

# “Egregious Folly:” John Gill’s Picture of Roman Catholicism in Proverbs

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## INTRODUCTION

John Gill felt a deep and visceral resistance to Roman Catholicism. He saw the rise of its spirit and even of its content during the apostolic age when John announced that the spirit of antichrist already was in the world (1 John 4:3). Also, he saw John’s awareness of it by special revelation as he wrote about mystical Babylon the “mother of prostitutes and of earth’s abominations” (Rev 17:5). This was Roman Catholicism including all of what Gill denominated the “peculiarities” of its systems. Both its ecclesiastical hierarchy and its peculiar doctrines constituted that abomination of religious apostasy<sup>1</sup> known as the Church of Rome, the papal system of authority and doctrine.

This article will describe briefly Gill's summary of the Roman Catholic system and then examine how he employed his understanding in selected sections of his commentary on Proverbs.

## **PRINCIPLES FOUNDATIONAL TO ROMAN CATHOLICISM**

### ***Tradition over Scripture***

Gill viewed the foundation of the great apostasy of Rome as its departure from the sole authority of Scripture and its enshrinement of tradition as the only true and clear source of doctrine. Commonly received doctrines of orthodoxy derived clearly from Scripture and affirmed in the history of councils Gill embraced. The common ground of the Trinity, the eternal generation of the Son, the deity of Christ, the double procession of the Holy Spirit, the death of Christ as the foundation of forgiveness of sins, the resurrection, the return of Christ to judge the living and dead, and the revelatory status of Scripture, Gill received as biblically revealed and necessary for the confession of all Christians.

Peculiarities, however, were of a different kind from revealed truth and arose from an alien source. "That, unwritten traditions with the Papists are equally the rule of faith and practice, as the holy scriptures, will not be doubted of by any conversant with their writings." To place any post-apostolic proposition whose only authority is tradition, a word or practice of a so-called apostolic father or the biblically unwarranted canon of a council, is fatal to truth and a corruption of both the church and the gospel message of redemption. Gill cited the teaching of the Council of Trent (1545-63), the theologian Bellarmine (1542-1621), and Bailey the Jesuit as more confident of Tradition than of Scripture. Gill observed that they did not see the biblical idea of tradition as that revelation handed down from the apostles, but "distinct from it, and out of it; unwritten tradition, apostolical tradition, as they frequently call it, not delivered by the apostles in the sacred scripture, but by word of mouth to their successors, or to the churches."<sup>2</sup> Such tradition, so they claimed, was given in order to keep the church from mistakes in interpretation. It is more necessary, therefore, according to Rome, than the Scripture itself.

### ***The Peculiarities of Rome***

Out of this Pandora arise all the errors of the Romish papal system. What may not be confirmed by such a rule? No matter how "foolish, impious,

and absurd,” any stray religious opinion may be tested and approved by this rule. “The essentials of Popery, or the peculiarities of it, are all founded upon this,” so Gill argued. Gill summarized the peculiarities of popery into a two-fold manifestation. First, it is a “hierarchy, an usurped jurisdiction, and tyrannical domination over others.” Second, it involved “a system of antichristian doctrines and practices.”<sup>3</sup>

In the first of these we find Rome’s extra-canonical developments appearing early in the history of the church. Among these is the domineering spirit over other bishops and churches. This led to a claim of the title *Pontifex Maximus* and an eventual capitulation to the assumption of the universal power of the Roman bishop. Not satisfied with grasping overarching ecclesiastical authority, the bishop of Rome applied all the leverage he could muster to gaining control of the state. The hierarchializing of power by the bishop of Rome led to the multiplication of offices in the church beyond the local church offices of pastor and deacon. Lack of real spiritual life in the churches led to a misguided quest for spirituality outside the congregation and produced the monastic life that enshrined the disaster of a required celibacy, and the multiplicity of societies arising from the monasteries and nunneries.

The second peculiarity, the manifestation of antichristian doctrine also developed completely apart from scriptural revelation. Some of the chief “principles and practices which are now reckoned popish ones” were in development and held by specific individuals before “the popes of Rome arrived to the full power they had long been aiming at.”<sup>4</sup> By this method of development and eventual canonization of religious practice they have given us “the adoration of images and relicks; the invocation of saints; the worship of the sign of the cross; the sacrifice of the mass; transubstantiation; the abrogation of the use of the cup in the Lord’s Supper; holy water; extreme unction, or the chrism; prayers for the dead; auricular confession; sale of pardons, purgatory pilgrimages, monastic vows, &c.”<sup>5</sup>

In *The Rise and Progress of Popery*, Gill mentioned several key corruptions and “doctrines of devils” that appeared early and developed into grotesque damning superstitions. The worshiping of angels and praying to departed saints developed into a religion of invincible idolatry. Forbidding to marry, the superiority of celibacy, was celebrated by even the orthodox Athanasius (296-373) who called virginity a “never-failing opulence, ... a never fading crown, ... the temple of God, ... and the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit,”

and commended continence as “the joy of the prophets and the boast of the apostles, ... the life of angels, and the crown of saints.”<sup>6</sup> Abstaining from meats and the development of an elaborate system of fasts as a source of merit, adopting practices from a number of early groups of heretics, was given warrant through tradition. Failure to observe these humanly-imposed fasts, especially connected with Easter, resulted in deposition of bishops and excommunication of the laity. “Popish festivals” constituted the fourth doctrinal departure and involved elaborate observance of Christmas, Easter, celebrations of the deaths of martyrs including the veneration of their relics. The fifth doctrine of devils was the concept of “*Limbus patrum*, purgatory, and praying for the dead.”<sup>7</sup> Sixth, the “popish notion of transubstantiation had its rise from the old hereticks, and was cherished and strengthened by the unguarded expressions and erroneous sentiments of the ancient fathers, even before the man of sin arrived to his manhood.” Baptism, including its proper subjects, its proper method, and its proper purpose constituted another decline begun early and brought to dogmatic status by Rome.<sup>8</sup>

In both of these ways, usurpation of authority and corruption of doctrine, the Roman system had a very early beginning. The apostles saw its presence and John, in the Apocalypse, saw an increasingly full development, its grossly antichristian idolatry, and its certain demise. It was the great whore of the book of Revelation that deceived the nations, but whom the nations would destroy by special arrangements of divine providence. “That God should put it into the hearts of these kings to fulfil his will, in destroying the whore of Rome is easily received.”<sup>9</sup> They do not do it for righteous purposes, but out of the evil cupidity and vengefulness of their own will, while God accomplished his will through their sin, even as in the crucifixion of Christ (Acts 13:27).

The entirety of Revelation 18 is a prophecy of the destruction of the Roman Catholic system, its popes, its traditions, its idolatries, its riches, its masses, and all of its counterfeits to the true gospel, the true church, and the true Christ. Commenting on Revelation 18:3, Gill wrote “such [“merchants of the earth”] are the cardinals, archbishops, and bishops; though the inferior clergy of the Romish church, who are under these, may be included.” Their wares are specified as “the souls of men” plainly indicating that these merchants are deceptive religionists. They “make merchandise of men, and pretend to sell them heaven, and the salvation of their souls; these are they that deal in pardons and indulgences, which they sell to ignorant people, and for a

sum of money say Mass to fetch souls out of purgatory.” All things are for sale for the right price: “crucifixes, priests, altars, temples, prayers, heaven, Christ, yea, God himself.” These idolatries and wicked practices will bring about Rome’s destruction. As he commented on 18:23, “by they sorceries all nations were deceived,” Gill observed, “meaning her false doctrines, traditions, idolatry, superstition, and will-worship, with which as another Jezebel, she has bewitched, allured, and deceived the nations of the empire, and the kings thereof.” As he remarked on the implications of her shedding the blood of the prophets and saints and of all that were slain on the earth, Gill commented, “Another reason for her destruction, besides her luxury and idolatry, namely, her shedding the blood of the saints, with which she is said to be drunk, and therefore blood is now given her to drink ... for she will be found guilty of slaying the witnesses, who are meant by the prophets and saints, that have been from the beginning of the apostasy; ... not only of those that have been slain in the city of Rome, but of all those that have been slain throughout the empire; they being slain by her order, or with her consent, and she conniving at it, encouraging, and therefore will be justly chargeable with it all.” (Rev 18:1-24, 9:828-836).

## **ROME AND PROVERBS**

### ***Gill’s Interpretive Framework***

This view of the eschatological importance of Rome leads Gill to see its imprint on many texts of Scripture. One of the most striking places where Gill sees foolishness and moral perversity of Rome is in the instructions in Proverbs about whoredom and fools.<sup>10</sup> In this OT book, Gill investigates the warnings about man’s sinful perversion of God’s intention in sexuality and then applies these descriptions and warnings to spiritual whoredom. The prophets do this frequently in describing the spiritual apostasy of Israel (e.g., Ezek 23:14-21; Hosea 1:2; ch. 3; 4:11-15; 9:1), and Gill follows their lead in applying these texts to the work of Christ for the final purity of his bride.

The greatest earthly folly in the moral and physical realm consists of taking up with the sexually unfaithful in this world, abandoning oneself to the pursuit of physical lust, thus becoming susceptible to the wrath of husbands, fathers, and mothers, the punishment of the magistrate, and the corruption of body here and eternal punishment from God hereafter. By analogy, far

greater folly consists in communion with the whore of Rome—her riches, her corruptions of worship, her usurpation of power both political and ecclesiastical, her perversions of doctrine, her idolatries, her promotions of salvific merits, her isolation of grace to her own powers of the priesthood, and thus her complete perversion of the way of salvation through Christ alone, engaged by faith alone, prompted by sovereign grace alone. The book of Proverbs, therefore, provides a rich field for warning against both physical and spiritual whoredom. Gill takes full advantage.

In chapter 8, Gills explains that “this chapter contains the instructions of Wisdom or Christ; shewing the excellency of them, and the author of them, in opposition to the harlot and her allurements, in the preceding chapter.” Chapter eight, therefore, represents the epitome of wisdom both in instruction and in the eternal personhood of the Son of God. The preceding chapter presents, therefore, the epitome of rascality, immorality, and foolishness. This is seen in literal instruction with the sexual perversity of the harlot and the foolish men who fall into her trap. Typologically, it refers to Rome and those who blindly follow her perverse unbiblical schemes.

### ***Papalism and Proverbs***

Gill recurrently insists that the wisdom of Proverbs is the wisdom of the gospel, evangelical truth as found in Christ alone and as revealed through Scripture. “Particularly the doctrines of the gospel may be meant, which are eminently so [instructive], and exceed the understanding of a natural man, and which are only understood by a spiritual man; the means of knowing which are the Scriptures, under the guidance and direction of the spirit of God.” (Prov 1:2; 4:329) And in verse 22, Gill notes on the words, “Fools hate knowledge,” that this refers to “the knowledge of the Gospel, and the truths of it; they hated the light of it, and did not care to come to it, but rather loved the darkness of the law, and even of error and infidelity; they hated Christ, the teacher of true and useful knowledge; they hated his person, ... they hated him in his offices, as a Prophet to instruct them, as a Priest to be the propitiation for them, and as a King to rule over them.” (22; 4:333) All wisdom is contained, therefore, in Christ himself and is distributed in the knowledge about him, in the perfect fitness of his person to be a redeemer, and the various facets of his work that constituted a perfect redemption.

For the man who utters evil, Gill considered that it could be, in light of

Revelation 13:56, "the man of sin, antichrist, who has a mouth speaking blasphemies against God." (2:12; 4:340). The "strange woman" of verse 2:16, however, more clearly is a reference, by type, to the "whore of Rome, from whose fornication, or spiritual adultery, that is, idolatry, will-worship, and antichristian doctrines, the Gospel delivers men." (16; 4:340) On the other hand, "antichrist, and all false teachers and heretics, with good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." The chief deceiver is the Pope of Rome, for she has forsaken the "guide of her youth" (17; 4:340). "So the church of Rome has forsook Christ, who was her guide in her first settlement, and her husband she professed to be espoused to, as a chaste virgin; and has followed other lovers and become the mother of harlots." (17; 4:341) Her final abode is death for "the second death will be the portion of the whore of Rome and all her followers (Revelation xiv 10, 11, and xvii 8, and xix. 20." (18; 4:341)

*Chapter 5:* We find the theme of the spiritual unfaithfulness of Rome renewed in chapter 5 as Solomon gave an invitation to wisdom, understanding, discretion, and knowledge as a means of warning against adultery and the "strange" or "forbidden" woman (5:3; 4:359). Though the warnings certainly are true and wholesome revelations in a literal sense, "it is applicable enough to the whore of Rome; who, by the blandishments of pomp and grandeur, and the allurements of wealth and riches, draws many into her idolatrous practices; which are spiritual adultery" (3; 4:359). Despite the external inducements of this woman, bitterness of hurt reside in her; such will be the case of "the worshippers of the beast, or whore of Rome; who will gnaw their tongues for pain, and be killed with the two-edged sword that proceedeth out of the mouth of Christ (Rev. xvi.10 and xix.15, 21" (4; 4:359). As the adulteress's feet go down to death in the path of Sheol, "such is the whore of Rome, notwithstanding all her boasted knowledge and wisdom." Her way leads to perdition, the second death, the lake burning with fire and brimstone, and "hither she brings all that follow her idolatrous practices, Rev. xvii. 8 and xix.20 and xxi.8" (5; 4:359). Hell finally is the certain portion of the harlot and those who follow her "unless reclaimed by the grace of God". So it will be with "the worshippers of antichrist, or who give into the idolatries of the church of Rome; or commit fornication with her, Rev. xix. 9-11" (5; 4:359).

The harlot wanders around, lives in such ignorance that she gives no thought to the paths of life. Instead she is enmeshed in ways of "deceivableness

of unrighteousness; and her chief care is to keep persons in ignorance, and from pondering the path of life or true religion, and to retain them in her idolatry, 2 Thess. ii.9, 10.” (6; 4:360) A particularly strong plea from Solomon, insisting on the dangers of the harlot, call the young man to listen to his words, that is to “avoid the whorish woman; the doctrines of Christ, the truths of the Gospel: these should not be forsaken, but abode by” (7; 4:360). When this is not done severe warning is in order as in the case of Christ’s warning to the church at Thyatira that “she suffered the woman Jezebel, the Romish harlot, to teach and seduce the servants of Christ” (8; 4:360). The kings of the earth have lost their honor—their wealth and power—in their submission to the Pope. They have committed fornication with “the whore of Rome, giving their power and strength to the beast, Rev xvii.2, 13” (9; 4:360). The “merchants of Rome” are skilled at extracting wealth from others “through the abundance of her delicacies and adulteries,” and “everyone knows what vast riches are brought into the temples or churches of the Papists by idolatry.” (10; 4:361).

When Solomon speaks of the observable physical results of a life of fornication, “which the sin of uncleanness brings upon persons, which affect the several parts of it; the brain, the blood, the liver, the back, and loins, and reins; an even all the parts of it, expressed by flesh and body,” he infers that this may express the great tribulation such shall be cast into that commit adultery with the Romish Jezebel, Rev. ii.2” (11; 4:361). In speaking of the public nature of the shame of an adulterer, Gill commented, “Both the sins and punishment of those that commit fornication with the whore of Rome will be public and manifest, xviii.5 and xiv. 10” (14; 4:361). In clinging always to one’s wife and finding one’s pleasure only in her, Gill made excellent points from the literal meaning but did not fail also to warn that one must cleave to the “pure apostolic church of Christ ... with delight and pleasure, and not follow the antichristian harlot” (18; 4:362). The pure church is “very different from the apostate church of Rome.” While the one is lovely and loving, the other is “a cruel and savage beast.” (19; 4:362) Both the physical reality of adultery with failure to receive instruction and the ease with which one is led astray, Gill called “egregious folly” (23; 4:365).

*Chapter 6* also provides rich opportunities to insert criticisms of Romish religion as the greatest of all follies. Verses 12-19 deal more with crooked speech than with infidelity. The worthless man of crooked speech in verse

12 is likened to the “man of sin and son of perdition” in 2 Thessalonians 2 who speaks against both reason and the light of nature, but especially perverse lies in the matter of law and gospel: “So antichrist has a mouth opened in blasphemies against God and his saints, Rev. xiii. 5, 6.” (6:12; 4:366). Other references in this passage are similar when moving from the foolish man who speaks perversely to the larger eschatological application. “This character of art and cunning, dissimulation and deceit, fitly agrees with the man of sin, 2 Thess. ii. 10 Rev. xiii. 11” (13; 4:366). Again in 14, “in which sort of work the man of sin, antichrist, has been very busy” (14; 4:366). The calamity that comes on this deceitful communicator is “sudden, inevitable, and irreparable; so antichrist will *come to his end, and none shall help him*. Dan. xi. 45” (15; 4:367). The three abominations of verse 17 “are plainly to be seen in the son of Belial, antichrist, who exalts himself above all that is called God, the kings and princes of the earth; he and his followers speak lies in hypocrisy; and is the whore that is drunk with the blood of the saints, 2 Thess. ii. 4. 1 Tim. iv. 2. Rev. xvii. 6” (17; 4:367). The same application is made of the evils described in verse 18: “wicked thoughts and designs, both against God and men, are intended, which are forged and fabricated in the wicked heart of man; and may respect the depths of Satan in the antichristian beast of Rome, Rev. ii. 24” (18; 4:367).

Verses 20-35 pick up the theme again of the fool who is seduced by the adulterous woman. The character of the evil woman “well agrees with the idolatrous church of Rome, or antichrist, represented by a whore, Rev. xvii 1, 2, 5” (24; 4:368). This work of the smooth-tongued adulteress (24) is like that of the man of sin. Gill described the art of deceitful language at length.

So the religion of this false church is delivered in a strange language the people understand not, by which they are kept in ignorance and deception; now the word of God read and explained in the mother-tongue, and especially the gospel part of it, the doctrines of wisdom, is a means of preserving persons from the errors and heresies, superstition and idolatry, of the church of Rome, and from being carried away with their false glosses, and gaudy worship, and all its deceivable way of unrighteousness. (24; 4:368)

Gill goes on to apply the warning against being captivated by “the sparkling of her eyes” as applied to the antichristian church, that is “the outward

pomp and grandeur of it, its pretensions to antiquity, to the apostolic see, to infallibility, miracles, great devotion &c” which are attractive to men like the Circean cup that bewitches but makes swine of men (25; 4:368).

The adulteress, the wife of another man, hunts down lives and destroys them in the way that “the precious souls of men are part of the wares of anti-christ, Rev. xviii.13” (26; 4:368). The price for such dalliance, however, goes far beyond the dangers of this life. Gill frequently refers to the temporal dangers it involved: “she brings him into the hands of her husband, who avenges himself by slaying the adulterer; or into the hands of the civil magistrate by whom this sin of adultery was punished with death; nay, is the occasion of the ruin of his precious and immortal soul to all eternity” (26; 4:368). It is certainly fitting, therefore to see how clearly this is analogous to the sentence of death for embracing the heresy and abominations of Rome: “the lake of fire and brimstone, everlasting burnings, will be the portion of those that commit fornication with the whore of Rome, Rev. xiv. 10, 11” (28; 4:369). God is a jealous God “in matters of worship, and will not suffer idolatry to go unpunished, which is spiritual adultery.” (35; 4:370)

*Chapter 7:* Having set his method of discussing the literal meaning of warnings against the adulteress woman and the prostitute and then extending them by analogy to the whole system of Roman Catholicism, Chapter 7, given totally to this subject, sees the epitome of foolishness in this iniquitous path of life. Likewise, the height of spiritual folly is bound up in Rome, its system, its professional advocates, and its blind followers.

In Gill’s comments on verse 7:5, we find this dual application set forth as a pattern of interpretation:

Nothing has a greater tendency than Christ and his gospel, and an intimate acquaintance with them, and a retention of them, to keep from all sin, from all fleshly lusts, from the sin of uncleanness; and also from all the errors, heresies, idolatry, superstition, and will-worship, of the whore of Rome; a stranger to God and true godliness, to Christ and his truths, the Spirit and his operations. (5; 4:371).

He follows this pattern in verses 6-8 seeing real warnings against the stupidity of being tantalized by the allurements of an adulteress. Even so one must beware of “the darkness of Popery” and all the “intrigues of the Romish harlot, and behold all the follies of those that commit fornication with her, Rev. ii.

13.” (6; 4:371). Just as we should abstain from evil wherever it appears and “from everything that leads to sin,” the same circumspection needs to be applied to avoid “false doctrine and false worship; the synagogues of Satan and Popish chapels” (8; 4:371).

Gill used verse 9 about twilight, evening, and black darkness to give a historical narrative of the “gradual and progressive growth of Popery.” Gill indicates a sense of discouragement in his analysis. The gospel brightness of the apostolic age quickly gave way to twilight. The twilight of the gospel yielded to darkness, a sunset that “issued in the gross darkness of Popery.” To some degree this was removed by “the morning-star of the Reformation,” only to be succeeded by another twilight. It is neither dark nor light, so opined Gill, but “a dark black night is hastening on” and many are “marching on in a stately manner to the harlot’s house, or are verging to Popery, whether they design it or not” (9; 4:372).

Verse 10 describes the attire and deceitfulness of the prostitute. Gill moves rapidly to identify this woman with “the woman of a scarlet-coloured beast, the mother of harlots, who, though she pretends to be the spouse of Christ, is an arrant whore.” Her alluring and form-fitting clothes, denoting her clearly as “the whore of Rome,” represent the “outward pomp and splendour of the Romish religion designed to captivate weak and unwary minds, Rev. xvii.4.” Her wiliness and subtlety of heart, so convincing to young men under her charm, spiritually refers to the “subtlety of the popes, priests, jesuits, and other emissaries of Rome, to deceive the hearts of the simple.” The deceit of unrighteousness is characteristic of the coming of antichrist, 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10, so Gill warns his readers (10; 4:372).

Her loudness (11) perhaps refers to her abusiveness to her husband to drive him away, so she will be free to pursue her wanton desires. Gill comments “all which agree with the whore of Rome, who is rebellious against Christ, whose spouse she professes to be, is perfidious to him, disobedient to his commandments; is gone out of the way of his truths and ordinances, and publishes and encourages everything that is contrary thereunto; as well as has a mouth speaking blasphemies, Rev. xiii. 5, 6.” (11; 4:372) The aggressive peregrination of the whore is consistent with “the diligence and industry, art and cunning, of the Romish emissaries to gain proselytes to their idolatrous worship, who everywhere lie in wait to deceive.” (12; 4:372)

The whore’s pretensions to religion, having made vows and offered

sacrifices (14) was too rich in its significance for Gill to ignore. She was a “holy religious harlot ... and such is the church of Rome, which makes great pretensions to devotion and religion, yet is the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth, Rev. xvii.5.” Such false and hypocritical worship is in the bosom of the church of Rome in the form of “vows of virginity and celibacy, through a shew of which the most shocking iniquities are committed by the members of the church of Rome” (14; 4:373).

The highly stylized ruse described in verse 15 was “no doubt a lie:” and even so, “it is no unusual thing for the whore of Rome to speak lies in hypocrisy.” She seemed so joyful, as if it were a kind providence, to meet the young man. In that way also “conversions to the antichristian church, which are the artifice of hell, are ascribed to the divine being.” As the harlot has decorated her bed and filled it with fragrance in order to give further enticement to the fool, “so the church of Rome adorns the places of worship in the most pompous manner; which are the beds in which she commits adultery, Rev. ii. 22, and also her images to strike the minds of people, and draw them into her idolatrous worship.” Also carved images set up in Romish churches along with all the wares of Babylon described in Rev. xviii. 13 signify that the church of Rome is the quintessential deceiver laying traps of death for the gullible, easily deceived, pleasure seekers of this world (15-17; 4:373).

The journey of “the man” away from home has offered the opportunity for the confident frolic of the adulteress and her willingness to set up another in his place. Gill looks at the “good man of the house” as Christ, and his journey is his ascension into heaven where he is taking a kingdom for himself, and then will return. In the meantime, “the church of Rome, who professes herself the true church and spouse of Christ, is committing fornication with the kings of the earth.” She has set up a substitute in his stead, “whom she calls Christ’s vicar on earth.” She “flatters herself and her lovers with impunity” since the vicar has “a right to do as he pleases.” (19; 4:374) Christ has an appointed time to return. Assuming it is at a great distance “wicked men and seducers, and such as the apostate church of Rome” make use of the interim to “encourage themselves in their wickedness, in hopes of impunity.” (20; 4:374)

This deceit will cost both the woman and her victim their lives. Like a bird in a snare, the seduced fool is caught, and this is the aim of Rome, the antichrist. “The souls of men and the ruin of them, are what the whore of Rome deals in Rev. xviii. 13, she goes into perdition, into the bottomless

pit, herself, and carries all her worshippers with her, Rev. xvii, 8 and xiv. 9-11.” (23; 4:375.)

The antidote to this deceit and allurements, the way in which these corruptions may be detected and rejected, is to listen to the words of Wisdom itself, the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. “Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children.” He calls for attention now and will present his narrative of true, essential, and personified wisdom through his speech in chapter 8. His words are the “best preservative from the allurements of the whore of Rome” (24; 4:375). Whoever listens to her goes astray from “God and his law; from Christ and his gospel; and from the true church of God; and from the right path of faith, duty and worship.” (25; 4:375)

### CONDENSED TO ITS ESSENCE

In lieu of wisdom, Rome has provided corruption, encouragement in idolatry, a false church, false healing from sin, a false Christ, a false gospel and a sure path to perdition. In summarizing the epitome of deceit manifested as egregious folly throughout the world Gill wrote:

All the world have wondered after the whore of Rome; kings of the earth and mighty men have committed fornication with her; high and low, rich and poor, have been ruined by her; thousands have gone to hell by her means; and some of her sycophants of Rome have even said, that if the pope of Rome should send thousands to hell, of which they seem themselves to be conscious, no one should say to him, What doest thou? (26, 4:376).

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1. This is the alternative spelling used by Gill. I have conformed to his preference.
  2. John Gill, *A Collection of Sermons and Tracts in Two Volumes* (London: George Keith, 1773), 2:512, 513. This is from his sermon, “Infant Baptism, A Part and Pillar of Popery.”
  3. *Ibid.*, 2:566. From “Rise and Progress of Popery.”
  4. *Ibid.*, 2:584.
  5. *Ibid.*, 2:512, 513. This is from his sermon, “Infant Baptism, A Part and Pillar of Popery.”
  6. *Ibid.*, 2:575.
  7. *Ibid.*, 2:580.
  8. *Ibid.*, 2:582.
  9. John Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments – Complete and Unabridged 6 vols.* (London: Printed for

- Mathews & Leigh Strane, 1810, reprinted in 9 volumes by Paris AR: The Baptist Standard Bearer, 1989) Revelation 17:17. 9:828. When citing this set of commentaries, the reference will remain in text, identified within parentheses by verse and then volume and page. E.g. (Rev 17:17; 9:828).
10. Matthew Henry's commentary written around fifty years prior to Gill, and whom Gill often consulted, was void of any reference to "the whore of Rome" in the passages of Proverbs under consideration. Though the sixteenth century Reformers and those following often identified the Pope as the antichrist, Gill's pervasive application of that idea to a wide variety of biblical texts seems to be his own hermeneutical method. Because of this phenomenon, citations from Gill on Proverbs will include his intra-textual reference to NT passages in support of his application to Rome.