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## Joy and Sadness of Heart

(Prov 15:13-17)

A decisive role in studying the First Solomonic Collection (Prov 10:1–22:16) is quite often played by the following presumption: it is a collection of independent sayings grouped haphazardly, i.e., without any formal, logical or thematic arrangement<sup>1</sup>. Consequently, the literal context of the Collection is considered to be not relevant for understanding of an individual proverb. In recent decades this traditional way of reading and interpreting the biblical proverbs has been challenged by some scholars who have focused their research on the compositional features in the Collection. They observed that some consecutive proverbs form real literal units<sup>2</sup>.

In this article I would like to share some results of my research<sup>3</sup> proving that the proverbs in the First Solomonic Collection (10:1–22:16) are linked together in various ways (formally, lexically and thematically). The second goal of this

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<sup>1</sup> Such a view is held by a number of modern scholars (e.g., W. MCKANE, *Proverbs: A New Approach*, OTL, London 1970, 10; A. BONORA, *Proverbi – Sapienza: Sapere e felicità*, LoB.AT 1.14, Brescia 1990, 18; K.A. FARMER, *Who Knows What is Good? A Commentary on the Books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes*, ITC, Grand Rapids – Edinburgh 1991, 18.63; R.E. MURPHY, *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Literature*, Grand Rapids – Cambridge 1996<sup>2</sup>, 19; D. BERGANT, *Israel's Wisdom Literature: A Liberation-Critical Reading*, Minneapolis 1997, 85; J.L. CRENSHAW, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction*, Louisville 1998, 62).

<sup>2</sup> E.g., O. PLÖGER, *Sprüche Salomos (Proverbia)*, BK 17, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1984; T. HILDEBRANDT, “Proverbial Pairs: Compositional Units in Proverbs 10–29”, *JBL* 107 (1988) 207-224; ID., “Proverbial Strings: Cohesion in Proverbs 10”, *GTJ* 11 (1990) 171-185; J. KRISPENZ, *Spruchkompositionen im Buch Proverbia*, E.H.T 349, Frankfurt – Bern – New York – Paris 1989; A. MEINHOLD, *Die Sprüche. I. Sprüche Kapitel 1–15, II. Sprüche Kapitel 16–31*, ZBK.AT 16. Zürich 1991; D.A. GARRETT, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, NAC 14, Nashville 1993; R.N. WHYBRAY, *The Composition of the Book of Proverbs*, JSOT.S 168, Sheffield 1994; ID., *Proverbs*, NCBC, Grand Rapids 1994; R. SCORALICK, *Einzelsspruch und Sammlung. Komposition im Buch der Sprichwörter Kapitel 10–15*, BZAW 232, Berlin – New York 1995; A. SCHERER, “Is the Selfish Man Wise? Considerations of Context in Proverbs 10.1–22.16 with Special Regard to Surety, Bribery and Friendship”, *JSOT* 76 (1997) 59-70; ID., *Das weise Wort und seine Wirkung. Eine Untersuchung zur Komposition und Redaktion von Proverbia 10,1 – 22,16*, WMANT 83, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1999; G. GJORGJEVSKI, *Enigma degli enigmi. Un contributo allo studio della composizione della raccolta salomonica (Pr 10,1–22,16)*, Tesi Gregoriana. Serie Teologia 72, Roma 2001; K.M. HEIM, *Like Grapes of Gold Set in Silver: An interpretation of Proverbial Clusters in Proverbs 10:1 – 22:16*, BZAW 273, Berlin – New York 2001.

<sup>3</sup> This article is based on my doctoral dissertation on the First Solomonic Collection: *Dio e i suoi figli: Analisi retorica della Prima Raccolta Salomonica (Pr 10,1–22,16)*, Tesi Gregoriana, serie Teologia 117, Roma 2005.

article is to point out how the interpretation of the proverbs within the literary units can give a new light to their understanding.

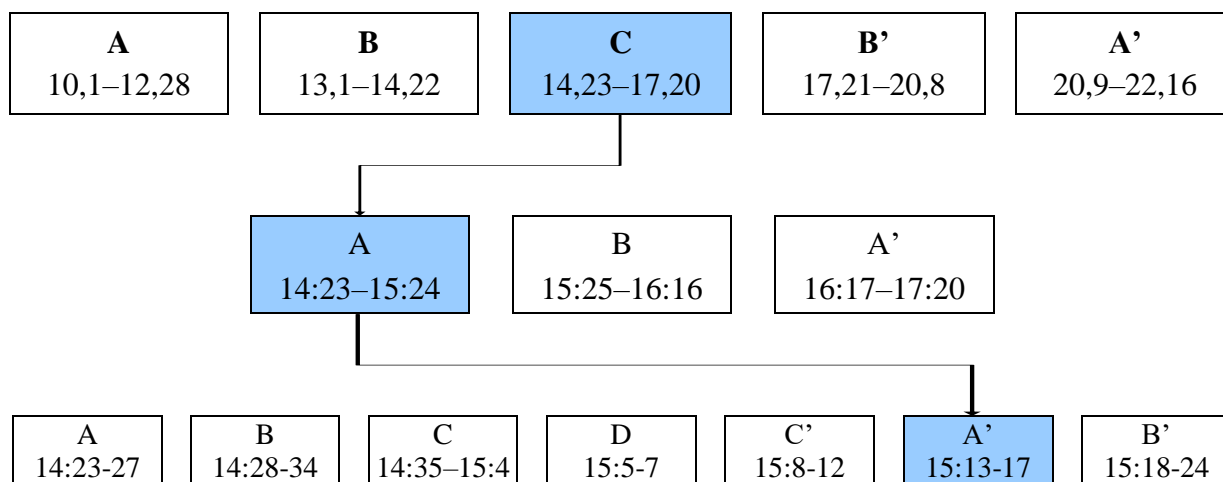
Five consecutive proverbs (15:13-17) are chosen as an example of a well delimited and organized literal unit. In the Collection it is located in the central sequence (14:23–17:20) as one of seven passages of its initial subsequence (14:23–15:24)<sup>4</sup>.

#### TEXT

<sup>13</sup> A joyful heart<sup>5</sup> makes a glad face,  
but by the sorrow of heart the spirit (is) broken.

<sup>14</sup> Heart of an intelligent searches knowledge,  
but the face<sup>6</sup> of fools feeds<sup>7</sup> on folly.

<sup>4</sup> According to my proposal the entire First Solomonic Collection (10:1–22:16) is composed of five major units (10:1–12:28; 13:1–14:22; 14:23–17:20; 17:21–20:8; 20:9–22:16) that I call “sequences”. The central sequence (14:23–17:20) is divided into three subsequences (14:23–15:24; 15:25–16:16; 16:17–17:20). Regarding the first subsequence (14:23–15:24), it contains seven passages (14:23-27; 14:28-34; 14:35–15:4; 15:5-7; 15:8-12; 15:13-17; 15:18-24).



<sup>5</sup> Respecting the word order in the original text the translation should be “a heart of joy”. The literal translation will be used in the figure where it is relevant for the composition.

<sup>6</sup> Many scholars follow the *qere ûpî* “but the mouth” (e.g.: A. BARUCQ, *Le Livre des Proverbes*, SBi, Paris 1964, 134; W. BÜHLMANN, *Vom rechten Reden und Schweigen. Studien zu Proverbien 10–31*, OBO 12, Göttingen 1976, 190; F. DELITZSCH, “Proverbs”, in C.F. KEIL – F. DELITZSCH, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, VI. *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, Peabody 1966, 233; B. GEMSER, *Sprüche Salomos*, HAT 16, Tübingen 1963<sup>2</sup>, 68; W.O.E. OESTERLEY, *The Book of Proverbs*, WC, London 1929, 121; P.A. STEVESON, *A Commentary on Proverbs*, Greenville 2001, 206, n. 7). The *ketib*, *ûp<sup>e</sup>nê* “but the face,” could be retained by the following reasons: *a*) The word *pānîm* is used in the previous verse (13a); *b*) It is not unusual to find a subject in plural accompanied by a verb in singular (K.M. HEIM, *Like Grapes*, 197). M. DAHOOD defends the *ketib* and suggests on the basis of the Ugaritic texts that the term *p<sup>e</sup>nê* could have the meaning of “desire, appetite” (*Proverbs and Northwest*

<sup>15</sup> All the days of the indigent (are) evil,  
but of the cheerful heart (are) a feast without end<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> Better a little with the fear of the Lord,  
than great treasure and anxiety with it.

<sup>17</sup> Better a dish of herbs where (is) love,  
than a fattened ox and hate with it.

#### COMPOSITION

The passage is composed of three pieces (13-14, 15, 16-17) organized in concentric manner<sup>9</sup>. Both segments of the initial piece (13-14) begin with the

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*Semitic Philology*, SPIB 113, Roma 1963, 34). The *ketib* is retained also by G. KUHN, *Beiträge zur Erklärung des salomonischen Spruchbuches*, BWANT 16, Stuttgart 1931, 37.

<sup>7</sup> There are two homonyms of the verb *r'h*. Many prefer the first one meaning “pasture, graze” (e.g.: W. BÜHLMANN, *Vom rechten Reden*, 190-191; W.O.E. OESTERLEY, *The Book of Proverbs*, 121; R.B.Y. SCOTT, *Proverbs. Ecclesiastes*, AncB 18, Doubleday 1965, 101; A. SCHERER, *Das weise Wort*, 165; R.N. WHYBRAY, *Proverbs*, 230). If the second would taken *r'h* “be associated with”, it could indicate that “the speech of fools consorts with folly” (W. MCKANE, *Proverbs*, 479). According to J.H. GREENSTONE, both meanings are possible (*Proverbs*, Philadelphia 1950, 164). Some prefer to read *r'h* with the meaning of the homonym Aramaic verb “desire, pleasure” (W. FRANKENBERG, *Die Sprüche*, HK 3/1, Göttingen 1898, 92; M. STUART, *Commentary on the Book of Proverbs*, New York 1859, 283). D.W. THOMAS for the parallelism suggests to read *yid'eh* “he seeks” (“Textual and Philological Notes on Some Passages in the Book of Proverbs”, in M. NOTH – D.W. THOMAS, ed., *Wisdom in Israel and in the Near East*, Fs. H.H. Rowley, VT.S 3, Leiden 1955, 285).

<sup>8</sup> It could be a case of ellipsis. Consequently the expression *kol y'mê* “all the days” should apply also do the second stich and the expression *t□ôb lēb* “cheerful heart” will be an object of *kol y'mê* as *ānî* “the indigent” in the first stich (F. HITZIG, *Die Sprüche Salomo's*, Zürich 1858, 150; A. MEINHOLD, *Die Sprüche*. I, 253-254; W.A. VAN DER WEIDEN, *Le Livre des Proverbes. Notes philologiques*, BibOr 23, Roma 1970, 115). Therefore the MT does not require the following amendments: *l't□ôb lēb* “for a cheerful heart” (BHS; A. MÜLLER – A. KAUTZSCH, *The Book of Proverbs. Critical Edition of the Hebrew Text*, Leipzig – Baltimore – London 1901, 48; C.H. TOY, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Proverbs*, ICC, Edinburgh 1899, Reprint 1988, 312) and *t□ûb lēb* “cheerful heart” (B. GEMSER, *Sprüche Salomos*, 69; J. KRISPENZ, *Spruchkompositionen*, 71). The expression *t□ôb lēb* is translated in various ways: “good soul” (W. FRANKENBERG, *Die Sprüche*, 93), “happy heart” (V. HAMP, *Das Buch der Sprüche*, EB, Würzburg 1949, 43), “joyful heart” (A. BARUCQ, *Le Livre*, 134), “gladness in heart” (A. VACCARI, “I Proverbi”, *La Sacra Bibbia*, V. I *Libri poetici*, Firenze 1949, 48) and “optimist” (A. LELIÈVRE – A. MAILLOT, *Commentaire des Proverbes*. I. *Les Proverbes de Salomon, chapitres 10-18*, LeDiv Commentaires 1, Paris 1993, 170).

<sup>9</sup> Some scholars (W.G. PLAUT, *Book of Proverbs: A Commentary*, New York 1961, 171; O. PLÖGER, *Sprüche*, 182; R.C. VAN LEEUWEN, “The Book of Proverbs”, in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, V, Nashville 1997, 149-150; R.J. CLIFFORD, *Proverbs: A Commentary*, OTL, Louisville 1999, 152) recognize the same limits of the unit observing the presence of the keywords: *lēb* “heart” (13a, 14a, 15b) and *t□ôb* rendered in the translation by “cheerful” (15b) and “better” (16a and 17a). However, non of these have noted that the composition of the unit is concentric. A. SCHERER also acknowledges the possibility of such a delimitation of the unit,

same Hebrew word *lēb* “heart” (13a and 14a) used in a positive context: “the heart of joy” (13a) and “the heart of an intelligent” (14a). When in 14b the word *ketib* is followed by the term *pāneh* “face” (13a and 14b) then it receives a double function: *a*) it establishes an additional link between both proverbs and *b*) it makes an inclusion between the extremities of the initial piece (13a and 14b)<sup>10</sup>.

Both segments of the final piece (16-17) are the so-called *t□ôb... min* “better... than” proverbs. The first members begin with the adjective *t□ôb* “better” (16a and 17a), while the second members start with the particle *min* “than” (16b and 17b).

There are yet two other formal features in the second members (16b and 17b) that make these proverbs very similar: *a*) the third term is preceded by the conjunction (*waw copulativum* “and”) and; *b*) both sayings are closed with the expression *bô* “with it”<sup>11</sup>.

The striking formal parallelism between verses 16 and 17 requires that we should look for some differences between these sayings<sup>12</sup>. Both third terms of the second members (16b and 17b) at the first sight seem to be the synonyms, but they in fact are complementary terms. “Anxiety” (16b) indicates the emotional condition of the subject itself, while “hate” (17b) is the reaction of others, not of the subject. Not only these terms but even both proverbs (16 and 17) can be seen as complementary statements. Verse 16 regards a relation between man and God, while verse 17 describes interhuman relations. A negative attitude toward God results in “anxiety” (16b). “Hate” (17b) can be a human response to someone who is doing injustice.

In the central segment (15) the proper terms of the extreme pieces are used: the noun *lēb* “heart” (13ab, 14a, 15b) and the adjective *t□ôb* “cheerful/better”

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however, he includes also verse 18, because, according to him, it is linked conceptually (emotions) with verse 17 (*Das weise Wort*, 172-173). Other similar delimitations: 7-17 (F. DELITZSCH, “Proverbs”, 230); 11-17 (J. KRISPENZ, *Spruchkompositionen*, 71-72; H.F. FUHS, *Das Buch der Sprichwörter. Ein Kommentar*, FzB 95, Würzburg 2001, 243; ID., *Spruchwörter*, neuEB 35, Würzburg 2001, 105); 12-15 and 16-17 (D.A. GARRETT, *Proverbs*, 153); 12-17 (R.N. WHYBRAY, *The Composition*, 104-105; ID., *Proverbs*, 229-230); 12-18 (H.-J. HERMISSON, *Studien zur israelitischen Spruchweisheit*, WMANT 28, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1968, 178); 13-18 (K.M. HEIM, *Like Grapes*, 197); 13-19 (A. MEINHOLD, *Die Sprüche*. I, 253); 15-17 (R.N. WHYBRAY, “Yahweh-sayings and their Contexts in Proverbs 10,1–22,16”, in M. GILBERT, ed., *La Sagesse de l’Ancien Testament*, BEThL 51, Leuven 1990, 161).

<sup>10</sup> See note 6.

<sup>11</sup> Out of 20 *t□ôb... min* proverbs in the Book of Proverbs these two sayings belong to the same group (4<sup>th</sup>) together with 12:9 and 16:8 (J. WEHRLE, *Spruchwort und Weisheit: Studien zur Syntax und Semantik der t□ôb...min-Sprüche im Buch der Sprichwörter*, ATSAT 38, St. Ottilien 1993, 204). For a detailed analysis of both proverbs see: *Ibid.*, 35-36 and 80-81.

<sup>12</sup> For an exposition of this rhetorical rule see R. MEYNET, *L’analisi retorica*, Biblioteca biblica 8, Brescia 1992, 255.

(15b, 16a, 17a)<sup>13</sup>. They form the following expression: *t□ôb lēb* “cheerful heart” (15b). These terms are placed in a reverse order in respect to the extreme pieces (13-14 and 16-17): the first in order is *t□ôb* “good”, a proper term of the final piece (16-17), instead the second is *lēb* referring back to the initial piece (13-14)<sup>14</sup>.

|                                              |                           |                            |                                |
|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| + <sup>13</sup> <i>lēb</i>                   | <i>šāmēah□</i>            | <i>yēt□ib</i>              | <i>pānîm</i>                   |
| – <i>ûb<sup>e</sup>‘as□s□<sup>e</sup>bat</i> | <i>lēb</i>                | <i>rûah□</i>               | <i>n<sup>e</sup>kē‘â.</i>      |
| + <sup>14</sup> <i>lēb</i>                   | <i>nābôn</i>              | <i>y<sup>e</sup>baqqeš</i> | <i>dā‘at</i>                   |
| – <i>ûp<sup>e</sup>nē</i>                    | <i>k<sup>e</sup>šîlîm</i> | <i>yir‘eh</i>              | <i>‘iwwelet.</i>               |
| – <sup>15</sup> <i>kol</i>                   | <i>y<sup>e</sup>mê</i>    | <i>‘ānî</i>                | <i>rā‘îm</i>                   |
| + <i>w<sup>e</sup>t□ôb</i>                   | <i>lēb</i>                | <i>mišteh</i>              | <i>tāmîd.</i>                  |
| + <sup>16</sup> <i>t□ôb</i>                  | <i>m<sup>e</sup>‘at□</i>  | <i>b<sup>e</sup>yir‘at</i> | <i>yhwh</i>                    |
| – <i>mē‘ôs□ār</i>                            | <i>rāb</i>                | <i>ûm<sup>e</sup>hûmâ</i>  | <i>bô.</i>                     |
| + <sup>17</sup> <i>t□ôb</i>                  | <i>‘āruh□at</i>           | <i>yārāq</i>               | <i>w<sup>e</sup>‘ahābâ šām</i> |
| – <i>miššôr</i>                              | <i>‘ābûs</i>              | <i>w<sup>e</sup>šîn‘â</i>  | <i>bô.</i>                     |

This chiastic relation between the center (15) and the extreme pieces (13-14 and 16-17) is also conformed by the antithesis between “evil days of the indigent” (15a) and the “feast without end” (15b). The affirmation of 15a is illustrated in 16b and 17b. The “evil days of the indigent” (15a) can refer also to the “sorrow of heart” (13b), but this link is weaker than the previous one.

|                                  |                   |                      |                      |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| + <sup>13</sup> The <b>HEART</b> | of <b>JOY</b>     | makes a <b>GLAD</b>  | <i>face,</i>         |
| – but by the <b>SORROW</b>       | of <b>HEART</b>   | the spirit           | (is) broken.         |
| + <sup>14</sup> The <b>HEART</b> | of an intelligent | searches             | knowledge,           |
| – but the <i>face</i>            | of fools          | feeds                | on folly.            |
| – <sup>15</sup> All              | <b>THE DAYS</b>   | of the indigent      | (are) <b>EVIL,</b>   |
| + but of the <b>CHEERFUL</b>     | <b>HEART</b>      | (are) a <b>FEAST</b> | without end.         |
| + <sup>16</sup> <b>BETTER</b>    | a little          | with the fear        | of the Lord,         |
| – <b>than</b> the great          | treasure          | <b>and ANXIETY</b>   | <b>with it.</b>      |
| + <sup>17</sup> <b>BETTER</b>    | a dish            | of herbs             | where is <b>LOVE</b> |

<sup>13</sup> In 13b the verb *t□wb* “to be good” is used.

<sup>14</sup> The same phenomenon of chiastic relation between the center and the extremities I have observed in some other units of the Collection (11:7-11; 14:12-14; 14:23-27; 15:25-33; 16:8-16; 17:9-15).

– **than** a fattened                      ox                      and **HATE**                      with it.

On the other hand, the “feast without end” (15b) goes back to the initial affirmation “the heart of joy makes a glad face” (13a). There is yet relation between the “feast without end” (15b) and the condition of a poor man who enjoys “love” (17a). Again the last link is less evident because lexically both affirmation (15b and 17a) have nothing in common and they seem to describe two opposite situations of the wealthy and the poor. Nonetheless, besides the apparent contradiction both members can refer to the same kind of people. Summing up, it is possible to see a chiasmic relation between the central segment (15) and the other proverbs of the passage (13-14 and 16-17) when only the stronger links are taken into consideration.

From the thematic point of view, the affirmation in the central segment (15) has a general character, while the outer proverbs (13-14 and 16-17) are concerned with inward disposition and concrete behaviors:

|                                                                 |       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| <i>Inward disposition and behavior</i>                          | 13-14 |
| The days are evil for the afflicted and good for cheerful heart | 15    |
| <i>Behavior and inward disposition</i>                          | 16-17 |

There is yet one interesting formal element. In the central segment (15) the order of the positive and negative members is reversed (negative + positive) in respect to the extreme pieces (13-14 and 16-17) where the order of members is: positive + negative.

In the extreme pieces (13-14 and 16-17) can be observed a phonetic feature. In the initial piece (13-14) the first members begin with the word *lēb* (13a and 14a) while in the second members (13b and 14b) the assonance is between *ûb<sup>e</sup>* (13b) and *ûp<sup>e</sup>* (14b). In the final piece (16-17) the first members begin with the term *tôb* (16a and 17a) and the initial terms of the second members (16b and 17b) begin with the same letter *mem*: *mē’ôšār* (16b) and *miššôr* (17b). In the central segment (15) the initial terms of the members do not produce a similar sound<sup>15</sup>. Therefore the central proverb differs even phonetically from the rest of the passage.

## BIBLICAL CONTEXT

### *Equilibrium in possessing material things*

The riches accumulated unjustly (16b) do not help and sometimes they ruin the human relation (16b and 17b). The proverbs speak about it: “Better a dry morsel and quietness with it, than a house full of feasting with strife” (17:1). Another proverb suggests that “better a little with righteousness, than a large income without justice” (16:8). The psalmist expresses the same idea: “Better a

<sup>15</sup> Graphically, someone may say that verse 15b begins with the same Hebrew letter *waw* like verses 13b and 14b but *w<sup>e</sup>* (15b) sounds differently than *û* (13b and 14b).

little of the just than the abundance of many wicked” (Ps 37:16). There is yet another negative aspect of the riches that a wealthy person may be led to deny God because of economical self-sufficiency. In order to avoid such a temptation, Agur is asking God: “keep lies and false words far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needed for me” (Prov 30:8). His last phrase calls to mind the central invocation of the Lord’s Prayer: “give us our daily bread” (Matt 6:11)<sup>16</sup>.

### *Countenance is the mirror of the soul*

The affirmation of the initial proverbs (13) that the face expression reflects inward feelings is described by Ben Sirach in the following way: “The heart changes the countenance, either for good or for evil. The sign of a happy heart is a cheerful face” (13:25-26a). For Ben Sirach true happiness is a characteristic of the heart of a just and pure person: “Happy are those who do not blunder with their lips, and need not suffer remorse for sin. Happy are those whose hearts do not condemn them, and who have not given up their hope” (14:1-2). His words evoke one of the gospel beatitudes: “Blessed are the pure of heart, for they will see God” (Matt 5:8). On the other hand, the fallen countenance of Cain (Gen 4:6-7) is a sign of his wicked attitude against his brother Abel.

## INTERPRETATION

### *Cheerful heart’s joy*

The expression *tōb lēb* “cheerful heart” (15b) taken by itself is enigmatic and can be understood in various ways. Within the proverbs (15) a “cheerful hearted” person is opposed to an “indigent” (15a) and it would indicate someone who is rich. In the light of the initial piece (13-14) a “cheerful hearted” person (15b) can be characterized as joyful (13a) and intelligent (14a). The initial assertion (13) is based on observation that emotions and feelings naturally tend to make themselves visible. The expression “cheerful heart” (15b) can indicate various positive emotions and feelings and one of them can be “joy” (13a). It could be deduced from the central proverbs (15) because the days of “the cheerful heart” person are “a feast without end” (15b) and a visible sign of internal joy is a joyful countenance (13a). The second characteristic of a “cheerful heart” person (15b) is “intelligence” (14a). Searching for “knowledge” (14a), being opposed to the attitude of the fools that satisfy themselves with folly (14b), suggests that a wise person does not accept just any kind of nourishment but is searching for a proper one. A contrast between “searching” (14a) and “feeding themselves” (14b) can indicate effort and dedication on the

<sup>16</sup> For the composition of the Lord’s Prayer (Matt 6:9-13) and the central function of the fourth invocation (v. 11) see R. MEYNET, “*E ora, scrivete per voi questo cantico*”. *Introduzione pratica all’analisi retorica*, 1. *Deti e proverbi*, ReBib 3, Roma 1996, 15-16; ID., “La composition du Notre Père”, *Liturgie* 119 (2002) 158-191.

one hand (14a) and passivity and laziness on the other hand (14b). An intelligent person is ready to make sacrifices wanting to obtain what is valuable (14a), while the fools satisfy themselves with “folly” that does not require any effort to get it (14b).

Searching for “knowledge” (14a) can be read also in the light of the initial affirmation of the final piece that suggests a modest life “with the fear of the Lord” (16a). The Book of Proverbs states that the fear of the Lord is a source of knowledge and wisdom (cf. 1:7). Searching for knowledge (15:14a) can imply a respectable and obedient attitude toward God and His commandments (16a). A wise person tries to understand God’s teaching and to live in conformity to it (14a). Therefore his/her preference is to be pleasing to God and respect his teaching (16a) instead of having great riches gained unjustly (16b). Searching for “knowledge” like for a valuable thing (14a) can imply also a preference for having a good relation with the other, of being loved and respected (17a), instead of having great riches that result in hate, envy and division (17b).

The “cheerful hearted” person (15b) is “an intelligent” person (14a) who enjoys life (13a) even if from an economical point of view he/she might be poor (16a and 17a). For a wise person a valuable thing (14a) and true joy (13a) is to live in peace with God (16a) and others (17a).

### *Sadness of the fool*

The name “indigent” (15a) in the passage does not seem to indicate a material poverty but rather a spiritual indigence because of deprivation of characteristics proper to the “cheerful heart” person (15b) described above. Now a “broken spirit” (13b) and “anxiety” (16b) take the place of “joy” (13a) and intelligence (14a).

The expression “the face of fools feeds on folly” (14b) is somehow enigmatic, but when it is read in the light of the final piece (16-17) then it can express that relying upon material things (16b and 17b) is foolishness because they do not satisfy the inward and spiritual needs. Unfortunately the fools (14b) do not understand it and most probably they become rich in an unjust way, because of their lack of respect toward God implies also a lack of respect toward His teachings and His commandments (cf. 16a). Such treasures cannot give them true happiness (cf. 13b and 15b). In the divine dimension an unjust gain results in restlessness of heart and in guilt (16b), while in the human dimension it causes hate, envy and division (17b).

### CONCLUSION

The passage is a well organized literary unit from the formal as well as the lexical and thematic points of view. It demonstrates the features that are common to some other units of the First Solomonic Collection (10:1–22:16). The central segment (15) shows some peculiarities. Thematically, it expresses



the more general idea than the extreme pieces (13-14 and 16-17)<sup>17</sup>. Lexically, besides the use of the keywords *lēb* “heart” (13a, 14a, 15b) and *tôb* “good” (15b, 16a, 17a), the central proverb (15) seems to be only loosely connected with the outer pieces (13-14 and 16-17). However, the lexical discontinuity between the central segment (15) and other segment (13-14 and 16-17) is only apparent because the proverbs are linked conceptually. Formally, in the central segment (15) the order of the positive and negative members is reversed in confrontation to other segments (13-14 and 16-17). Also a chiasmic relation has been noted between the centre (15) and the rest of the passage (13-14 and 16-17)<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> The same phenomenon is observed in other passages, for example in 11:12-16 and 14:23-27.

<sup>18</sup> See n. 14.