



6 For at the window of my house I looked through my casement, 7 And beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding, 8 Passing through the street near her corner; and he went the way to her house, 9 In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night: 10 And, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart. 11 (She is loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house: 12 Now is she without, now in the streets, and lieth in wait at every corner.) 13 So she caught him, and kissed him, and with an impudent face said unto him, 14 I have peace offerings with me; this day have I payed my vows. 15 Therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy face, and I have found thee. 16 I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved works, with fine linen of Egypt. 17 I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. 18 Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning: let us solace ourselves with loves. 19 For the goodman is not at home, he is gone a long journey: 20 He hath taken a bag of money with him, and will come home at the day appointed. 21 With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him. 22 He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; 23 Till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life. 24 Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth. 25 Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths. 26 For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her. 27 Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death. (Prov 7:6-27)

“The Age of Innocence” – not the Edith Wharton novel of 1920, but the 1785 painting of Sir Joshua Reynolds of a three year-old female subject – was intended to represent that age at which the air of sweet innocence is greatest and the mind is most free of lurid and immoral thoughts. First of all, nothing could depict innocence better than the character of a three-year-old; and of that of the three-year-olds none could do so better than that character of a little girl. The devolution (to be seriously contrasted with evolution) of man has continued apace from the moment of the Fall at Eden. In the days of the painting by Sir Reynolds, there was no argument as to the innocence of a three-year -old girl. Such a little girl of tender age epitomized the first water of that which was considered innocence. But that age of innocence is being compressed into ever smaller segments of the pie of life thanks to a corrupt education system and an

even more corrupt government that fosters the growth of immorality in order to gain a hand of power over its subjects.

What is the most important window in your life? From which window do you feel as though you can look out from a citadel of security and view the world? Is it not the window of your home? In the home, all is quiet and secure, but without the walls of a home, all manner of evil is taking place, especially during the hours of Satan's optimum hours of darkness. The home is a sanctuary where such evil is unthinkable; but a man or woman may roam beyond the confines of the home seeking sinful and lusty pleasures. So it happens that the author of this text looks out his window, *in the evening, in the black and dark night* – the same condition of darkness into which Judas left the Lord in the Upper Room never again to see the beauty of a sunrise. *For at the window of my house I looked through my casement, And beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding. Passing through the street near her corner; and he went the way to her house, In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night:* What is your favorite time of the 24- hour day? Is it the dark of night that conceals your actions that you prefer, or is it the brilliance of the morning sunrise when all things are being progressively revealed to God's Light? There is no beauty in darkness, is there? But the sunrise is a beauty in and of itself!

All youths are not void of understanding, but the percentage of them that are void of understanding seems to be increasing at phenomenal rates in our day. It is becoming rarer of a four year old to write a symphony as did Beethoven at that age; or for a young boy to compose such virtuous rules of conduct and manners as did George Washington; or for a young and uneducated peasant girl to lead an army to victory as did Jean d'Arc. But we still have many youth whose wisdom and judgment, still unspoiled by filthy sins, can outmatch that of members of Congress or of Parliament. But the author sees one youth void of understanding, and he watches to see what he will do. I saw a comment on an officer efficiency report once during the Vietnam War that read: "I would follow this officer into combat out of sheer curiosity" – because the officer was a fool. We tend to be taken more by those who act with thoughtless abandon than we do to those who act with deliberate thought and wisdom, don't we? How did the observer KNOW that the youth was void of understanding? I believe it was because he was moving down the wrong street known to be infested with the kind of woman he was soon to meet. Our curiosities are not morally neutral. They are often piqued by a certain sinful inclination. So, perhaps, with this youth traveling to the very house of a known harlot. If one seeks temptation, I can assure you, one shall soon find it.

10 And, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart. Ah, yes, the world is just FULL of surprises, isn't it? What should we expect to find at the flea market but fleas? Actually, I believe this youth sought the opportunity to be allured by such a woman. If there were vestiges of modesty still remaining with him, his inner heart wanted that barrier to be overcome by enticements. This woman was of subtle heart. Why do we in the Anglican tradition wear a collar? It is the uniform and profession of our calling to others. Why do women wear the attire of a harlot....I'll leave that one to your imagination! What is the nature of such a woman? *11 (She is loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house: 12 Now is she without, now in the streets, and lieth in wait at every corner.)* The home is a sanctified place and not the sort of place that an harlot desires to stay. Her business is ALWAYS outside the home. Because her companions and victims are always of low character and boorish, so is she. She is loud-mouthed and always on the lurk – a genuine 'ole strumpet' as my mother would say. She lies in wait, as a lion, at every corner. When I was young, there was a popular

song titled, Weem-o-wet. Its song began, "In the jungle, the mighty jungle, the lion sleeps tonight." But that line was not true, for lions love the cover of darkness to hunt their prey. Satan is no different: *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour* (1 Peter 5:8) The harlot is a lioness in the bush at night.

Such a woman is quite cocky and immodest. They are accustomed, as the lioness, for their victims to fall before their claws. *13 So she caught him, and kissed him, and with an impudent face said unto him 14 I have peace offerings with me; this day have I payed my vows. 15 Therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy face, and I have found thee.* The vow to which the woman relates is one of religious duty. She has paid her vow at the Temple and now has the part of the sin offering that is her share to feast upon. But the offering is full of sin still. How many use religion as a means to gratify their lust for money, power, and even sex? Yes, this lioness of a harlot has found her prey, no doubt.

First of all, come the enticements to sin: *16 I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved works, with fine linen of Egypt. 17 I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. 18 Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning: let us solace ourselves with loves.* See how appealing she makes sin to look? Next comes the false notion of security: *19 For the goodman is not at home, he is gone a long journey* There is, perhaps, no 'good man' of the house to begin with but, if there is such, he will not bother them for he is a great distance away. All good men would be a great distance away from such a woman. But there is an Eye that sees, be not deceived. Now she appeals to the boy's greed as well: *20 He hath taken a bag of money with him, and will come home at the day appointed.* This last comment suggests to the boy that the woman is a woman of means. Amazing how more prongs of temptation combine to have a greater force. This woman is the complete opposite of the woman in the Song of Solomon who desires only her betrothed to be with her.

21 With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him. This is simply polite speech on the part of Solomon. We are not victims of our temptations, but of our sinful natures to succumb to those temptations. The boy was clearly willing to be 'forced.' *22 He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; 23 Till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life.* Well, this is a sad commentary. The boy was not all that hopeless at the beginning, but his feet took him to a place he should not have gone. His ears listened to words he should have not heard, and his destruction waits just beyond the lighted door. He follows the WRONG shepherdess! As a lamb to the slaughter, he follows on without constraint. Soon innocence shall be lost never to return. The same happens to beautiful young ladies every day – even the home of the parents of some. Sin kills and is always a deadly end. Solomon tells us that sin is like strong wine: *31 Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. 32 At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. 33 Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things.* (Prov 23:31-33) One sin always leads to another. Going where we should not go is a sin. Listening to whom we should not converse is a sin. Drinking what we should not drink leads to other sins.

Is this harlot not very much like the harlot on the beast of Revelation 17? Does she not offer false hope and false doctrine? Does she not appeal to the dark angels of our souls? If we drink the wine of emotionalism in worship, or greater reverence for

man than God, have we drunken of the wine of that great whore?

Remember, God speaks to us through these words...to US! **24 Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth.** But you may say, "I am not a child." If not, what hope of Heaven do YOU have? ***Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*** (Matt 18:3) These are not Solomon's words, but Words God has given to him. **LISTEN!**

25 Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths. Here we see another example of the extreme precision of God's Word. Our hearts do not INCLINE to evil, but DECLINE to it. If we follow the path of the wicked, we too shall be astray. **26 For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her.** The harlot, of both the flesh and of religion, has destroyed the hope of many valiant. Remember the demise of Samson. Many men never recover from the spoils of sin. They go so deep into the wilderness of it that they never find their ways home. **27 Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.** Nothing new here, just a reinforcing emphasis of the wages of sin. That **DECLINING PATH** into which false religion and false love leads us is the BROAD PATH that leads to destruction. It is that **INCLINING PATH** we must seek which is far less traveled that leads upward to life eternal.