before
him their hearts in humble acknowledgment, & profound adoration. In
~~our prosperity~~ - In prosperity, we should praise him for his goodness, in
bestowing on us that to which we have no claim - that of which we are
in ourselves, unworthy: - & we should entreat him for the influences of his
Spirit, to preserve us from undue elation, - & from a spirit of pride, - & to
guide us in the safe & lowly walk of Christian humility & virtue.

In adversity, it behoves us to bow with humble submission before
our Father's rod; - to regard our sorrows as the chastisements of a Parent - to confess

I forsake the sins, which have caused him to turn away from us the light of his countenance, knowing that he doth not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men.

In all that we undertake, - in all the actions & employments of our lives, we ought to look to God for his blessing & his aid. Though he knoweth all things, - & though all things take place according to his will; - & though he hath determined to bestow all needful blessings, & inflict all needful chastisement - yet for all the good which he will do, - it is his will that delight that he should be inquired of by all those who ~~know~~ ^{know} & fear him. "Go to now," say, the Ap. James, "go to now, all that say, To day, or to morrow, we will go into such a city, & continue there a year, & buy & sell, & get gains; - whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow: for what is your life? - it is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, & then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, - To the Lord will, we shall live, & do this or that." (Jam. 4:13-15) In all that we do, - In our studies, our merchandize, our professions, - it becomes us to say, - if the Lord will - & to implore his favor ~~his blessing~~ the smiles of his Providence.

IV. It becomes us to acknowledge God as our Redeemer, & Sanctifier.

In view of this most interesting & most important relation in which the ~~God~~ God of heaven has ~~revealed~~ ^{manifested} himself towards us, the heart of the Christian is filled with fervent gratitude, & reverence & fervent love. "God commended his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners - Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8) - while we were yet sinners, - despisers of God's law, & rebels ^{against} of his governments - without hope & without God in the world, - the almighty Son of God "appeared, & put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," (Heb. 9:26) & purchased by his blood, a great redemption. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them: - for he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor. 5:18, 20)

God is ~~thus~~ the Creator of our spiritual life, as well as of our natural existence, - & it becomes us to ascribe to him all the praise & all the glory.

"By grace are we saved ^{through faith,} & that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God, — not of works,
"lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8,9) "Not by works of righteousness which we have
"done, but according to his mercy he saved us; by the washing of regeneration, & renewing
"of the Holy Ghost." (Tit. 3:5,6) "which he shed on us abundantly through J. C. our Saviour.
(Tit. 3:5,6). It is God alone who pours out his Spirit over the acrobacies of
our natural hearts — who dispels the moral darkness which lingers there, — who
causes light to arise & shine within us, — & ^{who} calls forth from the chaos of ^{our} corrupt
& defiled affections — a new heart & new spirit, — ~~like a new & beautiful~~
~~creation emerging from the deep.~~ To God alone is our homage due, in that he
has delivered us from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the gos-
pel of Christ. (Rom. 8:24.)

Now is it for his influences in regeneration alone, that we are bound
to acknowledge our God. Without the constant gift of his Spirit, — without
the constant effusion upon our hearts of the dew of his grace — we cannot ad-
vance one step in the Ch^r course, — we cannot strike one blow in the spiri-
tual warfare. The lethargy of everlasting death would come over our souls —
did not the Divine Spirit descend & dwell in our hearts, & incite us to new
& constant & persevering efforts to win the prize held out for our reward,
— even a crown of immortal glory in the heavens — & the precious favour
of God ^{through the ages of} ~~all~~ eternity. It is God alone who maketh in us both to will &
to do of his own good pleasure. It is God alone who giveth us life & joy &
peace in believing. — Without his precious presence, our souls are bound to
droop & languish, — to be embittered by doubt, & tormented by anxiety; nor, till
we ^{be enabled up to} draw very near unto him in prayer & supplication, — till he again
vouchsafes his precious presence, can we possibly regain that peace,
— which passeth all understanding, & which the world can neither give
nor take away.

The encouragement which is held out in our text
to all those who acknowledge God in all their ways, is, that he will
direct their steps. God ^{will} extend over them his everlasting arm, — he will

since all their prayers in infinite wisdom, — he will fold them in his
arms & carry them in his bosom — & bear them triumphant over sin
& death to the ~~possession~~ ^{abode} beyond the grave, — eternal in the heav-
ens. God will be inquired of for good by all those who love him — & the
sincere & fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much in his sight
(Ps. 5:16). Why God should thus delight in prayer, — or why he should be
influenced by it, — is beyond the limits of our knowledge, — but he who
goes to him in a proper frame of mind — is disturbed by no metaphysical
difficulties — he goes as a child to a Father, — he pours out his very
heart before his God, — he acts in unhesitating faith in the promises of
God, — & has a full assurance that his prayers are heard, & will be
answered, — in a manner, it may be, not according to his ^{wishes &} low concep-
tions, — but far beyond his hopes — far beyond what ⁱⁿ the hottest flights of
his imagination, was ever suggested to his mind. — Let us then all, my
brothers, with humble & penitent hearts acknowledge God in all our ways,
knowing & rejoicing in the belief that he will ^{even} direct our steps.

Our subject may be applied equally to communities & nations,
as well as to individuals: for it is God "who increaseth the nations, &
destroyeth them - who enlargeth the nations & straiteneth them again."
Nations are but collections of individuals - & they are capable by
their conduct of provoking the wrath - or of propitiating the favor
of an overruling Providence. We are this day assembled, & we
think & to praise him for his astonishing goodness unto us. Truly
the lines are fallen to us in pleasant places, - we have indeed a good
ly heritage. We are in the uninterrupted enjoyment of all the
blessings of civil & religious liberty - our rulers & our judges, are
men of our own choice - & ~~we~~ ^{will} soon to return to the walks
of private life - - we sit day after day, & Sabbath after
Sabbath - & year after year, under the shade of the sanctuary
- & worship our God in peace & in quietness, according to
the dictates of our own consciences. Our country is at peace,
our agriculture, & our commerce, & our arts are prospered, - &
more than all, God, as we trust, has been, & still is pouring out
his Spirit upon our churches, & upon our seminaries of learn-
ing - & is opening the hearts of his people, to a view of the
wants & the moral desolation ^{both} of our own land, & of the millions
of the heathen world. Let us pour out our supplications to our
Father, that he will continue to us all our blessings, & prosper all
our expectations, - & that our land, & all the works, may become one great Bethel
& be vocal with the ^{praises} of the ^{our God} most High.

Not are the obligations to praise & bless the Lord, less weighty
on this particular community, or on this town. While ~~plagues~~ has
invaded other states & other sections of our country, the people of this
State have been blessed with the general continuance of health in their
borders. While the angel of death has flapped his fatal wings
thundered
over our sister cities - while their dwellings have been forsaken
& the grass has literally grown in their streets - the inhabitants
of this place have reason to pour out their grateful thanks to God
for health & prosperity, - for blessings in their basket & in their store, for
blessings on their right hand, & on their left, - for blessings temporal,
- & for still higher blessings - even spiritual. You, my C^h, have in
a special manner, reason for acknowledge God, for building
you up as a Church & Society. When darkness & uncertainty hung
around you, - then God was very near you, & was waiting to be
his mercies demand your highest praise,
very gracious unto you. O that men would praise the Lord for
his goodness, & for his wonderful works to the children of men!
O, let us come, & acknowledge God in all our ways, the
Hallel shall meet our steps.

Nov. 2-5. 1822

We have now, my br^r taken a calid view of some of those ^{as to the way they stand towards God} ~~relations~~ ^{relations} which make
it our duty to acknowledge him in all our ways. The question then occurs to our
conscience, whether we fulfill this duty, — whether we do thus acknowledge God & look
& him for direction in all that we do: The man who truly loves God can be at no
loss for an answer; for although the remains of sin which are inseparable from this present
state, may sometimes remove him ^{in feeling} to a distance from his God, yet he can never rest
untill he has again tasted that the Lord is gracious & full of loving kindness to all
who seek him in sincerity, through the Lord J. C. But are there not many who
never acknowledge God; — who, although they may frequent his assemblies, & may listen
to the voice of his word, — yet go about all their worldly duties & enter upon the
most important avocations of their lives, without asking for the blessing of God, or
bestowing even one thought upon him? If there are any such present, — let
them pause for a moment. My br^r who made you? — who preserves you?
— who orders every ^{action &} ~~event~~ of your life? — you live un mindful of God, — but God
is not un mindful of you. — The very hairs of your head are all numbered.
God is present when a chance falls; and shall He then be absent when man
lies down to sleep, or awakes to life & vigor. Is this thought ^{ever} present to your mind when
you lie down or when you rise up? — Have you any excuse to offer, why you
should not thus think of God, & acknowledge him in all your ways. If you have
none now, — none which ~~you~~ ^{you} can give to your ^{self} ~~fellow~~ — none which you would
not be ashamed to give to your fellow-men, — O — pause, — think what you
will say when you stand before the ^{your} ~~judgment~~ seat of ^{the omniscient judg.} ~~Christ~~. You can frame no
new apology then, — you must carry with you from this world all your defence, — I
remember, — it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God for judgment.

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