

ECCLESIASTES;

OR THE PREACHER.

Commentary by **A. R. FAUSSETT**

INTRODUCTION

The Hebrew *title* is *Koheleth*, which the speaker in it applies to himself (²⁰¹²Ecclesiastes 1:12), “I, *Koheleth*, was king over Israel.” It means an *Assembler* or *Convener of a meeting* and a *Preacher* to such a meeting. The feminine form of the Hebrew noun, and its construction once (²⁰⁷²Ecclesiastes 7:27) with a feminine verb, show that it not only signifies *Solomon*, the Preacher to assemblies (in which case it is construed with the verb or noun masculine), but also *Divine Wisdom* (feminine in *Hebrew*) speaking by the mouth of the inspired king. In six cases out of seven it is construed with the masculine. Solomon was endowed with inspired wisdom (¹⁰⁸⁵1 Kings 3:5-14 6:11,12 9:1-9 11:9-11), specially fitting him for the task. The Orientals delight in such meetings for grave discourse. Thus the Arabs formerly had an assembly yearly, at *Ocadh*, for hearing and reciting poems. Compare “Masters of assemblies” (see on ²¹²¹Ecclesiastes 12:11). “The Preacher taught the people knowledge,” probably *viva voce* (“orally”); ¹⁰⁶⁴1 Kings 4:34 10:2,8,24 ⁴⁴⁰⁰2 Chronicles 9:1,7,23, plainly refer to a somewhat public *divan* met for literary discussion. So “spake,” thrice repeated (¹⁰⁶²1 Kings 4:32,33), refers not to *written* compositions, but to addresses *spoken* in assemblies convened for the purpose. The Holy Ghost, no doubt, signifies also by the term that Solomon’s doctrine is intended for the “great congregation,” the Church of all places and ages (⁴⁹²⁵Psalms 22:25:49:2-4).

Solomon was plainly *the author* (²⁰¹²Ecclesiastes 1:12,16 2:15 12:9). That the Rabbins attribute it to Isaiah or Hezekiah is explicable by supposing that one or the other inserted it *in the canon*. The difference of its style, as compared with Proverbs and Song of Solomon, is due to the difference of subjects, and the different period of his life in which each was written; the Song, in the fervor of his first love to God; Proverbs, about the same time, or somewhat later; but Ecclesiastes in late old age, as the seal and testimony of repentance of his apostasy in the intervening period: ¹⁸⁸³Psalms 89:30,33

proves his penitence. The substitution of the title *Koheleth* for Solomon (that is, *peace*), may imply that, having *troubled* Israel, meantime he forfeited his name of peace (⁴¹¹¹⁴1 Kings 11:14,23); but now, having repented, he wishes to be henceforth a *Preacher* of righteousness. The alleged foreign expressions in the *Hebrew* may have been easily imported, through the great intercourse there was with other nations during his long reign. Moreover, supposed Chaldaisms may be fragments preserved from the common tongue of which *Hebrew*, *Syriac*, *Chaldee*, and *Arabic* were offshoots.

THE SCOPE of Ecclesiastes is to *show the vanity of all mere human pursuits, when made the chief end, as contrasted with the real blessedness of true wisdom*, that is, religion. The immortality of the soul is dwelt on incidentally, as subsidiary to the main scope. Moses' law took this truth for granted but drew its sanctions of rewards and punishments in accordance with the theocracy, which was under a special providence of God as the *temporal* King of Israel, from the *present life*, rather than the future. But after Israel chose an earthly king, God withdrew, in part, His extraordinary providence, so that under Solomon, temporal rewards did not invariably follow virtue, and punishments vice (compare ²¹²¹⁹Ecclesiastes 2:16 3:19 4:1 5:8 7:15 8:14 9:2,11). Hence the need arises to show that these anomalies will be rectified hereafter, and this is the grand "conclusion," therefore, of the "whole" book, that, seeing there is a coming judgment, and seeing that present goods do not satisfy the soul, "man's whole duty is to fear God and keep his commandments" (²¹²¹³Ecclesiastes 12:13,14), and meanwhile, to use, in joyful and serene sobriety, and not abuse, the present life (²¹²¹²Ecclesiastes 3:12,13).

It is objected that sensual epicurism seems to be inculcated (²¹²¹²Ecclesiastes 3:12,13,22, etc.); but it is a contented, thankful enjoyment of God's present gifts that is taught, as opposed to a murmuring, anxious, avaricious spirit, as is proved by ²¹²¹⁸Ecclesiastes 5:18, compare with ²¹²¹¹Ecclesiastes 5:11-15, not making them the *chief end* of life; not the joy of levity and folly; a misunderstanding which he guards against in ²¹²¹⁰Ecclesiastes 7:2-6 11:9 12:1. Again, ²¹²¹⁶Ecclesiastes 7:16 9:2-10, might seem to teach fatalism and skepticism. But these are words put in the mouth of an objector; or rather, they were the language of Solomon himself during his apostasy, finding an echo in the heart of every sensualist, who *wishes* to be an unbeliever, and, who, therefore, sees difficulties enough in the world around wherewith to prop up his wilful unbelief. The answer is given (²¹²¹⁷Ecclesiastes 7:17,18 9:11,12 11:1,6 12:13). Even if these passages be taken as words of Solomon, they are to be understood as forbidding a self-made "righteousness," which tries to constrain God to grant salvation to

imaginary good works and external strictness with which it wearies itself; also, that speculation which tries to fathom all God's inscrutable counsels (²⁰⁸⁷Ecclesiastes 8:17), and that carefulness about the future forbidden in ⁴⁰²⁵Matthew 6:25.

THE CHIEF GOOD is that the possession of that which makes us happy, is to be sought as the *end*, for its own sake; whereas, all other things are but *means* towards it. Philosophers, who made it the great subject of inquiry, restricted it to the present life, treating the eternal as unreal, and only useful to awe the multitude with. But Solomon shows the vanity of all human things (so-called philosophy included) to satisfy the soul, and that heavenly wisdom alone is the chief good. He had taught so when young (²⁰⁰³Proverbs 1:20 8:1); so also; in Song of Solomon, he had spiritualized the subject in an allegory; and now, after having long personally tried the manifold ways in which the worldly seek to reach happiness, he gives the fruit of his experience in old age.

It is divided into two parts — ²⁰⁰⁰Ecclesiastes 1:1-6:10 showing the vanity of earthly things; ²⁰⁶⁰Ecclesiastes 6:10-12:14, the excellence of heavenly wisdom. Deviations from strict logical methods occur in these divisions, but in the main they are observed. The deviations make it the less stiff and artificial, and the more suited to all capacities. It is in poetry; the hemistichal division is mostly observed, but occasionally not so. The choice of epithets, imagery, inverted order of words, ellipses, parallelism, or, in its absence, similarity of diction, mark versification.

CHAPTER 1

~~2100~~ ECCLESIASTES 1:1-18.

INTRODUCTION.

1. **the Preacher** — and *Convener of assemblies* for the purpose. See my Preface. *Koheleth* in *Hebrew*, a symbolical name for *Solomon*, and of *Heavenly Wisdom* speaking through and identified with him.

~~2012~~ Ecclesiastes 1:12 shows that “king of Jerusalem” is in apposition, not with “David,” but “Preacher.”

of Jerusalem — rather, “*in Jerusalem*,” for it was merely his metropolis, not his whole kingdom.

2. The theme proposed of the first part of his discourse.

Vanity of vanities — Hebraism for the most utter vanity. So “holy of holies” (~~1268~~ Exodus 26:33); “servant of servants” (~~10025~~ Genesis 9:25). The repetition increases the force.

all — *Hebrew*, “*the all*”; all without exception, namely, earthly things.

vanity — not in themselves, for God maketh nothing in vain (~~50041~~ Timothy 4:4,5), but vain when put in the place of God and made the *end*, instead of the *means* (~~19915~~ Psalm 39:5,6 62:9 ~~10633~~ Matthew 6:33); vain, also, because of the “vanity” to which they are “subjected” by the fall (~~4830~~ Romans 8:20).

3. **What profit ... labor** — that is, “What profit” as to the chief good (~~11659~~ Matthew 16:26). Labor is profitable *in its proper place* (~~19115~~ Genesis 2:15 3:19 ~~11423~~ Proverbs 14:23).

under the sun — that is, *in this life*, as opposed to the future world. The phrase often recurs, but only in Ecclesiastes.

4. **earth ... for ever** — (~~19445~~ Psalm 104:5). While the *earth* remains the same, the generations of *men* are ever changing; what lasting profit, then, can there be from the toils of one whose sojourn on earth, as an individual, is so brief? The “for ever” is comparative, not absolute (~~19423~~ Psalm 102:26).

5. (~~19915~~ Psalm 19:5,6). “Panting” as the *Hebrew* for “hasteth”; metaphor, from a runner (~~19915~~ Psalm 19:5, “a strong man”) in a “race.” It applies rather to the *rising sun*, which seems *laboriously* to mount up to the meridian,

than to the setting sun; the accents too favor MAURER, “And (that too, returning) to his place, where panting he riseth.”

6. according to his circuits — that is, it returns afresh to its former circuits, however many be its previous veerings about. The north and south winds are the two prevailing winds in Palestine and Egypt.

7. By subterraneous cavities, and by evaporation forming rain clouds, the fountains and rivers are supplied from the sea, into which they then flow back. The connection is: *Individual* men are continually changing, while the *succession of the race* continues; just as the sun, wind, and rivers are ever shifting about, while the cycle in which they move is invariable; they return to the point whence they set out. Hence is man, as in these objects of nature which are his analogue, with all the seeming changes “there is no new thing” (^{<2009>}Ecclesiastes 1:9).

8. MAURER translates, “All *words* are wearied out,” that is, are inadequate, as also, “man cannot express” all the things in the world which undergo this ceaseless, changeless cycle of vicissitudes: “The eye is not satisfied with seeing them,” etc. But it is plainly a return to the idea (^{<2009>}Ecclesiastes 1:3) as to *man’s* “labor,” which is only wearisome and profitless; “no new” good can accrue from it (^{<2009>}Ecclesiastes 1:9); for as the sun, etc., so man’s laborious works move in a changeless cycle. The *eye* and *ear* are two of the taskmasters for which man toils. But these are never “satisfied” (^{<2009>}Ecclesiastes 6:7 ^{<1720>}Proverbs 27:20). Nor can they be so hereafter, for there will be nothing “new.” Not so the chief good, Jesus Christ (^{<0413>}John 4:13,14 ^{<6215>}Revelation 21:5).

9. Rather, “no new thing *at all*”; as in ^{<0416>}Numbers 11:6. This is not meant in a general sense; but there is no new source of happiness (the subject in question) which can be devised; the same round of petty pleasures, cares, business, study, wars, etc., being repeated over and over again [HOLDEN].

10. old time — *Hebrew*, “ages.”

which was — The *Hebrew plural* cannot be joined to the verb *singular*. Therefore translate: “It hath been in the ages before; certainly it hath been before us” [HOLDEN]. Or, as MAURER: “That which has been (done) before us (in our presence, ^{<1363>}1 Chronicles 16:33), has been (done) already in the old times.”

11. The reason why some things are thought “new,” which are not really so, is the imperfect record that exists of preceding ages among their successors.

those that ... come after — that is, those that live *still later* than the “things, rather the *persons* or generations, ⁽²⁰⁰⁴⁾Ecclesiastes 1:4, with which this verse is connected, the six intermediate verses being merely illustrations of ⁽²⁰⁰⁶⁾Ecclesiastes 1:4 [WEISS], that are to come” (⁽²⁰¹⁶⁾Ecclesiastes 2:16 9:5).

12. Resumption of ⁽²⁰⁰⁰⁾Ecclesiastes 1:1, the intermediate verses being the introductory statement of his thesis. Therefore, “the Preacher” (*Koheleth*) is repeated.

was king — instead of “am,” because he is about to give the results of his *past* experience during his long reign.

in Jerusalem — specified, as opposed to David, who reigned both in Hebron and Jerusalem; whereas Solomon reigned only in Jerusalem. “King of Israel in Jerusalem,” implies that he reigned over *Israel and Judah combined*; whereas David, at Hebron, reigned only over *Judah*, and not, until he was settled in Jerusalem, over both Israel and Judah.

13. *this sore travail* — namely, that of “searching” out all things done under heaven.” Not human wisdom in general, which comes afterwards (⁽²⁰⁰²⁾Ecclesiastes 2:12, etc.), but laborious enquiries into, and speculations about, the works of men; for example, political science. As man is doomed to get his bread, so his knowledge, by the sweat of his brow (⁽⁰⁰¹⁹⁾Genesis 3:19) [GILL].

exercised — that is, disciplined; literally, “that they may thereby *chastise*, or *humble* themselves.”

14. The reason is here given why investigation into man’s “works” is only “sore travail” (⁽²⁰¹³⁾Ecclesiastes 1:13); namely, because all man’s ways are vain (⁽²⁰¹⁸⁾Ecclesiastes 1:18) and cannot be mended (⁽²⁰¹⁵⁾Ecclesiastes 1:15).

vexation of — “a preying upon”

the Spirit — MAURER translates; “the pursuit of wind,” as in ⁽²⁰¹⁶⁾Ecclesiastes 5:16 ⁽²⁰¹¹⁾Hosea 12:1, “Ephraim feedeth on wind.” But old versions support the *English Version*.

15. Investigation (⁽²⁰¹³⁾Ecclesiastes 1:13) into human ways is vain labor, for they are hopelessly “crooked” and “cannot be made straight” by it (⁽²⁰¹³⁾Ecclesiastes 7:13). God, the chief good, alone can do this (⁽²⁰¹⁰⁾Isaiah 40:4 45:2).

wanting — (⁽²⁰¹²⁾Daniel 5:27).

numbered — so as to make a complete number; so equivalent to “supplied” [MAURER]. Or, rather, man’s state is *utterly wanting*; and that

which is wholly defective cannot be numbered or calculated. The investigator thinks he can draw up, in accurate *numbers*, statistics of man's wants; but these, including the defects in the investigator's labor, are not partial, but total.

16. *communed with ... heart* — (⁰²⁴⁵Genesis 24:45).

come to great estate — Rather, “I *have magnified* and gotten” (literally, “added,” increased), etc.

all ... before me in Jerusalem — namely, the priests, judges, and two kings that preceded Solomon. His wisdom exceeded that of all before Jesus Christ, the antitypical *Koheleth*, or “*Gatherer* of men,” (⁰¹³⁴Luke 13:34), and “Wisdom” incarnate (⁰¹¹⁹Matthew 11:19 12:42).

had ... experience — literally, “had *seen*” (⁰¹³¹Jeremiah 2:31). Contrast with this glorying in worldly wisdom (⁰¹²³Jeremiah 9:23,24).

17. *wisdom ... madness* — that is, their effects, the works of human wisdom and folly respectively. “Madness,” literally, “vaunting extravagance”; ⁰¹⁰²Ecclesiastes 2:12 7:25, etc., support *English Version* rather than DATHE, “splendid matters.” “Folly” is read by *English Version* with some manuscripts, instead of the present *Hebrew* text, “prudence.” If *Hebrew* be retained, understand “prudence,” *falsely so called* (⁰⁴⁰¹1 Timothy 6:20), “craft” (⁰¹⁸³Daniel 8:25).

18. *wisdom ... knowledge* — not in general, for wisdom, etc., are most excellent in their place; but *speculative knowledge of man's ways* (⁰¹¹³Ecclesiastes 1:13,17), which, the farther it goes, gives one the more pain to find how “crooked” and “wanting” they are (⁰¹¹⁵Ecclesiastes 1:15 12:12).

CHAPTER 2

2006 ECCLESIASTES 2:1-26.

He next tries pleasure and luxury, retaining however, his worldly “wisdom” (2009 Ecclesiastes 3:9), but all proves “vanity” in respect to the chief good.

1. ***I said ... heart*** — (2029 Luke 12:19).

thee — my heart, I will test whether thou canst find that solid good in pleasure which was not in “worldly wisdom.” But this also proves to be “vanity” (2800 Isaiah 50:11).

2. ***laughter*** — including *prosperity*, and joy in general (2823 Job 8:21).

mad — that is, *when made the chief good*; it is harmless in its proper place.

What doeth it? — Of what avail is it in giving solid good? (2006 Ecclesiastes 7:6 2043 Proverbs 14:13).

3-11. Illustration more at large of 2000 Ecclesiastes 2:1,2.

I sought — I resolved, after search into many plans.

give myself unto wine — literally, “to draw my flesh,” or “body to wine” (including all banquetings). Image from a captive drawn after a chariot in triumph (2866 Romans 6:16,19 2811 1 Corinthians 12:2); or, one “allured” (2028 2 Peter 2:18,19).

yet acquainting ... wisdom — literally, “and my heart (still) *was behaving, or guiding itself*,” with wisdom [GESENIUS]. MAURER translates: “*was weary of* (worldly) wisdom.” But the end of 2009 Ecclesiastes 2:9 confirms *English Version*.

folly — namely, pleasures of the flesh, termed “mad,” 2000 Ecclesiastes 2:2.

all the days, etc. — (See *Margin* and 2062 Ecclesiastes 6:12 2850 Job 15:20).

4. (2000 1 Kings 7:1-8 9:1,19 10:18, etc.).

vineyards — (So 8:11).

5. ***gardens*** — *Hebrew*, “paradises,” a foreign word; *Sanskrit*, “a place enclosed with a wall”; *Armenian* and *Arabic*, “a pleasure ground with

flowers and shrubs near the king's house, or castle." An earthly paradise can never make up for the want of the heavenly (^{<6137>}Revelation 2:7).

6. pools — artificial, for irrigating the soil (^{<1020>}Genesis 2:10 ^{<1624>}Nehemiah 2:14 ^{<3039>}Isaiah 1:30). Three such reservoirs are still found, called Solomon's cisterns, a mile and a half from Jerusalem.

wood that bringeth forth — rather, "the grove that *flourisheth with trees*" [LOWTH].

7. born in my house — These were esteemed more trustworthy servants than those bought (^{<1144>}Genesis 14:14 15:2,3 17:12,13,27 ^{<2424>}Jeremiah 2:14), called "*songs of one's handmaid*" (^{<1232>}Exodus 23:12; compare ^{<1126>}Genesis 12:16 ^{<3003>}Job 1:3).

8. (^{<1107>}1 Kings 10:27 ^{<4115>}2 Chronicles 1:15 9:20).

peculiar treasure of kings and ... provinces — contributed by them, as tributary to him (^{<1102>}1 Kings 4:21,24) a poor substitute for the wisdom whose "gain is better than fine gold" (^{<1184>}Proverbs 3:14,15).

singers — so David (^{<1095>}2 Samuel 19:35).

musical instruments ... of all sorts — introduced at banquets (^{<2562>}Isaiah 5:12 ^{<3065>}Amos 6:5,6); rather, "a princess and princesses," from an *Arabic* root. One regular wife, or queen (^{<1009>}Esther 1:9); Pharaoh's daughter (^{<1100>}1 Kings 3:1); other secondary wives, "princesses," distinct from the "concubines" (^{<1113>}1 Kings 11:3 ^{<9510>}Psalms 45:10 ^{<2168>}Song of Solomon 6:8) [WEISS, GESENIUS]. Had these been omitted, the enumeration would be incomplete.

9. great — opulent (^{<1025>}Genesis 24:35 ^{<3003>}Job 1:3; see ^{<1103>}1 Kings 10:23).

remained — (^{<2118>}Ecclesiastes 2:3).

10. my labor — in procuring pleasures.

this — evanescent "joy" was my only "portion out of all my labor" (^{<2102>}Ecclesiastes 3:22 5:18 9:9 ^{<1103>}1 Kings 10:5).

11. But all these I felt were only "vanity," and of "no profit" as to the chief good. "Wisdom" (worldly *common sense*, sagacity), which still "remained with me" (^{<2119>}Ecclesiastes 2:9), showed me that these could not give solid happiness.

12. He had tried (worldly) wisdom (^{<2112>}Ecclesiastes 1:12-18) and folly (foolish pleasure) (^{<2111>}Ecclesiastes 2:1-11); he now compares them (^{<2112>}Ecclesiastes 2:12) and finds that while (worldly)

wisdom excelleth folly (^{<2013>}Ecclesiastes 2:13,14), yet the one event, death, befalls both (^{<2014>}Ecclesiastes 2:14-16), and that thus the wealth acquired by the wise man's "labor" may descend to a "fool" that hath not labored (^{<2018>}Ecclesiastes 2:18,19,21); therefore all his labor is vanity (^{<2022>}Ecclesiastes 2:22,23).

what can the man do ... already done — (^{<2009>}Ecclesiastes 1:9).

Parenthetical. A future investigator can strike nothing out "new," so as to draw a different conclusion from what I draw by comparing "wisdom and madness." HOLDEN, with less ellipsis, translates, "What, O man, shall come after the king?" etc. Better, GROTIUS, "What man can come after (compete with) the king in the things which are done?" None ever can have the same means of testing what all earthly things can do towards satisfying the soul; namely, worldly wisdom, science, riches, power, longevity, all combined.

13, 14. (^{<1074>}Proverbs 17:24). The worldly "wise" man has *good sense* in managing his affairs, *skill* and *taste* in building and planting, and keeps within *safe* and *respectable* bounds in pleasure, while the "fool" is wanting in these respects ("darkness," equivalent to *fatal error, blind infatuation*), yet one event, death, happens to both (^{<3225>}Job 21:26).

15. why was I — so anxious to become, etc. (^{<4002>}2 Chronicles 1:10).

Then — Since such is the case.

this — namely, pursuit of (worldly) wisdom; it can never fill the place of the true wisdom (^{<3333>}Job 28:28 ^{<2439>}Jeremiah 8:9).

16. remembrance — a great aim of the worldly (^{<1104>}Genesis 11:4). The righteous alone attain it (^{<3616>}Psalms 112:6 ^{<3007>}Proverbs 10:7).

for ever — no *perpetual* memorial.

that which now is — MAURER, "In the days to come all things shall be now long ago forgotten."

17. Disappointed in one experiment after another, he is weary of life. The backslider ought to have rather reasoned as the prodigal (^{<3016>}Hosea 2:6,7 ^{<2157>}Luke 15:17,18).

grievous unto me — (^{<3016>}Job 10:1).

18, 19. One hope alone was left to the disappointed worldling, the perpetuation of his name and riches, laboriously gathered, through his successor. For selfishness is mostly at the root of worldly parents' alleged providence for their children. But now the remembrance of how he himself,

the piously reared child of David, had disregarded his father's dying charge (^{<330>}1 Chronicles 28:9), suggested the sad misgivings as to what Rehoboam, his son by an idolatrous Ammonitess, Naamah, should prove to be; a foreboding too fully realized (1 Kings 12 14:21-31).

20. *I gave up as desperate all hope of solid fruit from my labor.*

21. Suppose "there is a man," etc.

equity — rather "with success," as the *Hebrew* is rendered (^{<2106>}Ecclesiastes 11:6), "prosper," though *Margin* gives "right" [HOLDEN and MAURER].

evil — not in itself, for this is the ordinary course of things, but "evil," as regards the chief good, that one should have toiled so fruitlessly.

22. Same sentiment as in ^{<2121>}Ecclesiastes 2:21, interrogatively.

23. The only fruit he has is, not only sorrows *in* his days, but *all* his days are sorrows, and his travail (not only *has* griefs connected with it, but is itself), grief.

24. *English Version* gives a seemingly Epicurean sense, contrary to the general scope. The *Hebrew*, literally is, "It is *not good* for man that he should eat," etc., "and should make his soul see good" (or "*show* his soul, that is, himself, happy"), etc. [WEISS]. According to HOLDEN and WEISS, ^{<2182>}Ecclesiastes 3:12,22 differ from this verse in the text and meaning; here he means, "It is not good that a man should feast himself, and falsely make as though his soul were happy"; he thus refers to a false *pretending* of happiness *acquired by and for one's self*; in ^{<2182>}Ecclesiastes 3:12,22 5:18,19, to *real seeing*, or *finding* pleasure *when God gives it*. There it is said to be *good* for a man to enjoy with satisfaction and thankfulness the blessings which God gives; here it is said *not* to be *good* to take an unreal pleasure to one's self by feasting, etc.

This also I saw — I perceived by experience that good (real pleasure) is not to be taken at will, but comes only from the hand of God [WEISS] (^{<3904>}Psalms 4:6 ^{<2579>}Isaiah 57:19-21). Or as HOLDEN, "It is the appointment from the hand of God, that the sensualist has no solid satisfaction" (good).

25. *hasten* — after indulgences (^{<1023>}Proverbs 7:23 19:2), *eagerly pursue* such enjoyments. None can compete with me in this. If I, then, with all my opportunities of enjoyment, failed utterly to obtain solid pleasure of my own making, apart from God, who else can? God mercifully spares His children the sad experiment which Solomon made, by denying them the goods which they often desire. He gives them the fruits of Solomon's experience, without their paying the dear price at which Solomon bought it.

26. True, literally, in the Jewish theocracy; and in some measure in all ages (^{<3276>}Job 27:16,17 ^{<332>}Proverbs 13:22,28:8). Though the retribution be not so visible and immediate now as then, it is no less real. Happiness even here is more truly the portion of the godly (^{<3811>}Psalm 84:11 ^{<1085>}Matthew 5:5 ^{<4129>}Mark 10:29,30 ^{<4838>}Romans 8:28 ^{<5008>}1 Timothy 4:8).

that he — the sinner

may give — that is, unconsciously and in spite of himself. The godly Solomon had satisfaction in his riches and wisdom, when God gave them (^{<4011>}2 Chronicles 1:11,12). The backsliding Solomon had no happiness when he sought it in them apart from God; and the riches which he heaped up became the prey of Shishak (^{<4420>}2 Chronicles 12:9).

CHAPTER 3

~~2108~~ECCLESIASTES 3:1-22.

Earthly pursuits are no doubt lawful in their proper time and order (~~2108~~Ecclesiastes 3:1-8), but unprofitable when out of time and place; as for instance, when pursued as the solid and chief good (~~2108~~Ecclesiastes 3:9,10); whereas God makes everything beautiful in its season, which man obscurely comprehends (~~2108~~Ecclesiastes 3:11). God allows man to enjoy moderately and virtuously His earthly gifts (~~2108~~Ecclesiastes 3:12,13). What consoles us amidst the instability of earthly blessings is, God's counsels are immutable (~~2104~~Ecclesiastes 3:14).

1. Man has his appointed cycle of seasons and vicissitudes, as the sun, wind, and water (~~2108~~Ecclesiastes 1:5-7).

purpose — as there is a fixed “season” in God’s “purposes” (for example, He has fixed the “time” when man is “to be born,” and “to die,” ~~2108~~Ecclesiastes 3:2), so there is a lawful “time” for man to carry out his “purposes” and inclinations. God does not condemn, but approves of, the *use* of earthly blessings (~~2108~~Ecclesiastes 3:12); it is the *abuse* that He condemns, the making them the chief end (~~4175~~1 Corinthians 7:31). The earth, without human desires, love, taste, joy, sorrow, would be a dreary waste, without water; but, on the other hand, the misplacing and excess of them, as of a flood, need control. Reason and revelation are given to control them.

2. **time to die** — (~~4815~~Psalms 31:15 ~~8027~~Hebrews 9:27).

plant — A man can no more reverse the times and order of “planting,” and of “digging up,” and transplanting, than he can alter the times fixed for his “birth” and “death.” To try to “plant” *out of season* is vanity, however good *in season*; so to make earthly things *the chief end* is vanity, however good they be in order and season. GILL takes it, not so well, figuratively (~~2487~~Jeremiah 18:7,9 ~~4195~~Amos 9:15 ~~4053~~Matthew 15:13).

3. **time to kill** — namely, judicially, criminals; or, in wars of self-defense; not in malice. Out of this time and order, killing is murder.

to heal — God has His times for “healing” (literally, ~~2385~~Isaiah 38:5,21; figuratively, ~~4529~~Deuteronomy 32:39 ~~2108~~Hosea 6:1; spiritually, ~~4970~~Psalms

147:3 ^{<2579>}Isaiah 57:19). To *heal* spiritually, before the sinner feels his *wound*, would be “out of time,” and so injurious.

time to break down — cities, as Jerusalem, by Nebuchadnezzar.

build up — as Jerusalem, in the time of Zerubbabel; spiritually (^{<3091>}Amos 9:11), “the set time” (^{<4921>}Psalms 102:13-16).

4. mourn — namely, for the dead (^{<0210>}Genesis 23:2).

dance — as David before the ark (^{<0062>}2 Samuel 6:12-14 ^{<3801>}Psalms 30:11); spiritually (^{<0195>}Matthew 9:15 ^{<0161>}Luke 6:21 15:25). The Pharisees, by requiring sadness *out of time*, erred seriously.

5. cast away stones — as out of a garden or vineyard (^{<2382>}Isaiah 5:2).

gather — for building; figuratively, the Gentiles, once castaway stones, were in due time made parts of the spiritual building (^{<0029>}Ephesians 2:19,20), and children of Abraham (^{<0039>}Matthew 3:9); so the restored Jews hereafter (^{<0921>}Psalms 102:13,14 ^{<3016>}Zechariah 9:16).

refrain ... embracing — (^{<2016>}Joel 2:16 ^{<0071>}1 Corinthians 7:5,6).

6. time to get — for example, to gain honestly a livelihood (^{<0023>}Ephesians 4:23).

lose — When God wills losses to us, then is our time to be content.

keep — not to give to the idle beggar (^{<3010>}2 Thessalonians 3:10).

cast away — in charity (^{<0124>}Proverbs 11:24); or to part with the dearest object, rather than the soul (^{<0043>}Mark 9:43). To be careful is right in its place, but not when it comes between us and Jesus Christ (^{<2004>}Luke 10:40-42).

7. rend — garments, in mourning (^{<2013>}Joel 2:13); figuratively, nations, as Israel from Judah, already foretold, in Solomon’s time (^{<0113>}1 Kings 11:30,31), to be “sewed” together hereafter (^{<2575>}Ezekiel 37:15,22).

silence — (^{<3013>}Amos 5:13), in a national calamity, or that of a friend (^{<0813>}Job 2:13); also not to murmur under God’s visitation (^{<0008>}Leviticus 10:3 ^{<0301>}Psalms 39:1,2,9).

8. hate — for example, sin, lusts (^{<2405>}Luke 14:26); that is, to love *God* so much more as to seem in comparison to *hate* “father or mother,” when coming between us and God.

a time of war ... peace — (^{<2431>}Luke 14:31).

9. But these earthly pursuits, while lawful in their season, are “unprofitable” when made by man, what God never intended them to be, the chief good. Solomon had tried to create an artificial forced joy, at times when he ought rather to have been serious; the result, therefore, of his labor to be happy, out of God’s order, was disappointment. “A time to plant” (²¹⁰⁸Ecclesiastes 3:2) refers to his *planting* (²¹⁰⁸Ecclesiastes 2:5); “laugh” (²¹⁰⁸Ecclesiastes 3:4), to ²¹⁰⁸Ecclesiastes 2:1,2. “his mirth,” “laughter”; “build up,” “gather stones” (²¹⁰⁸Ecclesiastes 3:3,5), to his “building” (²¹⁰⁸Ecclesiastes 2:4); “embrace,” “love,” to his “princess” (see on ²¹⁰⁸Ecclesiastes 2:8); “get” (perhaps also “gather,” ²¹⁰⁸Ecclesiastes 3:5,6), to his “gathering” (²¹⁰⁸Ecclesiastes 2:8). All these were of “no profit,” because not in God’s time and order of bestowing happiness.

10. (See on ²¹⁰³Ecclesiastes 1:13).

11. *his time* — that is *in its proper season* (³⁰⁰⁸Psalms 1:3), opposed to worldlings putting earthly pursuits *out of their proper time and place* (see on ²¹⁰⁹Ecclesiastes 3:9).

set the world in their heart — given them capacities to understand *the world* of nature as reflecting God’s wisdom in its beautiful order and times (⁶¹⁰⁹Romans 1:19,20). “Everything” answers to “world,” in the parallelism.

so that — that is, but in such a manner that man only sees a portion, not the whole “from beginning to end” (²¹⁰⁷Ecclesiastes 8:17 ⁸³⁰⁴Job 26:14 ⁶¹⁰³Romans 11:33 ⁶⁶⁵⁰Revelation 15:4). PARKHURST, for “world,” translates: “Yet He hath put *obscurity in the midst of them*,” literally, “a secret,” so man’s mental *dimness of sight* as to the full mystery of God’s works. So HOLDEN and WEISS. This incapacity for “finding out” (comprehending) God’s work is chiefly the fruit of the fall. The worldling ever since, not knowing God’s time and order, labors in vain, because out of time and place.

12. *in them* — in God’s works (²¹⁰⁸Ecclesiastes 3:11), as far as relates to man’s duty. Man cannot fully comprehend them, but he ought joyfully to receive (“rejoice in”) God’s gifts, and “do good” with them to himself and to others. This is never out of season (⁸¹⁰⁹Galatians 6:9,10). Not sensual joy and self-indulgence (³⁰⁰⁴Philippians 4:4 ⁵⁰⁰³James 4:16,17).

13. Literally, “And also as to every man who eats ... this is the gift of God” (²¹⁰²Ecclesiastes 3:22 ²¹⁰⁸Ecclesiastes 5:18). When received as God’s gifts, and to God’s glory, the good things of life are enjoyed in their due time and order (⁴¹⁰⁶Acts 2:46 ⁴¹⁰¹1 Corinthians 10:31 ⁵⁰⁰³1 Timothy 4:3,4).

14. (^{<082>}1 Samuel 3:12 ^{<023>}2 Samuel 23:5 ^{<088>}Psalm 89:34 ^{<025>}Matthew 24:35 ^{<017>}James 1:17).

for ever — as opposed to man’s perishing labors (^{<026>}Ecclesiastes 2:15-18).

any thing taken from it — opposed to man’s “crooked and wanting” works (^{<015>}Ecclesiastes 1:15 7:13). The event of man’s labors depends wholly on God’s immutable purpose. Man’s part, therefore, is to do and enjoy every earthly thing *in its proper season* (^{<032>}Ecclesiastes 3:12,13), not setting aside God’s order, but observing deep reverence towards God; for the mysteriousness and unchangeableness of God’s purposes are designed to lead “man to fear before Him.” Man knows not the event of each act: otherwise he would think himself independent of God.

15. Resumption of ^{<009>}Ecclesiastes 1:9. Whatever changes there be, the succession of events is ordered by God’s “everlasting” laws (^{<034>}Ecclesiastes 3:14), and returns in a fixed cycle.

requireth that ... past — After many changes, God’s law *requires* the return of the same cycle of events, as in *the past*, literally, “that which is driven on.” The *Septuagint* and *Syriac* translate: “God requireth (that is, avengeth) the *persecuted man*”; a transition to ^{<036>}Ecclesiastes 3:16,17. The parallel clauses of the verse support *English Version*.

16. Here a difficulty is suggested. If God “requires” events to move in their perpetual cycle, why are the wicked allowed to deal unrighteously in the place where injustice ought least of all to be; namely, “the place of judgment” (^{<011>}Jeremiah 12:1)?

17. Solution of it. There is a coming judgment in which God will vindicate His righteous ways. The sinner’s “time” of his unrighteous “work” is short. God also has His “time” and “work” of judgment; and, meanwhile, is overruling, for good at last, what seems now dark. Man cannot now “find out” the plan of God’s ways (^{<031>}Ecclesiastes 3:11 ^{<092>}Psalm 97:2). If judgment instantly followed every sin, there would be no scope for free will, faith, and perseverance of saints in spite of difficulties. The previous darkness will make the light at last the more glorious.

there — (^{<017>}Job 3:17-19) in eternity, in the presence of the Divine Judge, opposed to the “there,” in the human place of judgment (^{<036>}Ecclesiastes 3:16): so “from *thence*” (^{<044>}Genesis 49:24).

18. *estate* — The estate of fallen man is so ordered (these wrongs are permitted), that God might “manifest,” that is, thereby *prove* them, and that they might themselves see their mortal frailty, like that of the beasts.

sons of men — rather, “sons of Adam,” a phrase used for “fallen men.” The toleration of injustice until the judgment is designed to “manifest” men’s characters in their fallen state, to see whether the oppressed will bear themselves aright amidst their wrongs, knowing that the time is short, and there is a coming judgment. The oppressed share in death, but the comparison to “beasts” applies especially to *the ungodly oppressors* (⁴⁹¹²Psalm 49:12,20). They too need to be “manifested” (“proved”), whether, considering that they must soon die as the “beasts,” and fearing the judgment to come, they will repent (²⁰²⁷Daniel 4:27).

19. Literally, “For the sons of men (Adam) *are a mere chance*, as also the beast is a mere chance.” These words can only be the sentiments of the skeptical oppressors. God’s delay in judgment gives scope for the “manifestation” of their infidelity (²⁰⁸¹Ecclesiastes 8:11 ⁴⁹⁵⁹Psalm 55:19 ⁶⁰⁰²Peter 3:3,4). They *are* “brute beasts,” morally (²⁰⁸⁸Ecclesiastes 3:18 ⁶¹¹⁰Jude 1:10); and they end by maintaining that man, physically, has no pre-eminence over the beast, both alike being “fortuities.” Probably this was the language of Solomon himself in his apostasy. He answers it in ²¹⁸²Ecclesiastes 3:21. If ²¹⁸⁹Ecclesiastes 3:19,20 be *his* words, they express only that *as regards liability to death*, excluding the future judgment, as the skeptic oppressors do, man is on a level with the beast. Life is “vanity,” if regarded independently of religion. But ²⁰²⁰Ecclesiastes 3:21 points out the vast difference between them in respect to the future destiny; also (²¹⁸⁷Ecclesiastes 3:17) beasts have no “judgment” to come.

breath — vitality.

21. Who knoweth — Not *doubt* of the destination of man’s spirit (²¹⁰⁷Ecclesiastes 12:7); but “*how few*, by reason of the outward mortality to which man is as liable as the beast and which is the ground of the skeptic’s argument, comprehend the wide difference between man and the beast” (²⁸¹⁰Isaiah 53:1). The *Hebrew* expresses the difference strongly, “The spirit of man that ascends, it belongeth to on high; but the spirit of the beast that descends, it belongeth to below, even to the earth.” Their destinations and proper element differ utterly [WEISS].

22. (Compare ²⁰⁸²Ecclesiastes 3:12 ²⁰⁵⁸Ecclesiastes 5:18). Inculcating a thankful enjoyment of God’s gifts, and a cheerful discharge of man’s duties, founded on fear of God; not as the sensualist (²¹⁰⁹Ecclesiastes 11:9); not as the anxious money-seeker (²⁰²³Ecclesiastes 2:23 5:10-17).

his portion — in the present life. If it were made his *main* portion, it would be “vanity” (²⁰⁰¹Ecclesiastes 2:1 ²⁰²⁵Luke 16:25).

for who, etc. — Our ignorance as to the future, which is God’s “time” (2011 Ecclesiastes 3:11), should lead us to use the present time in the best sense and leave the future to His infinite wisdom (4011 Matthew 6:20,25,31-34).

CHAPTER 4

ECCLESIASTES 4:1-16.

1. **returned** — namely, to the thought set forth (²¹⁸⁶Ecclesiastes 3:16 ⁴⁸⁸⁹Job 35:9).

power — MAURER, not so well, “violence.”

no comforter — twice said to express *continued* suffering without any to give comfort (²⁵⁰⁷Isaiah 53:7).

2. A profane sentiment if severed from its connection; but just in its bearing on Solomon’s scope. If religion were not taken into account (²¹⁸⁷Ecclesiastes 3:17,19), to die as soon as possible would be desirable, so as not to suffer or witness “oppressions”; and still more so, not to be born at all (²¹⁰⁰Ecclesiastes 7:1). Job (⁴⁸⁸²Job 3:12 21:7), David (⁴⁹³⁸Psalms 73:3, etc.), Jeremiah (²⁴²⁰Jeremiah 12:1), Habakkuk (³⁸¹³Habakkuk 1:13), all passed through the same perplexity, until they went into the sanctuary, and looked beyond the present to the “judgment” (⁴⁹³⁷Psalms 73:17 ³⁸¹³Habakkuk 2:20 3:17,18). Then they saw the need of delay, before completely punishing the wicked, to give space for repentance, or else for accumulation of wrath (⁴⁸¹⁵Romans 2:15); and before completely rewarding the godly, to give room for faith and perseverance in tribulation (⁴⁹¹⁷Psalms 92:7-12). Earnests, however, are often even now given, by partial judgments of the future, to assure us, in spite of difficulties, that God governs the earth.

3. **not seen** — nor *experienced*.

4. **right** — rather, “prosperous” (see on ²¹⁰²Ecclesiastes 2:21). Prosperity, which men so much covet, is the very source of provoking oppression (²¹⁰⁰Ecclesiastes 4:1) and “envy,” so far is it from constituting the chief good.

5. Still the

fool, the *wicked* oppressor who “folds his hands together” (²¹⁶⁰Proverbs 6:10 24:33), *in idleness*, living on the means he wrongfully wrests from others, is not to be envied even in this life; for such a one

eatheth his own flesh — that is, is a *self-tormentor*, never satisfied, his spirit preying on itself (²¹⁰⁰Isaiah 9:20 49:26).

6. *Hebrew*; “One open hand (palm) full of quietness, than both closed hands full of travail.” “Quietness” (mental tranquillity flowing from honest labor), opposed to “eating one’s own flesh” (²⁰⁰⁵Ecclesiastes 4:5), also opposed to anxious labor to gain (²⁰⁰⁸Ecclesiastes 4:8 ²¹⁵⁶Proverbs 15:16,17 16:8).

7. A vanity described in ²⁰⁰⁸Ecclesiastes 4:8.

8. *not a second* — no partner.

child — “son or brother,” put for any heir (⁰²³⁶Deuteronomy 25:5-10).

eye — (²⁰⁰⁸Ecclesiastes 1:8). The miser would not be able to give an account of his infatuation.

9. *Two* — opposed to “one” (²⁰⁰⁸Ecclesiastes 4:8). Ties of union, marriage, friendship, religious communion, are better than the selfish solitariness of the miser (⁰⁰⁰⁸Genesis 2:18).

reward — Advantage accrues from their efforts being conjoined. The *Talmud* says, “A man without a companion is like a left hand without the right.

10. *if they fall* — if *the one or other* fall, as may happen to *both*, namely, into any distress of body, mind, or soul.

11. (See on ¹⁰⁰⁰1 Kings 1:1). The image is taken from man and wife, but applies universally to the *warm* sympathy derived from social ties. So Christian ties (⁰²⁰³Luke 24:32 ⁰²⁰⁵Acts 28:15).

12. *one* — enemy.

threefold cord — proverbial for a *combination of many* — for example, husband, wife, and children (²⁰¹⁴Proverbs 11:14); so Christians (²⁰⁰¹Luke 10:1 ⁵⁰⁰²Colossians 2:2,19). Untwist the cord, and the separate threads are easily “broken.”

13. The “threefold cord” (²⁰¹²Ecclesiastes 4:12) of social ties suggests the subject of *civil government*. In this case too, he concludes that kingly power confers no lasting happiness. The “wise” child, though a supposed case of Solomon, answers, in the event foreseen by the Holy Ghost, to Jeroboam, then a poor but valiant youth, once a “servant” of Solomon, and (¹¹²⁵1 Kings 11:26-40) appointed by God through the prophet Ahijah to be heir of the kingdom of the ten tribes about to be rent from Rehoboam. The “old and foolish king” answers to Solomon himself, who had lost his wisdom, when, in defiance of two warnings of God (¹⁰³⁴1 Kings 3:14 9:2-9), he forsook God.

will no more be admonished — knows not yet how to take warning (see *Margin*) God had by Ahijah already intimated the judgment coming on Solomon (^{<1111>}1 Kings 11:11-13).

14. *out of prison* — Solomon uses this phrase of a supposed case; for example, Joseph raised from a dungeon to be lord of Egypt. His words are at the same time so framed by the Holy Ghost that they answer virtually to Jeroboam, who fled to escape a “prison” and death from Solomon, to Shishak of Egypt (^{<1114>}1 Kings 11:40). This unconscious presaging of his own doom, and that of Rehoboam, constitutes the irony. David’s elevation from poverty and exile, under Saul (which may have been before Solomon’s mind), had so far their counterpart in that of Jeroboam.

whereas ... becometh poor — rather, “though he (the youth) was born poor in his kingdom” (in the land where afterwards he was to reign).

15. “I considered all the living,” the present generation, in relation to (“with”) the “*second* youth” (the “*legitimate* successor” of the “old king,” as opposed to the “poor youth,” the one *first* spoken of, about to be raised from poverty to a throne), that is, Rehoboam.

in his stead — the old king’s.

16. Notwithstanding their now worshipping the rising sun, the heir-apparent, I reflected that “there were no bounds, no stability (^{<1157>}2 Samuel 15:6 20:1), no check on the love of innovation, of all that have been before them,” that is, the past generation; so

also they that come after — that is, the next generation,

shall not rejoice in him — namely, Rehoboam. The parallel, “shall not rejoice,” fixes the sense of “no bounds,” *no permanent adherence*, though now men *rejoice* in *him*.

CHAPTER 5

ECCLESIASTES 5:1-20.

1. From vanity connected with kings, he passes to vanities (^{2180E}Ecclesiastes 5:7) which may be fallen into convinced of the vanity of the creature, wish to worship the Creator.

Keep thy foot — In going to worship, go with considerate, circumspect, reverent feeling. The allusion is to the taking off the shoes, or sandals, in entering a temple (^{1088E}Exodus 3:5 ^{1065E}Joshua 5:15, which passages perhaps gave rise to the custom). WEISS needlessly reads, “Keep thy *feast days*” (^{1224E}Exodus 23:14,17; the three great feasts).

hear — rather, “To be ready (to draw nigh with the desire) to hear (obey) is a better sacrifice than the offering of fools” [HOLDEN]. (*Vulgate; Syriac*). (^{1516E}Psalms 51:16,17 ^{1088E}Proverbs 21:3 ^{1065E}Jeremiah 6:20 7:21-23 14:12 ^{1062E}Amos 5:21-24). The warning is against mere ceremonial self-righteousness, as in ^{1072E}Ecclesiastes 7:12. *Obedience* is the spirit of the law’s requirements (^{1062E}Deuteronomy 10:12). Solomon sorrowfully looks back on his own neglect of this (compare ^{1083E}1 Kings 8:63 with ^{1104E}Ecclesiastes 11:4,6). *Positive* precepts of God must be kept, but will not stand instead of obedience to His *moral* precepts. The last provided no sacrifice for *wilful* sin (^{1053E}Numbers 15:30,31 ^{1089E}Hebrews 10:26-29).

2. **rash** — opposed to the *considerate reverence* (“keep thy foot,” ^{1080E}Ecclesiastes 5:1). This verse illustrates ^{1080E}Ecclesiastes 5:1, as to *prayer* in the house of God (“before God,” ^{1012E}Isaiah 1:12); so ^{1064E}Ecclesiastes 5:4-6 as to *vows*. The remedy to such vanities is stated (^{1080E}Ecclesiastes 5:6). “Fear thou God.”

God is in heaven — Therefore He ought to be approached with carefully weighed words, by thee, a frail creature of earth.

3. As much “business,” engrossing the mind, gives birth to incoherent “dreams,” so many words, uttered inconsiderately in prayer, give birth to and betray “a fool’s speech” (^{1104E}Ecclesiastes 10:14), [HOLDEN and WEISS]. But ^{1080E}Ecclesiastes 5:7 implies that the “dream” is not a comparison, but the *vain thoughts of the fool* (sinner, ^{1073E}Psalms 73:20), arising from multiplicity of (worldly) “business.” His “dream” is that God hears him

for his much speaking (^{<4087>}Matthew 6:7), independently of the frame of mind [*English Version* and MAURER].

fool's voice — answers to “dream” in the parallel; it comes by the many “words” flowing from the fool’s “dream.”

4. When thou vowest a vow unto God — Hasty words in *prayer* (^{<2182>}Ecclesiastes 5:2,3) suggest the subject of hasty *vows*. A vow should not be hastily made (^{<4013>}Judges 11:35 ^{<4944>}1 Samuel 14:24). When made, it must be kept (^{<4761>}Psalms 76:11), even as God keeps His word to us (^{<4234>}Exodus 12:41,51 ^{<4626>}Joshua 21:45).

5. (^{<4201>}Deuteronomy 23:21,23).

6. thy flesh — Vow not with “thy mouth” a vow (for example, fasting), which the lusts of the flesh (“body,” ^{<2003>}Ecclesiastes 2:3, *Margin*) may tempt thee to break (^{<4105>}Proverbs 20:25).

angel — the “messenger” of God (^{<4833>}Job 33:23); minister (^{<4603>}Revelation 1:20); that is, the priest (^{<3407>}Malachi 2:7) “before” whom a breach of a vow was to be confessed (^{<4884>}Leviticus 5:4,5). We, Christians, in our vows (for example, at baptism, the Lord’s Supper, etc.) vow in the presence of Jesus Christ, “the angel of the covenant” (^{<3101>}Malachi 3:1), and of ministering angels as witnesses (^{<4110>}1 Corinthians 11:10 ^{<5421>}1 Timothy 5:21). Extenuate not any breach of them as a slight error.

7. (See on ^{<2182>}Ecclesiastes 5:3). God’s service, which ought to be our chief good, becomes by “dreams” (foolish fancies as of God’s requirements of us in worship), and random “words,” positive “vanity.” The remedy is, whatever fools may do, “Fear *thou* God” (^{<2123>}Ecclesiastes 12:13).

8. As in ^{<2186>}Ecclesiastes 3:16, so here the difficulty suggests itself. If God is so exact in even punishing hasty words (^{<2182>}Ecclesiastes 5:1-6), why does He allow gross injustice? In the remote “provinces,” the “poor” often had to put themselves for protection from the inroads of Philistines, etc., under chieftains, who oppressed them even in Solomon’s reign (^{<4110>}1 Kings 12:4).

the matter — literally, “the pleasure,” or purpose (^{<2510>}Isaiah 53:10). Marvel not at this *dispensation of God’s will*, as if He had abandoned the world. Nay, there is coming a capital judgment at last, and an earnest of it in partial punishments of in serving the King of kings, even by those who, sinners meanwhile. higher than the highest — (^{<2078>}Daniel 7:18).

regardeth — (^{<4402>}2 Chronicles 16:9).

there be higher — plural, that is, the three persons of the Godhead, or else, “regardeth not only the ‘highest’ kings, than whom He ‘is higher,’ but even the petty tyrants of the provinces, namely, the high ones who are above them” (the poor) [WEISS].

9. “The profit (produce) of the earth is (ordained) for (the common good of) all: even the king himself is served by (the fruits of) the field” (⁴⁴⁰⁰2 Chronicles 26:10). Therefore the common Lord of all, high and low, will punish at last those who rob the “poor” of their share in it (³¹²²Proverbs 22:22,23 ³¹⁰⁹Amos 8:4-7).

10. Not only will God punish at last, but meanwhile the oppressive gainers of “silver” find no solid “satisfaction” in it.

shall not be satisfied — so the oppressor “eateth his own flesh” (see on ²¹⁰⁰Ecclesiastes 4:1 and ²¹⁰⁵Ecclesiastes 4:5).

with increase — is not satisfied with the gain that he makes.

11. **they ... that eat them** — the rich man’s dependents (⁴⁹²⁵Psalm 23:5).

12. Another argument against anxiety to gain riches. “Sleep ... sweet” answers to “quietness” (²¹⁰⁰Ecclesiastes 4:6); “not suffer ... sleep,” to “vexation of spirit.” Fears for his wealth, and an overloaded stomach without “laboring” (compare ²¹⁰⁵Ecclesiastes 4:5), will not suffer the rich oppressor to sleep.

13, 14. Proofs of God’s judgments even in this world (³¹¹³Proverbs 11:31). The rich oppressor’s wealth provokes enemies, robbers, etc. Then, after having kept it for an expected son, he loses it beforehand by misfortune (“by evil travail”), and the son is born to be heir of poverty. ²¹⁰⁹Ecclesiastes 2:19,23 gives another aspect of the same subject.

16. Even supposing that he loses not his wealth before death, *then* at last he must go stripped of it all (³⁹⁰⁷Psalm 49:17).

labored for the wind — (³⁸¹¹Hosea 12:1 ⁴¹²⁵1 Corinthians 9:26).

17. **eateth** — appropriately put for “liveth” in general, as connected with ²¹⁰³Ecclesiastes 5:11,12,18.

darkness — opposed to “light (joy) of countenance” (²¹⁰⁰Ecclesiastes 8:1 ³¹⁰⁵Proverbs 16:15).

wrath — fretfulness, literally, “His sorrow is much, and his infirmity (of body) and wrath.”

18. Returns to the sentiment (²⁰⁸²Ecclesiastes 3:12,13,22); translate: “Behold the good which I have seen, and which is becoming” (in a man).

which God giveth — namely, both the good of his labor and his life.

his portion — legitimately. It is God’s gift that makes it so when regarded as such. Such a one will use, not abuse, earthly things (⁴⁰⁷³1 Corinthians 7:31). Opposed to the anxious life of the covetous (²⁰⁵⁰Ecclesiastes 5:10,17).

19. As ²⁰⁵⁸Ecclesiastes 5:18 refers to the “laboring” man (²⁰⁵²Ecclesiastes 5:12), so ²⁰⁵⁹Ecclesiastes 5:19 to the “rich” man, who gets wealth not by “oppression” (²⁰⁵⁸Ecclesiastes 5:8), but by “God’s gift.” He is distinguished also from the “rich” man (²⁰⁶²Ecclesiastes 6:2) in having received by God’s gift not only “wealth,” but also “power to eat thereof,” which that one has not.

to take his portion — limits him to the lawful use of wealth, not keeping back from God *His* portion while enjoying his own.

20. He will not remember much, looking back with disappointment, as the ungodly do (²⁰¹¹Ecclesiastes 2:11), on the days of his life.

answereth ... in the joy — God *answers* his prayers in giving him “power” to *enjoy* his blessings. GESENIUS and *Vulgate* translate, “For God (so) occupies him with joy,” etc., that he thinks not much of the shortness and sorrows of life. HOLDEN, “Though God gives not much (as to real enjoyment), yet he remembers (with thankfulness) the days; for (he knows) God *exercises* him by the joy,” etc. (tries him by prosperity), so *Margin*, but *English Version* is simplest.

CHAPTER 6

~~2108~~ ECCLESIASTES 6:1-12.

1. **common** — or else more literally, — “great upon man,” falls heavily upon man.

2. **for his soul** — that is, his enjoyment.

God giveth him not power to eat — This distinguishes him from the “rich” man in ~~2169~~ Ecclesiastes 5:19. “God hath given” distinguishes him also from the man who got his wealth by “oppression” (~~2188~~ Ecclesiastes 5:8,10).

stranger — those not akin, nay, even hostile to him (~~2653~~ Jeremiah 51:51 ~~2892~~ Lamentations 5:2 ~~2908~~ Hosea 7:9). He seems to have it in his “power” to do as he will with his wealth, but an unseen power gives him up to his own avarice: God wills that he should toil for “a stranger” (~~2122~~ Ecclesiastes 2:26), who has found favor in God’s sight.

3. Even if a man (of this character) have very many (equivalent to “a hundred,” ~~2101~~ 2 Kings 10:1) children, and not have a “stranger” as his heir (~~2102~~ Ecclesiastes 6:2), and live long (“days of years” express the *brevity* of life *at its best*, ~~0470~~ Genesis 47:9), yet enjoy no real “good” in life, and lie unhonored, without “burial,” at death (~~1192~~ 2 Kings 9:26,35), the embryo is better than he. In the East to be without burial is the greatest degradation. “Better the fruit that drops from the tree before it is ripe than that left to hang on till rotten” [HENRY].

4. **he** — rather “it,” “the untimely birth.” So “its,” not “*his* name.”

with vanity — to no purpose; a type of the driftless existence of him who makes riches the chief good.

darkness — of the abortive; a type of the unhonored death and dark future beyond the grave of the avaricious.

5. **this** — yet “it has more rest than” the toiling, gloomy miser.

6. If the miser’s length of “life” be thought to raise him above the abortive, Solomon answers that long life, without enjoying real good, is but lengthened misery, and riches cannot exempt him from going whither “all go.” He is fit neither for life, nor death, nor eternity.

7. *man* — rather, “the man,” namely, the miser (²⁰⁶⁸Ecclesiastes 6:3-6). For not *all* men labor for the mouth, that is, for selfish gratification.

appetite — *Hebrew*, “the soul.” The insatiability of the desire prevents that which is the only end proposed in toils, namely, self-gratification; “the man” thus gets no “good” out of his wealth (²⁰⁶⁸Ecclesiastes 6:3).

8. *For* — “However” [MAURER]. The “for” means (in contrast to the insatiability of the miser), *For what* else is the advantage which *the wise man hath above the fool?*”

What — advantage, that is, superiority, above him who knows not how to walk uprightly

hath the poor who knoweth to walk before the living? — that is, to use and enjoy life aright (²¹⁵⁸Ecclesiastes 5:18,19), a cheerful, thankful, godly “walk” (⁴⁸⁰⁹Psalms 116:9).

9. Answer to the question in ²⁰⁶⁸Ecclesiastes 6:8. This is the advantage:

Better is the sight of the eyes — the wise man’s godly enjoyment of present *seen* blessings

than the (fool’s) ***wandering*** — literally, *walking* (⁴⁹⁷⁴Psalms 73:9), of the desire, that is, vague, insatiable desires for what he has not (²⁰⁶⁸Ecclesiastes 6:7 ⁸¹⁶Hebrews 13:5).

this — restless wandering of desire, and not enjoying contentedly the present (⁵⁰⁶⁶1 Timothy 6:6,8).

10. Part II begins here. Since man’s toils are vain, what is the chief good? (²⁰⁶²Ecclesiastes 6:12). The answer is contained in the rest of the book.

That which hath been — man’s various circumstances

is named already — not only has existed, ²⁰⁰⁹Ecclesiastes 1:9 3:15, but has received its just name, “vanity,” long ago,

and it is known that it — vanity

is man — *Hebrew*, “Adam,” equivalent to man “of *red* dust,” as his Creator appropriately named him from his frailty.

neither may he contend, etc. — (⁴⁹²⁰Romans 9:20).

11. “Seeing” that man cannot escape from the “vanity,” which by God’s “mighty” will is inherent in earthly things, and cannot *call in question* God’s wisdom in these dispensations (equivalent to “contend,” etc.),

what is man the better — of these vain things as regards the chief good? None whatever.

12. *For who knoweth*, etc. — The ungodly know not what is really “good” during life, nor “what shall be after them,” that is, what will be the event of their undertakings (²⁰³²Ecclesiastes 3:22 8:7). The godly might be tempted to “contend with God” (²⁰⁶⁰Ecclesiastes 6:10) as to His dispensations; but they cannot fully know the wise purposes served by them now and hereafter. Their sufferings from the oppressors are more really good for them than cloudless prosperity; sinners are being allowed to fill up their measure of guilt. Retribution in part vindicates God’s ways even now. The judgment shall make all clear. In ²⁰⁰⁰Ecclesiastes 7:1-29, he states what is good, in answer to this verse.

CHAPTER 7

~~2106~~ ECCLESIASTES 7:1-29.

1. (See see on ~~2162~~ Ecclesiastes 6:12).

name — character; a godly mind and life; not mere reputation with man, but what a man *is* in the eyes of God, with whom the *name* and *reality* are one thing (~~2106~~ Isaiah 9:6). This alone is “good,” while all else is “vanity” when made the chief end.

ointment — used lavishly at costly banquets and peculiarly refreshing in the sultry East. The *Hebrew* for “name” and for “ointment,” have a happy paronomasia, *Sheem* and *Shemen*. “Ointment” is fragrant only in the place where the person is whose head and garment are scented, and only for a time. The “name” given by God to His child (~~4182~~ Revelation 3:12) is for ever and in all lands. So in the case of the woman who received an everlasting name from Jesus Christ, in reward for her precious ointment (~~2868~~ Isaiah 56:5 ~~4148~~ Mark 14:3-9). Jesus Christ Himself hath such a name, as the Messiah, equivalent to Anointed (So 1:3).

and the day of [his] death, etc. — not a general censure upon God for creating man; but, connected with the previous clause, death is to him, who hath a godly name, “better” than the day of his birth; “far better,” as ~~31023~~ Philippians 1:23 has it.

2. Proving that it is not a *sensual* enjoyment of earthly goods which is meant in ~~2083~~ Ecclesiastes 3:13 5:18. A thankful use of these is right, but frequent feasting Solomon had found dangerous to piety in his own case. So Job’s fear (~~2100~~ Ecclesiastes 1:4,5). The house of feasting often shuts out thoughts of God and eternity. The sight of the dead in the “house of mourning” causes “the living” to think of their own “end.”

3. **Sorrow** — such as arises from serious thoughts of eternity.

laughter — reckless mirth (~~2002~~ Ecclesiastes 2:2).

by the sadness ... better — (~~3035~~ Psalm 126:5,6 ~~40472~~ 2 Corinthians 4:17 ~~3820~~ Hebrews 12:10,11). MAURER translates: “In sadness of countenance there is (may be) a good (*cheerful*) heart.” So *Hebrew*, for “good,” equivalent to “cheerful” (~~21100~~ Ecclesiastes 11:19); but the parallel clause supports *English Version*.

5. (^{<3E04>}Psalm 141:4,5). Godly reproof offends the flesh, but benefits the spirit. Fools' songs in the house of mirth please the flesh, but injure the soul.

6. *crackling* — answers to the loud merriment of fools. It is the very fire consuming them which produces the seeming merry noise (^{<2116>}Joel 2:5). Their light soon goes out in the black darkness. There is a paronomasia in the *Hebrew*, *Sirim* (“thorns”), *Sir* (“pot”). The wicked are often compared to “thorns” (^{<1016>}2 Samuel 23:6 ^{<110>}Na 1:10). Dried cow-dung was the common fuel in Palestine; its slowness in burning makes the quickness of a fire of thorns the more graphic, as an image of the sudden end of fools (^{<4822>}Psalm 118:12).

7. *oppression* — recurring to the idea (^{<2016>}Ecclesiastes 3:16 5:8). Its connection with ^{<2008>}Ecclesiastes 7:4-6 is, the sight of “oppression” perpetrated by “fools” might tempt the “wise” to call in question God’s dispensations, and imitate the folly (equivalent to “madness”) described (^{<2008>}Ecclesiastes 7:5:6). WEISS, for “oppression,” translates, “distraction,” produced by merriment. But ^{<2118>}Ecclesiastes 5:8 favors *English Version*.

a gift — that is, the sight of *bribery* in “places of judgment” (^{<2116>}Ecclesiastes 3:16) might cause the wise to lose their wisdom (equivalent to “heart”), (^{<8116>}Job 12:6 21:6,7 24:1, etc.). This suits the parallelism better than “a heart of gifts”; a benevolent heart, as WEISS.

8. connected with ^{<2008>}Ecclesiastes 7:7. Let the “wise” wait for “the end,” and the “oppressions” which now (in “the beginning”) perplex their faith, will be found by God’s working to be overruled to their good. “Tribulation worketh *patience*” (^{<6118>}Romans 5:3), which is infinitely better than “the proud spirit” that prosperity might have generated in them, as it has in fools (^{<5716>}Psalm 73:2,3,12-14,17-26 ^{<4111>}James 5:11).

9. *angry* — impatient at adversity befalling thee, as Job was (^{<2116>}Ecclesiastes 5:2 ^{<2120>}Proverbs 12:16).

10. Do not call in question God’s ways in making thy former days better than thy present, as Job did (^{<8210>}Job 29:2-5). The very putting of the question argues that heavenly “wisdom” (*Margin*) is not as much as it ought made the chief good with thee.

11. Rather, “Wisdom, *as compared* with an inheritance, is good,” that is, is as good as an inheritance; “yea, better (literally, and a profit) to them that see the sun” (that is, *the living*, ^{<21107>}Ecclesiastes 11:7 ^{<8116>}Job 3:16 ^{<9019>}Psalm 49:19).

12. Literally, (To be) in (that is, under) the *shadow* (^{<2301>}Isaiah 30:2) of wisdom (is the same as to be) in (under) the *shadow* of money; wisdom no less *shields* one from the ills of life than money does.

is, that — rather, “the excellency of the knowledge of wisdom giveth life,” that is, life in the highest sense, here and hereafter (^{<2168>}Proverbs 3:18 ^{<3173>}John 17:3 ^{<6102>}2 Peter 1:3). Wisdom (religion) cannot be lost as money can. It *shields* one in adversity, as well as prosperity; money, only in prosperity. The question in ^{<2170>}Ecclesiastes 7:10 implies a want of it.

13. Consider as to God’s work, that it is impossible to alter His dispensations; *for who can*, etc.

straight ... crooked — Man cannot amend what God wills to be “wanting” and “adverse” (^{<2115>}Ecclesiastes 1:15 ^{<1824>}Job 12:14).

14. consider — resumed from ^{<2173>}Ecclesiastes 7:13. “Consider,” that is, regard it as “the work of God”; for “God has made (*Hebrew*, for ‘set’) this (adversity) also as well as the other (prosperity).” “Adversity” is one of the things which “God has made crooked,” and which man cannot “make straight.” He ought therefore to be “patient” (^{<2108>}Ecclesiastes 7:8).

after him — equivalent to “that man may not find anything (to blame) after God” (that is, *after* “considering God’s work,” ^{<2173>}Ecclesiastes 7:13). *Vulgate* and *Syriac*, “against Him” (compare ^{<2170>}Ecclesiastes 7:10 ^{<3104>}Romans 3:4).

15. An objection entertained by Solomon

in the days of his vanity — his apostasy (^{<2184>}Ecclesiastes 8:14 ^{<3217>}Job 21:7).

just ... perisheth — (^{<1213>}1 Kings 21:13). *Temporal* not eternal death (^{<3108>}John 10:28). But see on ^{<2176>}Ecclesiastes 7:16; “*just*” is probably a *self-justiciary*.

wicked ... prolongeth — See the antidote to the abuse of this statement in ^{<2182>}Ecclesiastes 8:12.

16. HOLDEN makes ^{<2176>}Ecclesiastes 7:16 the scoffing inference of the objector, and ^{<2177>}Ecclesiastes 7:17 the answer of Solomon, now repentant. So (^{<4152>}1 Corinthians 15:32) the skeptic’s objection; (^{<4153>}1 Corinthians 15:33) the answer. However, “Be not righteous over much,” may be taken as Solomon’s words, forbidding a *self-made* righteousness of outward performances, which would wrest salvation from God, instead of receiving it as the gift of His *grace*. It is a fanatical, pharisaical righteousness, separated from God; for the “fear of God” is in antithesis to it

(²⁰⁷⁵Ecclesiastes 7:18 ²¹⁸⁵Ecclesiastes 5:3,7 ⁴⁰⁶⁵Matthew 6:1-7 9:14 23:23,24
⁶⁰⁰⁵Romans 10:3 ⁵⁰⁰⁵1 Timothy 4:3).

over wise — (⁸⁸¹²Job 11:12 ⁶⁰⁰⁵Romans 12:3,16), presumptuously self-sufficient, as if acquainted with the whole of divine truth.

destroy thyself — expose thyself to needless persecution, austerities and the wrath of God; hence to an untimely death. “Destroy thyself” answers to “perisheth” (²⁰⁷⁵Ecclesiastes 7:15); “righteous over much,” to “a just man.” Therefore in ²⁰⁷⁵Ecclesiastes 7:15 it is *self-justiciary*, not a truly righteous man, that is meant.

17. over much wicked — so worded, to answer to “righteous *over much*.” For if not taken thus, it would seem to imply that we *may* be wicked a *little*. “Wicked” refers to “wicked man” (²⁰⁷⁵Ecclesiastes 7:15); “die before thy time,” to “prolongeth his life,” antithetically. There may be a wicked man spared to “live long,” owing to his avoiding gross excesses (²⁰⁷⁵Ecclesiastes 7:15). Solomon says, therefore, Be not so foolish (answering antithetically to “over wise,” ²⁰⁷⁵Ecclesiastes 7:16), as to run to such excess of riot, that God will be provoked to cut off prematurely thy day of grace (⁶⁰⁰⁵Romans 2:5). The precept is addressed to a *sinner*. Beware of aggravating thy sin, so as to make thy case desperate. It refers to the days of Solomon’s “vanity” (apostasy, ²⁰⁷⁵Ecclesiastes 7:15), when only such a precept would be applicable. By litotes it includes, “Be not wicked *at all*.”

18. this ... this — the two opposite excesses (²⁰⁷⁵Ecclesiastes 7:16,17), fanatical, self-wise righteousness, and presumptuous, foolhardy wickedness.

he that feareth God shall come forth of them all — shall escape all such extremes (²¹⁸⁷Proverbs 3:7).

19. Hebrew, “The wisdom,” that is, the true wisdom, religion (⁵⁸¹⁵2 Timothy 3:15).

than ten mighty — that is, able and valiant generals (²⁰⁷²Ecclesiastes 7:12 9:13-18 ⁴⁰²²Proverbs 21:22 24:5). These “watchmen wake in vain, except the Lord keep the city” (⁸²⁰⁵Psalms 127:1).

20. Referring to ²⁰⁷⁵Ecclesiastes 7:16. Be not “self-righteous,” seek not to make thyself “*just*” before God by a superabundance of self-imposed performances; “for true ‘wisdom, or ‘righteousness,’ shows that there is not a *just* man,” etc.

21. As therefore thou being far from perfectly “*just*” thyself, hast much to be forgiven by God, do not take too strict account, as the *self-righteous* do

(²⁰⁷⁶Ecclesiastes 7:16 ²⁰⁸¹Luke 18:9,11), and thereby shorten their lives (²⁰⁷⁵Ecclesiastes 7:15,16), of words spoken against thee by others, for example, thy servant: Thou art their “fellow servant” before God (²⁰⁸²Matthew 18:32-35).

22. (²⁰⁸⁴1 Kings 2:44).

23. **All this** — resuming the “all” in ²⁰⁷⁵Ecclesiastes 7:15 ²⁰⁷⁵Ecclesiastes 7:15-22 is therefore the fruit of his dearly bought experience in the days of his “vanity.”

I will be wise — I tried to “be wise,” independently of God. But true wisdom was then “far from him,” in spite of his *human* wisdom, which he retained by God’s gift. So “over wise” (²⁰⁷⁶Ecclesiastes 7:16).

24. **That ... far off ... deep** — True wisdom is so when sought independently of “fear of God” (²⁰⁷⁸Ecclesiastes 7:18 ²⁰⁸²Deuteronomy 30:12,13 ²⁰⁸¹Job 11:7,8 28:12-20,28 ²⁰⁸⁶Psalms 64:6 ²⁰⁸⁶Romans 10:6,7).

25. Literally, “I turned myself and mine heart to.” A phrase peculiar to Ecclesiastes, and appropriate to the penitent *turning* back to *commune with his heart* on his past life.

wickedness of folly — He is now a step further on the path of penitence than in ²⁰¹⁷Ecclesiastes 1:17 2:12, where “folly” is put without “wickedness” prefixed.

reason — rather, “the right estimation” of things. HOLDEN translates also “foolishness (that is, sinful folly, answering to ‘wickedness’ in the parallel) of madness” (that is, of man’s mad pursuits).

26. “I find” that, of all my sinful follies, none has been so ruinous a snare in seducing me from God as idolatrous women (²⁰⁸³1 Kings 11:3,4 ²⁰⁸³Proverbs 5:3,4 22:14). As “God’s favor is better than life,” she who seduces from God is “more bitter than death.”

whoso pleaseth God — as Joseph (²⁰⁸⁹Genesis 39:2,3,9). It is God’s *grace* alone that keeps any from falling.

27. **this** — namely, what follows in ²⁰⁷²Ecclesiastes 7:28.

counting one by one — by comparing one thing with another [HOLDEN and MAURER].

account — a right estimate. But ²⁰⁷²Ecclesiastes 7:28 more favors GESENIUS. “Considering *women one by one*.”

28. Rather, referring to his past experience, “Which my soul *sought* further, but I *found* not.”

one man — that is, worthy of the name, “man,” “upright”; not more than one in a thousand of my courtiers (^{<1833>}Job 33:23 ^{<1911>}Psalms 12:1). Jesus Christ alone of men fully realizes the perfect ideal of “man.” “Chiefest among ten thousand” (So 5:10). No *perfect* “woman has ever existed, not even the Virgin Mary. Solomon, in the word “thousand,” alludes to his three hundred wives and seven hundred concubines. Among these it was not likely that he should find the fidelity which *one* true wife pays to *one* husband. Connected with ^{<1072>}Ecclesiastes 7:26, not an unqualified condemnation of the sex, as ^{<1104>}Proverbs 12:4 31:10, etc., prove.

29. The “only” way of accounting for the scarcity of even comparatively upright men and women is that, whereas God made man upright, they (men) have, etc. The only account to be “found” of the origin of evil, the great mystery of theology, is that given in Holy Writ (^{<1001>}Genesis 2:1-3:24). Among man’s “inventions” was the one especially referred to in ^{<1072>}Ecclesiastes 7:26, the bitter fruits of which Solomon experienced, the breaking of God’s primeval marriage law, joining one man to “one” woman (^{<1104>}Matthew 19:4,5,6). “Man” is *singular*, namely, Adam; “they,” *plural*, Adam, Eve, and their posterity.

CHAPTER 8

ECCLESIASTES 8:1-17.

1. Praise of true wisdom continued (^{<2071>}Ecclesiastes 7:11, etc.). “Who” is to be accounted “equal to the wise man? ... Who (like him) knoweth the interpretation” of God’s providences (for example, ^{<2008>}Ecclesiastes 7:8,13,14), and God’s word (for example, see on ^{<2072>}Ecclesiastes 7:29; ^{<2006>}Proverbs 1:6)?

face to shine — (^{<2074>}Ecclesiastes 7:14 ^{<4185>}Acts 6:15). A *sunny countenance*, the reflection of a tranquil conscience and serene mind. Communion with God gives it (^{<4349>}Exodus 34:29,30).

boldness — austerity.

changed — into a benign expression by true wisdom (religion) (^{<5087>}James 3:17). MAURER translates, “The *shining* (brightness) of his face is doubled,” arguing that the *Hebrew* noun for “boldness” is never used in a bad sense (^{<2048>}Proverbs 4:18). Or as *Margin*, “strength” (^{<2079>}Ecclesiastes 7:19 ^{<3081>}Isaiah 40:31 ^{<4082>}2 Corinthians 3:18). But the adjective is used in a bad sense (^{<6250>}Deuteronomy 28:50).

2. **the king’s** — Jehovah, peculiarly the king of Israel in the theocracy; ^{<2088>}Ecclesiastes 8:3,4, prove it is not the earthly king who is meant.

the oath of God — the covenant which God made with Abraham and renewed with David; Solomon remembered ^{<4885>}Psalm 89:35, “I have *sworn*,” etc. (^{<4886>}Psalm 89:36), and the penalties if David’s children should forsake it (^{<4881>}Psalm 89:30-32); inflicted on Solomon himself; yet God not “utterly” forsaking him (^{<4883>}Psalm 89:33,34).

3. **hasty** — rather, “Be not *terror-struck* so as to go out of His sight.” Slavishly “terror-struck” is characteristic of the sinner’s feeling toward God; he vainly tries to flee out of His sight (^{<4907>}Psalm 139:7); opposed to the “shining face” of filial confidence (^{<2080>}Ecclesiastes 8:1 ^{<4883>}John 8:33-36 ^{<4882>}Romans 8:2 ^{<4948>}1 John 4:18).

stand not — persist not.

for he doeth — God inflicts what punishment He pleases on persisting sinners (^{<4253>}Job 23:13 ^{<4883>}Psalm 115:3). True of none save God.

4. God's very "word" is "power." So the gospel word (^{<4016>}Romans 1:16 ^{<3042>}Hebrews 4:12).

who may say, etc. — (^{<3892>}Job 9:12 33:13 ^{<2459>}Isaiah 45:9 ^{<2045>}Daniel 4:35). Scripture does not ascribe such arbitrary power to earthly kings.

5. *feel* — experience.

time — the neglect of the right "times" causes much of the sinful folly of the spiritually unwise (^{<2104>}Ecclesiastes 3:1-11).

judgment — the right manner [HOLDEN]. But as God's future "judgment" is connected with the "time for every purpose" in ^{<2107>}Ecclesiastes 3:17, so it is here. The punishment of persisting sinners (^{<2108>}Ecclesiastes 8:3) suggests it. The wise man realizes the fact, that as there is a fit "time" for every purpose, so for the "judgment." This thought cheers him in adversity (^{<2104>}Ecclesiastes 7:14 8:1).

6. *therefore the misery*, etc. — because the foolish sinner does not think of the right "times" and the "judgment."

7. *he* — the sinner, by neglecting times (for example, "the accepted *time*, and the day of salvation, ^{<4002>}2 Corinthians 6:2), is taken by surprise by the judgment (^{<2102>}Ecclesiastes 3:22 6:12 9:12). The godly wise observe the due times of things (^{<2101>}Ecclesiastes 3:1), and so, looking for the judgment, are not taken by surprise, though not knowing the precise "when" (^{<3101>}1 Thessalonians 5:2-4); they "know the time" to all saving purposes (^{<5131>}Romans 13:11).

8. *spirit* — "breath of life" (^{<2109>}Ecclesiastes 3:19), as the words following require. Not "wind," as WEISS thinks (^{<3104>}Proverbs 30:4). This verse naturally follows the subject of "times" and "judgment" (^{<2106>}Ecclesiastes 8:6,7).

discharge — alluding to the liability to military service of all above twenty years old (^{<0003>}Numbers 1:3), yet many were exempted (^{<4105>}Deuteronomy 20:5-8). But in *that war* (death) there is no exemption.

those ... given to — literally, the *master* of it. Wickedness can get money for the sinner, but cannot deliver him from the death, temporal and eternal, which is its penalty (^{<2385>}Isaiah 28:15,18).

9. *his own hurt* — The tyrannical ruler "hurts" not merely his subjects, but *himself*; so Rehoboam (^{<1103>}1 Kings 12:1-33); but the "time" of "hurt" chiefly refers to eternal ruin, incurred by "wickedness," at "the *day* of

death” (²⁰⁸⁸Ecclesiastes 8:8), and the “*time*” of “judgment” (²⁰⁸⁶Ecclesiastes 8:6 ²⁰⁸⁵Proverbs 8:36).

10. *the wicked* — namely, rulers (²⁰⁸⁹Ecclesiastes 8:9).

buried — with funeral pomp by man, though little meriting it (²⁰²⁹Jeremiah 22:19); but this only formed the more awful contrast to their death, temporal and eternal, inflicted by God (²⁰²³Luke 16:22,23).

come and gone from the place of the holy — went to and came from *the place of judicature*, where they sat as *God’s representatives* (²⁰³¹Psalms 82:1-6), with pomp [HOLDEN]. WEISS translates, “Buried and gone (utterly), even from the holy place they departed.” As Joab, by Solomon’s command, was sent to the grave from the “holy place” *in the temple*, which was not a sanctuary to murderers (²⁰¹⁴Exodus 21:14 ²⁰²⁸1 Kings 2:28,31). The use of the very word “bury” there makes this view likely; still “who had come and gone” may be retained. Joab *came* to the altar, but had to go from it; so the “wicked rulers” (²⁰⁸⁹Ecclesiastes 8:9) (including *high priests*) came to, and went from, *the temple*, on occasions of solemn worship, but did not thereby escape their doom.

forgotten — (²⁰⁰⁷Proverbs 10:7).

11. The reason why the wicked persevere in sin: God’s delay in judgment (²⁰⁴⁸Matthew 24:48-51 ²⁰⁸²2 Peter 3:8,9). “They see not the smoke of the pit, therefore they dread not the fire” [SOUTH], (²⁰⁵⁹Psalms 55:19). Joab’s escape from the punishment of his murder of Abner, so far from “leading him to repentance,” as it ought (²⁰⁰⁴Romans 2:4), led him to the additional murder of Amasa.

12. He says this, lest the sinner should abuse the statement “A wicked man *prolongeth* his life” (²⁰⁷⁵Ecclesiastes 7:15).

before him — literally, “at His presence”; reverently serve Him, realizing His continual presence.

13. *neither shall lie prolong* — not a contradiction to ²⁰⁸²Ecclesiastes 8:12. The “prolonging” of his days there is only *seeming*, not *real*. Taking into account his eternal existence, his present days, however seemingly long, are really short. God’s delay (²⁰⁸¹Ecclesiastes 8:11) exists only in man’s short-sighted view. It gives scope to the sinner to repent, or else to fill up his full measure of guilt; and so, in either case, tends to the final vindication of God’s ways. It gives exercise to the faith, patience, and perseverance of saints.

shadow — (²⁰⁶²Ecclesiastes 6:12 ²⁰⁸⁸Job 8:9).

14. An objection is here started (entertained by Solomon in his apostasy), as in ^{<2086>}Ecclesiastes 3:16 7:15, to the truth of retributive justice, from the fact of the just and the wicked not now receiving always according to their respective deserts; a cavil, which would seem the more weighty to men living under the Mosaic covenant of temporal sanctions. The objector adds, as Solomon had said, that the worldling's pursuits are "vanity" (^{<2080>}Ecclesiastes 8:10), "I say (not 'said') *this* also is vanity. Then I commend mirth," etc. [HOLDEN]. ^{<2084>}Ecclesiastes 8:14,15 may, however, be explained as teaching a cheerful, thankful use of God's gifts "under the sun," that is, not making them the *chief* good, as sensualists do, which ^{<2088>}Ecclesiastes 2:2 7:2, forbid; but in "the fear of God," as ^{<2082>}Ecclesiastes 3:12 5:18 7:18 9:7, opposed to the abstinence of the self-righteous ascetic (^{<2076>}Ecclesiastes 7:16), and of the miser (^{<2077>}Ecclesiastes 5:17).

15. *no better thing*, etc. — namely, for the "just" man, whose *chief* good is religion, not for the worldly.

abide — *Hebrew*, "adhere"; not *for ever*, but it is the only sure good to be enjoyed from *earthly labors* (equivalent to "of his labor the days of his life"). Still, the language resembles the skeptical precept (^{<4352>}1 Corinthians 15:32), introduced only to be refuted; and "abide" is too strong language, perhaps, for a religious man to apply to "eating" and "mirth."

16. Reply to ^{<2084>}Ecclesiastes 8:14,15. When I applied myself to observe man's toils after happiness (some of them so incessant as not to allow sufficient time for "sleep"), then (^{<2087>}Ecclesiastes 8:17, the apodosis) I saw that man cannot find out (the reason of) God's inscrutable dealings with the "just" and with the "wicked" here (^{<2084>}Ecclesiastes 8:14 ^{<2081>}Ecclesiastes 3:11 ^{<8789>}Job 5:9 ^{<6133>}Romans 11:33); his duty is to acquiesce in them as good, because they are *God's*, though he *sees* not all the reasons for them (^{<9736>}Psalms 73:16). It is enough to know "the righteous are in God's hand" (^{<2000>}Ecclesiastes 9:1). "Over wise" (^{<2076>}Ecclesiastes 7:16); that is, Speculations above what is written are vain.

CHAPTER 9

~~2108~~ ECCLESIASTES 9:1-18.

1. **declare** — rather, explore; the result of my exploring is this, that “the righteous, etc., are in the hand of God. No man knoweth either the love or hatred (of God to them) by all that is before them,” that is, by what is *outwardly* seen in His present dealings (~~2104~~ Ecclesiastes 8:14,17). However, from the sense of the same words, in ~~2109~~ Ecclesiastes 9:6, “love and hatred” seem to be the feelings *of the wicked towards the righteous*, whereby they caused to the latter comfort or sorrow. Translate: “Even the love and hatred” (exhibited towards the righteous, are in God’s hand) (~~1960~~ Psalm 76:10 ~~2106~~ Proverbs 16:7). “No man knoweth all that is before them.”

2. **All things ... alike** — not universally; but as to *death*. ~~2109~~ Ecclesiastes 9:2-10 are made by HOLDEN the objection of a skeptical sensualist. However, they may be explained as Solomon’s language. He repeats the sentiment already implied in ~~2104~~ Ecclesiastes 2:14 3:20 8:14.

one event — not eternally; but *death* is common to all.

good — morally.

clean — ceremonially.

sacrificeth — alike to. Josiah who sacrificed to God, and to Ahab who made sacrifice to Him cease.

sweareth — rashly and falsely.

3. Translate, “There is an evil above all (evils) that are done,” etc., namely, that not only “there is one event to all,” but “also the heart of the sons of men” makes this fact a reason for “madly” persisting in “evil while they live, and after that,” etc., sin is “madness.”

the dead — (~~2108~~ Proverbs 2:18 9:18).

4. **For** — rather, “Nevertheless.” *English Version* rightly reads as the *Margin, Hebrew*, “that is joined,” instead of the text, “who is to be chosen?”

hope — not of mere temporal good (~~3847~~ Job 14:7); but of yet repenting and being saved.

dog — metaphor for the vilest persons (²⁰⁴⁴1 Samuel 24:14).

lion — the noblest of animals (²¹⁸³Proverbs 30:30).

better — as to hope of salvation; the noblest who die unconverted have no hope; the vilest, so long as they have life, have hope.

5. know that they shall die — and may thereby be led “so to number their days, that they may apply their hearts to wisdom” (²⁷⁰⁰Ecclesiastes 7:1-4 ⁴⁹¹²Psalms 90:12).

dead know not anything — that is so far as their *bodily* senses and *worldly* affairs are concerned (³⁸⁴²Job 14:21 ²³⁶⁶Isaiah 63:16); also, they know no door of repentance open to them, such as is to all on earth.

neither ... reward — no advantage from their worldly labors (²⁰²⁸Ecclesiastes 2:18-22 4:9).

memory — not of the righteous (⁴⁹³⁶Psalms 112:6 ³¹⁸⁶Malachi 3:16), but *the wicked*, who with all the pains to perpetuate their names (⁴⁹¹¹Psalms 49:11) are soon “forgotten” (²¹⁸⁰Ecclesiastes 8:10).

6. love, and ... hatred, etc. — (referring to ²¹⁰⁰Ecclesiastes 9:1; see on ²¹⁰⁰Ecclesiastes 9:1). Not that these cease in a future world absolutely (³³²⁷Ezekiel 32:27 ⁶²¹¹Revelation 22:11); but as the end of this verse shows, relatively to persons and things in this world. Man’s love and hatred can no longer be exercised for good or evil in the same way as here; but the fruits of them remain. What he is at death he remains for ever. “Envy,” too, marks the wicked as referred to, since it was therewith that they assailed the righteous (see on ²¹⁰⁰Ecclesiastes 9:1).

portion — Their “portion” was “in this life” (³⁹⁷⁴Psalms 17:14), that they now “cannot have any more.”

7. Addressed to the “righteous wise,” spoken of in ²¹⁰⁰Ecclesiastes 9:1. Being “in the hand of God,” who now accepteth “thy works” in His service, as He has previously accepted thy person (¹⁰⁰⁴Genesis 4:4), thou mayest “eat ... with a cheerful (not sensually ‘merry’) heart” (²⁰⁸³Ecclesiastes 3:13 5:18 ⁴¹⁴⁶Acts 2:46).

8. white — in token of joy (²³⁰⁸Isaiah 61:3). Solomon was clad in *white* (JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities*, 8:7,3); hence his attire is compared to the “*lilies*” (⁴¹⁶⁹Matthew 6:29), typical of the spotless righteousness of Jesus Christ, which the redeemed shall wear (⁴⁶¹⁸Revelation 3:18 7:14).

ointment — (^{<4215>}Psalm 23:5), opposed to a gloomy exterior (^{<1042>}2 Samuel 14:2 ^{<9817>}Psalm 45:7 ^{<1167>}Matthew 6:17); typical, also (^{<2108>}Ecclesiastes 7:1 ^{<2108>}Song of Solomon 1:3).

9. wife ... lovest — godly and true love, opposed to the “snares” of the “thousand” concubines (^{<2123>}Ecclesiastes 7:26,28), “among” whom Solomon could not find the true love which joins one man to *one* woman (^{<1855>}Proverbs 5:15,18,19 18:22 19:14).

10. Whatsoever — namely, in the service of God. This and last verse plainly are the language of Solomon, not of a skeptic, as HOLDEN would explain it.

hand, etc. — (^{<8118>}Leviticus 12:8, *Margin*; ^{<9107>}1 Samuel 10:7, *Margin*).

thy might — diligence (^{<8115>}Deuteronomy 6:5; ^{<2480>}Jeremiah 48:10, *Margin*).

no work ... in the grave — (^{<8304>}John 9:4 ^{<6443>}Revelation 14:13). “The soul’s play-day is Satan’s work-day; the idler the man the busier the tempter” [SOUTH].

11. This verse qualifies the sentiment, ^{<2107>}Ecclesiastes 9:7-9. Earthly “enjoyments,” however lawful in their place (^{<2108>}Ecclesiastes 3:1), are to give way when any work to be done for God requires it. Reverting to the sentiment (^{<2107>}Ecclesiastes 8:17), we ought, therefore, not only to work God’s work “with might” (^{<2109>}Ecclesiastes 9:10), but also with the feeling that the event is wholly “in God’s hand” (^{<2108>}Ecclesiastes 9:1).

race ... not to the swift — (^{<10823>}2 Samuel 18:23); spiritually (^{<36857>}Zephaniah 3:19 ^{<8106>}Romans 9:16).

nor ... battle to ... strong — (^{<19747>}1 Samuel 17:47 ^{<4449>}2 Chronicles 14:9,11,15 ^{<8316>}Psalm 33:16).

bread — livelihood.

favor — of the great.

chance — seemingly, really Providence. But as man cannot “find it out” (^{<2111>}Ecclesiastes 3:11), he needs “with all might” to use opportunities. Duties are ours; events, God’s.

12. his time — namely, of death (^{<2175>}Ecclesiastes 7:15 ^{<2122>}Isaiah 13:22). Hence the danger of delay in doing the work of God, as one knows not when his opportunity will end (^{<2109>}Ecclesiastes 9:10).

evil net — fatal to them. The unexpected suddenness of the capture is the point of comparison. So the second coming of Jesus Christ, “as a snare” (^{<215>}Luke 21:35).

evil time — as an “evil net,” fatal to them.

13. Rather, “I have seen wisdom of this kind also,” that is, exhibited in the way which is described in what follows [MAURER].

14, 15. (^{<106>}2 Samuel 20:16-22).

bulwarks — military works of besiegers.

15. **poor** — as to the temporal advantages of true wisdom, though it often saves others. It receives little reward from the world, which admires none save the rich and great.

no man remembered — (^{<428>}Genesis 40:23).

16. Resuming the sentiment (^{<279>}Ecclesiastes 7:19 ^{<122>}Proverbs 21:22 24:5).

poor man’s wisdom is despised — not the poor man mentioned in ^{<215>}Ecclesiastes 9:15; for *his* wisdom could not have saved the city, had “his words not been heard”; but poor men in general. So Paul (^{<271>}Acts 27:11).

17. **The words of wise**, etc. — Though generally the poor wise man is not heard (^{<216>}Ecclesiastes 9:16), yet “the words of wise men, when heard in quiet (when calmly given heed to, as in ^{<215>}Ecclesiastes 9:15), are more serviceable than,” etc.

ruleth — as the “great king” (^{<214>}Ecclesiastes 9:14). Solomon reverts to “the rulers to their own hurt” (^{<289>}Ecclesiastes 8:9).

18. **one sinner**, etc. — (^{<610>}Joshua 7:1,11,12). Though wisdom excels folly (^{<216>}Ecclesiastes 9:16 ^{<279>}Ecclesiastes 7:19), yet a “little folly (equivalent to *sin*) can destroy much good,” both in himself (^{<101>}Ecclesiastes 10:1 ^{<120>}James 2:10) and in others. “Wisdom” must, from the antithesis to “sinner,” mean religion. Thus typically, the “little city” may be applied to *the Church* (^{<232>}Luke 12:32 ^{<222>}Hebrews 12:22); the great king to *Satan* (^{<231>}John 12:31); the despised poor wise man, Jesus Christ (^{<231>}Isaiah 53:2,3 ^{<103>}Mark 6:3 ^{<189>}2 Corinthians 8:9 ^{<107>}Ephesians 1:7,8 ^{<103>}Colossians 2:3).

CHAPTER 10

<2100> ECCLESIASTES 10:1-20.

1. Following up <2108> Ecclesiastes 9:18.

him that is in reputation — for example, David (<3124> 2 Samuel 12:14); Solomon (<4100> 1 Kings 11:1-43); Jehoshaphat (<4481> 2 Chronicles 18:1-34 19:2); Josiah (<4452> 2 Chronicles 35:22). The more delicate the perfume, the more easily spoiled is the ointment. Common oil is not so liable to injury. So the higher a man's religious character is, the more hurt is caused by a sinful folly in him. Bad savor is endurable in oil, but not in what professes to be, and is compounded by the perfumer ("apothecary") for, fragrance. "Flies" answer to "a little folly" (sin), appropriately, being *small* (<4486> 1 Corinthians 5:6); also, "Beelzebub" means *prince of flies*. "Ointment" answers to "reputation" (<2100> Ecclesiastes 7:1 <0340> Genesis 34:30). The verbs are *singular*, the noun *plural*, implying that each of the flies causes the stinking savor.

2. (<2104> Ecclesiastes 2:14).

right — The right hand is more expert than the left. The godly wise is more on his guard than the foolish sinner, though at times he slip. Better a diamond with a flaw, than a pebble without one.

3. **by the way** — in his ordinary *course*; in his simplest acts (<2162> Proverbs 6:12-14). That he "saith," *virtually*, "that he" himself, etc. [*Septuagint*]. But *Vulgate*, "He thinks that *every one* (*else* whom he meets) is a fool."

4. **spirit** — anger.

yielding pacifieth — (<2161> Proverbs 15:1). This explains "leave not thy place"; do not in a *resisting* spirit withdraw from thy post of duty (<2108> Ecclesiastes 8:3).

5. **as** — rather, "by reason of an error" [MAURER and HOLDEN].

6. **rich** — not in mere wealth, but in *wisdom*, as the antithesis to "folly" (for "foolish men") shows. So *Hebrew*, rich, equivalent to "liberal," in a good sense (<2305> Isaiah 32:5). Mordecai and Haman (<1700> Esther 3:1,2 6:6-11).

7. **servants upon horses** — the worthless exalted to *dignity* (<2175> Jeremiah 17:25); and vice versa (<3053> 2 Samuel 15:30).

8. The fatal results to kings of such an unwise policy; the wrong done to others recoils on themselves (²¹⁰³⁹Ecclesiastes 8:9); they fall into the pit which they dug for others (¹⁷⁰⁷⁰Esther 7:10 ⁴⁹⁰⁷⁵Psalm 7:15 ²¹⁰²⁷Proverbs 26:27). Breaking through the wise fences of their throne, they suffer unexpectedly themselves; as when one is stung by a serpent lurking in the stones of his neighbor's garden wall (⁴³⁰¹²Psalm 80:12), which he maliciously pulls down (³¹⁵⁶⁹Amos 5:19).

9. *removeth stones* — namely, of an ancient building [WEISS]. His neighbor's landmarks [HOLDEN]. *Cuts out* from the quarry [MAURER].

endangered — by the splinters, or by the head of the hatchet, flying back on himself. Pithy aphorisms are common in the East. The sense is: Violations of true wisdom recoil on the perpetrators.

10. *iron ... blunt* — in “cleaving wood” (²¹⁰⁰⁹Ecclesiastes 10:9), answering to the “fool set in dignity” (²¹⁰⁰⁶Ecclesiastes 10:6), who wants sharpness. More force has then to be used in both cases; but “force” without judgment “endangers” one's self. Translate, “If one hath blunted his iron” [MAURER]. The preference of rash to judicious counsellors, which entailed the pushing of matters by *force*, proved to be the “hurt” of Rehoboam (⁴¹¹²¹1 Kings 12:1-33).

wisdom is profitable to direct — to a prosperous issue. Instead of forcing matters by main “strength” to one's own hurt (²¹⁰¹⁶Ecclesiastes 9:16,18).

11. A “serpent will bite” if “enchantment” is not used; “and a babbling calumniator is no better.” Therefore, as one may escape a serpent by charms (⁴⁸⁰⁴Psalm 58:4,5), so one may escape the sting of a calumniator by discretion (²¹⁰⁰²Ecclesiastes 10:12), [HOLDEN]. Thus, “without enchantment” answers to “not whet the edge” (²¹⁰⁰⁰Ecclesiastes 10:10), both expressing, figuratively, *want of judgment*. MAURER translates, “There is no gain to the enchanter” (*Margin*, “*master of the tongue*”) from his enchantments, because the serpent bites before he can use them; hence the need of continual caution. ²¹⁰⁰⁸Ecclesiastes 10:8-10, caution in acting ²¹⁰⁰¹Ecclesiastes 10:11 and following verses, caution in speaking.

12. *gracious* — Thereby he takes precaution against sudden injury (²¹⁰⁰¹Ecclesiastes 10:11).

swallow up himself — (²¹⁰⁰⁸Proverbs 10:8,14,21,32 12:13 15:2 22:11).

13. Illustrating the *folly* and *injuriousness* of the fool's words; last clause of ²¹⁰⁰²Ecclesiastes 10:12.

14. *full of words* — (²¹⁰⁰⁰Ecclesiastes 5:2).

a man cannot tell what shall be — (²⁰²²Ecclesiastes 3:22 6:12 8:7 11:2 ²¹⁷¹Proverbs 27:1). If man, universally (including the wise man), cannot foresee the future, much less can the fool; his “many words” are therefore futile.

15. labor ... wearieth — (²³⁵¹Isaiah 55:2 ²³²³Habakkuk 2:13).

knoweth not how to go to the city — proverb for ignorance of the most ordinary matters (²¹⁰⁸Ecclesiastes 10:3); spiritually, *the heavenly city* (⁴⁹⁴⁷Psalms 107:7 ⁴¹⁷³Matthew 7:13,14). MAURER connects ²¹⁰⁵Ecclesiastes 10:15 with the following verses. The labor (vexation) caused by the foolish (injurious princes, ²¹⁰⁶Ecclesiastes 10:4-7) harasses him who “knows not how to go to the city,” to ingratiate himself with them there. *English Version* is simpler.

16. a child — given to pleasures; behaves with childish levity. Not *in years*; for a nation may be happy under a young prince, as Josiah.

eat in the morning — the usual time for dispensing *justice* in the East (²²¹²Jeremiah 21:12); here, given to feasting (²³⁵¹Isaiah 5:11 ⁴⁴¹⁵Acts 2:15).

17. son of nobles — not merely in blood, but in virtue, the true nobility (So 7:1 ²³¹⁵Isaiah 32:5,8).

in due season — (²¹⁰⁸Ecclesiastes 3:1), not until duty has first been attended to.

for strength — to refresh the body, not for *revelry* (included in “drunkenness”).

18. building — literally, “the joining of the rafters,” namely, the kingdom (²¹⁰⁶Ecclesiastes 10:16 ²³¹⁶Isaiah 3:6 ²¹⁹¹Amos 9:11).

hands — (²⁰⁴⁸Ecclesiastes 4:5 ²¹⁶⁰Proverbs 6:10).

droppeth — By neglecting to repair the roof in time, the rain gets through.

19. Referring to ²¹⁰⁸Ecclesiastes 10:18. Instead of repairing the breaches in the commonwealth (equivalent to “building”), the princes “make a feast for laughter” (²¹⁰⁶Ecclesiastes 10:16), and wine maketh their *life* glad (⁴⁹⁴⁵Psalms 104:15), and (but) money supplieth (answereth their wishes by supplying) all things,” that is, they take bribes to support *their extravagance*; and hence arise the wrongs that are perpetrated (²¹⁰⁵Ecclesiastes 10:5,6 ²¹⁰⁶Ecclesiastes 3:16 ²¹²³Isaiah 1:23 5:23). MAURER takes “all things” of *the wrongs* to which princes are instigated by “money”; for example, the heavy taxes, which were the occasion of Rehoboam losing ten tribes (¹¹²⁴1 Kings 12:4, etc.).

20. *thought* — literally, “consciousness.”

rich — the great. The language, as applied to earthly princes knowing the “thought,” is figurative. But it literally holds good of the King of kings (^{<139>}Psalm 139:1-24), whose consciousness of every evil thought we should ever realize.

bed-chamber — the most secret place (^{<116>}2 Kings 6:12).

bird of the air, etc. — proverbial (compare ^{<311>}Habakkuk 2:11 ^{<290>}Luke 19:40); in a way as marvellous and rapid, as if birds or some winged messenger carried to the king information of the curse so uttered. In the East superhuman sagacity was attributed to birds (see on ^{<188>}Job 28:21; hence the proverb).

CHAPTER 11

◀2110▶ ECCLESIASTES 11:1-10.

1. ▶2110▶ Ecclesiastes 11:2 shows that *charity* is here inculcated.

bread — bread corn. As in the Lord's prayer, *all things needful for the body and soul*. Solomon reverts to the sentiment (◀2090▶ Ecclesiastes 9:10).

waters — image from the custom of sowing seed by casting it from boats into the overflowing waters of the Nile, or in any marshy ground. When the waters receded, the grain in the alluvial soil sprang up (◀2320▶ Isaiah 32:20). "Waters" express *multitudes*, so ▶2110▶ Ecclesiastes 11:2 ▶675▶ Revelation 17:15; also the seemingly *hopeless* character of the recipients of the charity; but it shall prove at last to have been not thrown away (◀2340▶ Isaiah 49:4).

2. **portion** — of thy bread.

seven — the perfect number.

eight — even to *more than seven*; that is, "to many" (so "waters," ▶2110▶ Ecclesiastes 11:1), nay, even to *very many* in need (◀855▶ Job 5:19 ▶315▶ Micah 5:5).

evil — The day may be near, when you will need the help of those whom you have bound to you by kindnesses (◀2160▶ Luke 16:9). The very argument which covetous men use against liberality (namely, that bad times may come), the wise man uses for it.

3. **clouds** — answering to "evil" (◀2110▶ Ecclesiastes 11:2), meaning, When the times of evil are fully ripe, evil *must* come; and speculations about it beforehand, so as to prevent one sowing seed of liberality, are vain (◀2110▶ Ecclesiastes 11:4).

tree — Once the storm uproots it, it lies either northward or southward, according as it fell. So man's character is unchangeable, whether for hell or heaven, once that death overtakes him (◀620▶ Revelation 22:11,14,15). *Now* is his time for liberality, before the evil days come (◀2110▶ Ecclesiastes 12:1).

4. Therefore sow thy charity in faith, without hesitancy or speculation as to results, because they may not seem promising (◀2090▶ Ecclesiastes 9:10). So in ▶2110▶ Ecclesiastes 11:1, man is told to "cast his bread corn" on the seemingly unpromising "waters" (◀835▶ Psalm 126:5,6). The farmer would get on badly,

who, instead of sowing and reaping, spent his time in watching the wind and clouds.

5. spirit — How the *soul* animates the body! Thus the transition to the formation of the *body* “in the womb” is more natural, than if with MAURER we translate it “wind” (²¹⁰⁰Ecclesiastes 1:6 ⁴⁰⁰⁸John 3:8).

bones ... grow — (⁴⁸⁰⁸Job 10:8,9 ⁴⁰⁰⁵Psalm 139:15,16).

knowest not the works of God — (²⁰⁰¹Ecclesiastes 3:11 8:17 9:12).

6. morning ... evening — early and late; when young and when old; in sunshine and under clouds.

seed — of godly works (⁴⁸⁰²Hosea 10:12 ⁴⁰⁰⁰2 Corinthians 9:10 ⁴⁰⁰⁷Galatians 6:7).

prosper — (²⁵⁵⁰Isaiah 55:10,11).

both ... alike — Both the unpromising and the promising sowing may bear good fruit in *others*; certainly they shall to the faithful *sower*.

7. light — of life (²⁰⁷¹Ecclesiastes 7:11 ⁴⁹⁰⁹Psalm 49:19). Life is enjoyable, especially to the godly.

8. But while man thankfully enjoys life, “let him remember” it will not last for ever. The “many days of darkness,” that is, the unseen world (⁴⁸⁰²Job 10:21,22 ⁴⁸⁸²Psalm 88:12), also days of “evil” in this world (²¹⁰²Ecclesiastes 11:2), are coming; therefore sow the good seed while life and good days last, which are not too long for accomplishing life’s duties.

All that cometh — that is, All that followeth in the *evil* and *dark days* is vain, as far as *work for God* is concerned (²⁰⁰⁰Ecclesiastes 9:10).

9. Rejoice — not *advice*, but *warning*. Song of Solomon ⁴¹²⁵1 Kings 22:15, is irony; if thou dost rejoice (*carnally*, ²⁰⁰²Ecclesiastes 2:2 7:2, not *moderately*, as in ²⁰⁵⁸Ecclesiastes 5:18), etc., then “know that ... God will bring thee into judgment” (²⁰⁸⁷Ecclesiastes 3:17 12:14).

youth ... youth — distinct *Hebrew* words, *adolescence* or *boyhood* (before ²¹²³Ecclesiastes 12:13), and full-grown *youth*. It marks the gradual progress in self-indulgence, to which the young especially are prone; they see the roses, but do not discover the thorns, until pierced by them. Religion will cost self-denial, but the want of it infinitely more (⁴¹⁴⁸Luke 14:28).

10. sorrow — that is, *the lusts* that end in “sorrow,” opposed to “rejoice,” and “heart cheer thee” (²¹⁰⁹Ecclesiastes 11:9), *Margin*, “anger,” that is, all

“ways of thine heart”; “remove,” etc., is thus opposed to “walk in,” etc. (²¹¹⁰⁹Ecclesiastes 11:9).

flesh — the bodily organ by which the sensual *thoughts* of the “heart” are embodied in *acts*.

childhood — rather, “boyhood”; the same *Hebrew* word as the first, “youth” in ²¹¹⁰⁹Ecclesiastes 11:9. A motive for self-restraint; the time is coming when the vigor of youth on which thou reliest, will seem vain, except in so far as it has been given to God (²¹¹¹⁰Ecclesiastes 12:1).

youth — literally, *the dawn* of thy days.

CHAPTER 12

Ⓜ ECCLESIASTES 12:1-14.

1. As ^{Ⓜ1109}Ecclesiastes 11:9,10 showed what youths are to shun, so this verse shows what they are to follow.

Creator — “Remember” that thou art not thine own, but God’s property; for He has created thee (^{Ⓜ9408}Psalm 100:3). Therefore serve Him with thy “all” (^{Ⓜ4120}Mark 12:30), and with thy *best* days, not with the dregs of them (^{Ⓜ1087}Proverbs 8:17 22:6 ^{Ⓜ4304}Jeremiah 3:4 ^{Ⓜ5827}Lamentations 3:27). The *Hebrew* is “Creators,” plural, implying the plurality of persons, as in ^{Ⓜ0028}Genesis 1:26; so *Hebrew*, “Makers” (^{Ⓜ2505}Isaiah 54:5).

while ... not — that is, *before that* (^{Ⓜ1089}Proverbs 8:26) the evil days come; namely, calamity and old age, when one can no longer serve God, as in youth (^{Ⓜ1102}Ecclesiastes 11:2,8).

no pleasure — of a sensual kind (^{Ⓜ1085}2 Samuel 19:35 ^{Ⓜ900}Psalm 90:10). Pleasure in God continues to the gody old (^{Ⓜ2364}Isaiah 46:4).

2. Illustrating “the evil days” (^{Ⓜ4336}Jeremiah 13:16). “Light,” “sun,” etc., express *prosperity*; “darkness,” *pain and calamity* (^{Ⓜ2130}Isaiah 13:10 30:26).

clouds ... after ... rain — After rain sunshine (comfort) might be looked for, but only a brief glimpse of it is given, and the gloomy clouds (pains) return.

3. **keepers of the house** — namely, *the hands and arms* which *protected* the body, as guards do a palace (^{Ⓜ0424}Genesis 49:24 ^{Ⓜ3019}Job 4:19 ^{Ⓜ4802}2 Corinthians 5:1), are now palsied.

strong men ... bow — (^{Ⓜ7625}Judges 16:25,30). Like supporting pillars, *the feet and knees* (So 5:15); the *strongest* members (^{Ⓜ9270}Psalm 147:10).

grinders — the molar teeth.

cease — are idle.

those that look out of the windows — the eyes; the powers of vision, looking out from beneath the eyelids, which open and shut like the casement of a window.

4. doors — *the lips*, which are closely *shut* together as *doors*, by old men in eating, for, if they did not do so, the food would drop out (^{<8114>}Job 41:14 ^{<8115>}Psalms 141:3 ^{<8116>}Micah 7:5).

in the streets — that is, toward the street, “the *outer doors*” [MAURER and WEISS].

sound of ... grinding — The teeth being almost gone, and the lips “shut” in eating, the sound of mastication is scarcely heard.

the bird — the cock. In the East all mostly rise with the dawn. But the old are glad to rise from their sleepless couch, or painful slumbers still earlier, namely, when the cock crows, before dawn (^{<8117>}Job 7:4) [HOLDEN]. The least noise awakens them [WEISS].

daughters of music — the organs that produce and that enjoy music; the *voice* and *ear*.

5. that which is high — The old are afraid of ascending a *hill*.

fears ... in the way — Even on the level *highway* they are full of fears of falling, etc.

almond ... flourish — In the East the hair is mostly dark. *The white head* of the old among the dark-haired is like *an almond tree*, with its white blossoms, among the dark trees around [HOLDEN]. The almond tree *flowers* on a leafless stock in *winter* (answering to *old age*, in which all the powers are dormant), while the other trees are flowerless. GESENIUS takes the *Hebrew* for *flourishes* from a different root, *casts off*; when the old man loses his gray hairs, as the almond tree *casts* its white flowers.

grasshoppers — the dry, shrivelled, old man, his backbone sticking out, his knees projecting forwards, his arms backwards, his head down, and the apophyses enlarged, is like that insect. Hence arose the fable, that Tithonus in very old age was changed into a grasshopper [PARKHURST]. “The locust *raises itself* to fly”; the old man about to leave the body is like a locust when it is assuming its winged form, and is about to fly [MAURER].

a burden — namely, to himself.

desire shall fail — satisfaction shall be abolished. For “desire,” *Vulgate* has “the caper tree,” provocative of lust; not so well.

long home — (^{<8118>}Job 16:22 17:13).

mourners — (^{<8119>}Jeremiah 9:17-20), hired for the occasion (^{<8120>}Matthew 9:23).

6. A double image to represent *death*, as in ^{<2120>}Ecclesiastes 12:1-5, *old age*:

(1) A *lamp* of frail material, but *gilded* over, often in the East hung from roofs by a *cord* of silk and *silver* interwoven; as the lamp is dashed down and broken, when the cord breaks, so man at death; the golden bowl of the lamp answers to *the skull*, which, from the vital preciousness of its contents, may be called “golden”; “the silver cord” is *the spinal marrow*, which is white and precious as silver, and is attached to the brain.

(2) A *fountain*, from which water is drawn by a *pitcher* let down by a rope wound round a *wheel*; as, when the pitcher and wheel are broken, water can no more be drawn, so life ceases when the vital energies are gone. The “fountain” *may* mean the right ventricle of the heart; the “cistern,” the left; the pitcher, the veins; the wheel the aorta, or great artery [SMITH].

The circulation of the blood, whether known or not to Solomon, *seems* to be implied in the language put by the Holy Ghost into his mouth. This gloomy picture of old age applies to those who have not “remembered their Creator in youth.” They have none of the consolations of God, which they might have obtained in youth; it is now too late to seek them. A good old age is a blessing to the godly (^{<0151>}Genesis 15:15 ^{<0153>}Job 5:26 ^{<0161>}Proverbs 16:31 20:29).

7. *dust* — the dust — formed body.

spirit — surviving the body; implying its immortality (^{<2081>}Ecclesiastes 3:11).

8-12. A summary of the first part.

Vanity, etc. — Resumption of the sentiment with which the book began (^{<2002>}Ecclesiastes 1:2 ^{<0171>}John 2:17).

9. *gave good heed* — literally, “he weighed.” The “teaching the people” seems to have been *oral*; the “proverbs,” *in writing*. There must then have been auditories *assembled to hear* the inspired *wisdom of the Preacher*. See the explanation of *Koheleth* in the *Introduction*, and (^{<1061>}1 Kings 4:34).

that which is written, etc. — rather, (he sought) “*to write down* uprightly (or, ‘aright’) words of truth” [HOLDEN and WEISS]. “Acceptable” means an agreeable style; “uprightly ... truth,” correct sentiment.

11. *goads* — piercing deeply into the mind (^{<4127>}Acts 2:37 9:5 ^{<3042>}Hebrews 4:12); evidently *inspired words*, as the end of the verse proves.

fastened — rather, on account of the *Hebrew* genders, (The words) “are fastened (in the memory) like nails” [HOLDEN].

masters of assemblies — rather, “the masters of collections (that is, collectors of inspired sayings, ^{<2181>}Proverbs 25:1), are given (‘have published them as proceeding’ [HOLDEN]) from one Shepherd,” namely, the Spirit of Jesus Christ [WEISS], (^{<3524>}Ezekiel 37:24). However, the mention of “goads” favors the *English Version*, “masters of assemblies,” namely, *under-shepherds*, inspired by *the Chief Shepherd* (^{<6181>}1 Peter 5:2-4). SCHMIDT translates, “The masters of assemblies are fastened (made sure) as nails,” so ^{<3023>}Isaiah 22:23.

12. (See on ^{<2118>}Ecclesiastes 1:18).

many books — of mere *human* composition, opposed to “by these”; these *inspired* writings are the only sure source of “admonition.”

(over much) study — in mere human books, wearies the body, without solidly profiting the soul.

13. The grand inference of the whole book.

Fear God — The antidote to following creature idols, and “vanities,” whether self-righteousness (^{<2076>}Ecclesiastes 7:16,18), or wicked oppression and other evils (^{<2082>}Ecclesiastes 8:12,13), or mad mirth (^{<2019>}Ecclesiastes 2:2 7:2-5), or self-mortifying avarice (^{<2083>}Ecclesiastes 8:13,17), or youth spent without God (^{<2119>}Ecclesiastes 11:9 12:1).

this is the whole duty of man — literally, “this is the whole man,” the full ideal of man, as originally contemplated, realized wholly by Jesus Christ alone; and, through Him, by saints now in part, hereafter perfectly (^{<6192>}1 John 3:22-24 ^{<6214>}Revelation 22:14).

14. **For God shall bring every work into judgment** — The future judgment is the test of what is “vanity,” what solid, as regards the chief good, the grand subject of the book.