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AN  
AMERICAN COMMENTARY  
ON THE  
OLD TESTAMENT

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THE  
BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

BY

PRINCIPAL J. T. MARSHALL, D. D.

Manchester Baptist College, England

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# INTRODUCTION

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## I. THE TITLE.

The Hebrew title is Koheleth, a "gatherer," "assembler," "collector." It is allied to the noun *kāhāl*, an assembly of men united by ties, political or religious. In the Greek Septuagint this noun is usually rendered by "*ecclesia*." Hence Koheleth is *Ecclesiastes*. The explanation of the name is to be sought in 12 : 11, where the true rendering is: "The words of the wise are like goads: like stakes driven home are (the words of) *those skilled in gathering*"; or as R. V., "the masters of assemblies." "Goads" are useful to *impel*, stimulate, incite; "stakes driven home," to *repress*, under excitement or refractoriness. Thus, a *Koheleth* is one who, by words that incite thought, but repress emotionalism; arouse doubt, but repress atheism, brings men into the *kāhāl*, the congregation of the wise. The phenomena symbolized by the "goad" and the "stake," present themselves all through our book. They have been mistaken by many for "contradictions," "indications of plurality of authorship," "dialogue," the "two voices in man," etc. The wise man claimed to keep his eye open for facts, plain, unvarnished facts, and he states these with bold, if not cynical, incisiveness. This, however, is not his ultimate purpose. He wishes to investigate how men may make the most of life, what it is best for man to do, confined as he is in such a sad world as this. As is customary, we shall treat Koheleth as a proper noun.

The form, grammatically, is feminine. Ginsburg and Hitzig hold this to be so because the writer impersonates Wisdom, which in Hebrew is a feminine noun. But could Wisdom say: "I have gotten wisdom"? (1 : 16) or could Wisdom indulge in jovial revelry? (2 : 1.) It is better with Ewald, Delitzsch, Cheyne, and others to regard the feminine (after the analogy of Arabic) as intensive; representing one who possesses the qualities connoted in an exceptional or ideal manner. "The ideal gatherer"; or, since the purpose of the gathering is to give moral discipline, "the ideal preacher," is the best interpretation of Koheleth.

## II. THE AUTHOR.

The author claims in some sense to have been the "king over Israel in Jerusalem" (1 : 12). The superscription may be, as is often the case, the work of a scribe. Koheleth does not *call* himself Solomon, but, with the exception of Hengstenberg and very few others, all scholars are agreed that he, at all events, writes in the name of Solomon. In fact the Solomonic authorship was universally admitted, until it was called in question by Martin Luther, in his "Table Talk." Luther there says: "Solomon himself did not write the book, The Preacher. It was compiled by Sirach, in the times of the Maccabees." This surmise was allowed to slumber for a century, when it was revived by Grotius in his Commentary

(1644), and was defended on linguistic grounds. In our day, the defenders of the Solomonic authorship are very few indeed.

The arguments which compel us to assign the book to a far later date than that of the historic Solomon are two: 1. Its linguistic peculiarities; 2. The state of society evinced throughout the book.

1. The language in which the book is written is very remarkable. It is quite unlike anything we have elsewhere in the Old Testament. It has far more points of resemblance to the late Hebrew of the Mishna than even to Malachi and Chronicles. Delitzsch has collected a list of one hundred and four words which in the Hebrew Bible are found seldom, or not at all, except in Ecclesiastes. These are divisible into the following classes: (1) Those found only in the post-exilic books of the scribes; (2) those which are found only in Ecclesiastes in the Bible, but are used regularly ( $\alpha$ ) in the Mishna or ( $\beta$ ) in the Aramaic Targums, or ( $\gamma$ ) are borrowed from non-Semitic sources. There is no exaggeration at all in Ginsburg's words: "We could as easily believe that Chaucer wrote Johnson's *Rasselas*, as that Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes. Hengstenberg is equally explicit when he says: "The peculiarities of style and language are undeniably not those of Solomon but of the later post-exilic period."

2. The social condition of the times of Solomon is described in 1 Kings 4: 20-25: "Judah and Israel were many . . . eating and drinking and making merry . . . dwelling *safely* every man under his vine . . . *all* the days of Solomon." (Read also 1 Kings 11: 8 f.) The social picture presented in our book is the very antipodes of this. The place of judgment is filled with wickedness (3: 16). The fabric of the State is sinking to ruin and decay (10: 16-18). Property is so insecure that to seem rich is to expose one's self to envy (4: 4) and extortion (4: 5 f.). Life is insecure. The king is so capricious that it is perilous even to withdraw hastily from before him (8: 3; 10: 4); and the system of espionage is so complete that no one is safe, even in his bedchamber (10: 20). "Servants sit on horses and princes walk as servants on the earth" (10: 7). The author is not a king, but a poor man, who writhes under a sense of the injustice of those that are oppressed, who weep in their misery and have no comforter (4: 1-3). Revolution is brewing, and Koheleth counsels delay or sharp measures (8: 2; 10: 10).

It has been seriously felt by many that it would detract very much from the value of this book if we are compelled to confess that it was not written by the historic Solomon. But need that be so? Is not the form of personated authorship, without any intention to deceive, regarded in all literature as a perfectly legitimate literary device? Do we censure Plato for his free use of Socrates or Parmenides as interlocutors? or Cicero, for making Cato the exponent of his views on old age and on friendship? and are the utterances of Eccl. 1 and 2 any less truthful for being put into the lips of Solomon? The fact is, that in Jewish literature personation abounds to an extent to which we have elsewhere no parallel. We have the book of Baruch, the epistle of Jeremy, the Wisdom of Solomon, the books of Esdras, Adam, Enoch, Lamech, and Noah; indeed, there is scarcely an important character in the O. T. who is not made the alleged author of didactic Jewish works.

I am disposed to believe, however, that in the case before us, and perhaps in other cases just cited from Jewish literature, we have more than a literary device.

I hold that Koheleth believed himself to have been destined to some extent to live over again the life of Solomon, and thus to be qualified to speak to his contemporaries in the name of Solomon. There is no evidence that the Jews believed in transmigration of souls, and yet they did say respecting Jesus, that he was "Elijah, or Jeremiah, or one of the prophets" (Matt. 16 : 14). This shows that the people anticipated the advent of men who would be to their own generation what Elijah or Jeremiah or the prophets were to theirs. In Plumptre's "Autobiography of Koheleth," there is much that is fanciful, but I regard it as indisputable that there is much autobiography in the work before us. Koheleth had once been rich and influential, though now he was very poor. He has "sown the wind and reaped the whirlwind"; and in his sad, dejected old age, he is led to believe that he has been repeating largely in his life the experiences of Solomon, and that he has received from God a message for his generation, such as Solomon, could he have spoken, would have given, when he recovered (as every Jew believed he did) from the fall occasioned by excessive indulgence. In the same sense as John the Baptist was Elijah (Matt. 11 : 14), because he came "in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1 : 17), so Koheleth believed himself to be Solomon, *i. e.*, sent in the spirit and power of Solomon, to deliver to his generation lessons which Solomon would have given to it had he been alive. It is in this way that we explain the words: "I, the preacher, *was* king over Israel in Jerusalem." This would be understood to mean, "He, in whose name I speak to you, in whose spirit and power I address you, whose life I have in a striking degree repeated, *was* king over Israel in Jerusalem." Delitzsch seems to be looking somewhat in the same direction as the above when he says: "It is not the veritable Solomon who speaks in 1 : 12, but *his spirit*" (p. 205); and so does Vaihinger, who says that "The past tense, 'I, Koheleth, *was* king,' indicates a writer of later date, who adduces Solomon as speaking from his grave." (Wright, p. 90.)

### III. DATE OF COMPOSITION.

It is impossible to fix the date definitely, but there are two *termini* between which we must certainly place our book: viz, the date of the book of Malachi and that of the book of the son of Sirach, otherwise known as Ecclesiasticus. Later than Malachi, to allow time for the modernization of the language and an approximation to Mishnic Hebrew; earlier than Sirach because he evidently quotes from our book; while the book of Wisdom was written partly to counteract the errors of Ecclesiastes, or rather, the exaggerated misuse of statements provisionally advanced by Koheleth. These considerations exclude the views of Graetz, who referred our book to the times of Herod the Great. There are two other facts against Graetz: (1) The Old Testament Hebrew Canon was certainly closed before 100 B. C.; and (2) In the Talmudic tractate, *Baba Bathra*, 4a, we are told that Herod once disguised himself and visited by night a rabbi whom he suspected. This rabbi gave the king in conversation three quotations from Scripture, all from Ecclesiastes. See Ryle on O. T. Canon, p. 76, and Wright on Eccl., p. 19 f.

The resemblances between Sirach and Ecclesiastes are deeply interesting. They have been exhibited at length by Plumptre in his Commentary, p. 56 f.; Wright, Chap. 2; Tyler, pp. 4-8. The connection between our work and the Wisdom of Solo-

mon is however much more intimate, because some parts of the last-named book were evidently written to contradict passages from Ecclesiastes, which had been used in an extravagant sense by "the wicked" in Alexandria. For these we refer the reader to Plumptre, p. 70-74, and to Wright, Chap. 3.

Another interesting phenomenon bearing on the date of composition is the possible acquaintance of the author with the schools of Greek philosophy. This is defended at length by Tyler (Eccl., pp. 8-30, Edn., 1899), and is taken for granted throughout by Plumptre in his Commentary. Beyond doubt, some of the coincidences are very striking; but whether they amount to literary dependence is quite another matter. No student in those days could well escape the clash of arms between the Stoics and Epicureans, especially if, as is probable, Koheleth spent a portion of his life in Alexandria.

After a full examination of all the evidence, we are disposed to assign the date of the book to the period between 250 and 200 B. C.

#### IV. INTEGRITY OF THE BOOK.

Many students of Ecclesiastes have been bewildered by its apparent contradictions. These were noted by the early rabbis (comp. 4 : 2 with 9 : 4 ; 7 : 3 with 8 : 15, etc.), and have been carefully collected, among others, by D. C. Siegfried, p. 3. Because of the contradictions, Siegfried and others regard almost all the brighter portions as later interpolations by an orthodox Jew. Roughly speaking, all the portions are eliminated in which Koheleth speaks as we would expect a Jewish believer to speak; and nothing is left us but querulous pessimism. But the question ought to be considered: How could the book ever have found a place in the Old Testament Canon, if this had been its original purpose and contents? There is considerable weight in the remark of Doctor Sanday (Inspiration, p. 209) that "if the book had been originally without these saving clauses, it is more probable that it would have been left out of the Canon altogether, than fitted for inclusion by their insertion." Our theory as to the "goad" and the "stake" renders such apparent contradictions antecedently probable. The only passage as to whose originality we have any doubts is 12 : 8-12, which speaks *about* the Preacher, whereas in the rest of the book the Preacher *speaks*. (See comment on these verses.) Possibly they were added by the scribe who wrote the superscription.

#### V. DESIGN OF THE BOOK.

The ultimate design of Koheleth was to *conserve Judaism* against the inroads of Grecian civilization, luxury, and vice. The work is to a large extent autobiographical. The author had personally passed through the experiences he describes. He had probably squandered a large fortune in a foreign land, and returned home old, poor, embittered, cynical. There is not one expression of penitence for *sin* in the book, though he does admit his madness and folly. He is shocked to find on his return home that the people are, as is usual under anarchical rule, despondent, desperate, reckless, revolutionary, and worse than all, godless. He has embraced again heartily the theological creed of the sages which finds expression in the book of Proverbs, and is sufficiently patriotic to deplore the current degeneracy and godlessness. In deep sympathy with the tears of the oppressed he is led to describe



what he has gone through. "Who can suffer more than I have?" he exclaims. (See comment on 2 : 25.) By a recital of his experiences and his utterances, he shows himself in thorough sympathy with current pessimism, and still with a firm hand he tries to lead the despondent and the reckless along the way he has trod to faith in God; at all events, he is anxious to convince them that to forsake the fear of God would only intensify their misery. The method of the book is that expressed by the occult symbolism of the "goad" and the "stake." The "goad," to stimulate restive inquiry; the "stake," to confine the restiveness within due limits, and ultimately to collect men jaded and weary within the well-fenced fold of Judaism.

## VI. ANALYSIS OF CONTENTS.

- 1 : 1. Superscription.
  - 2. The first toll of the funeral knell of human endeavor.
  - 3. Statement of the design of the author.
  - 4-11. Nature, a fruitless monotony.
- 1 : 12 to 2 : 23. Koheleth records his search for satisfaction; (1) in intellectual pursuits; (2) worldly pleasures; (3) the study of human nature; (4) riches.
- 2 : 24-26. Result of the four foregoing experiments.
- 3 : 1-8. Koheleth complains that man's activity is fettered by Divine decrees.
  - 9-15. He offers sundry reflections thereon.
- 3 : 16 to 4 : 16. He dwells on the anomalies of human life, moral disorders, unredressed oppression, miserliness and isolation.
- 5 : 1-7. He comments on inconsistencies in popular religion.
  - 8-10. He comments on tyranny by officials.
  - 11-17. He comments on the unsatisfactoriness of wealth.
- 5 : 18 to 6 : 9. The real value of money.
- 6 : 10-12. Dissatisfaction with Divine foreordination as he understands it.
- 7 : 1-14. Maxims bearing on life's uncertainty; oppressive rulers; changeful providences.
  - 15-24. Uncertainties as to the value of wisdom and goodness.
  - 25-29. Koheleth's estimate of womanhood.
- 8 : 1-9. Advice to men who are under a despotism.
  - 10-15. Agitation because wicked men are honored.
- 8 : 16 to 9 : 6. Anomalies connected with death.
- 9 : 7-10. Advice in view of the uncertainty of death.
- 9 : 11 to 10 : 15. The world's injustice and ingratitude to benefactors and reformers.
- 10 : 16-20. The evils of misgovernment.
- 11 : 1-6. Koheleth counsels benevolence.
- 11 : 7 to 12 : 7. Advice to young men.
- 12 : 8-12. A description of Koheleth, his studies and tasks.
  - 13, 14. Koheleth's conclusion of the whole matter.

## VII. ABBREVIATIONS OF AUTHORS CONSTANTLY CONSULTED.

- Ch. Cheyne, Job and Solomon.  
Cox. Book of Ecclesiastes. Expositor's Bible.  
Del. Delitzsch, Commentary on Ecclesiastes.  
Dln. Dillon, Skeptics of the Old Testament.  
Dr. Driver, Introduction to Literature of Old Testament.  
Ew. Ewald, *Dichter des alt. Bundes*.  
Gin. Ginsburg, Coheleth.  
Heng. Hengstenberg, Commentary on Ecclesiastes.  
Hi. Hitzig, Commentary on Ecclesiastes.  
Kal. Kalisch, Path and Goal.  
Pl. Plumptre, Ecclesiastes in Cambridge Bible.  
Reu. Reuss, *Das Alte Testament*. Band VI.  
Ros. Rosenmüller, Koheleth.  
Sgf. D. C. Siegfried, *Prediger* in *Nowack's Handkommentar*.  
Ty. Tyler, Ecclesiastes.  
V. & O. Volck and Orelli, in *Kurzgef. Komm. z. A. T.*  
Wr. Wright, Ecclesiastes. Donnellan Lectures.

# ECCLESIASTES

## CHAPTER I.

1 THE words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

2 Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity.

3 What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?

4 One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever.

5 The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose.

6 The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits.

7 All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.

1 THE words of the Preacher, the son of David king in Jerusalem.

2 Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher; vanity of vanities, all is vanity. What profit hath man

of all his labour wherein he laboureth under the sun? One generation goeth, and another

generation cometh; and the earth abideth for ever. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth

down, and hasteth to his place where he ariseth. 6 The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth

about unto the north; it turneth about continually in its course, and the wind returneth

7 again to its circuits. All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; unto the place whither the rivers go, thither they go again.

1. TITLE OF BOOK. **The Preacher.** Heb., Koheleth. On the interpretation of the name, see Introduction, page 1.

2. *The funeral knell of human happiness*, which the author tolls at measured intervals, all through his book! **Vanity.** The word announces his intense disappointment over a wasted life. Heb., <sup>הבל</sup>, *hebel*, "breath," "nothingness" (Job 7: 16; Ps. 39: 5; 62: 9). It occurs thirty-four times in Ecclesiastes. **Vanity of vanities.** A Hebrew superlative like "holy of holies" (Exod. 26: 32); "eternity of eternities" (Isa. 54: 10). It means "utter vanity." **All is vanity.** A pessimistic utterance. All is *not* unreal and unsatisfying as a vapor. There are dark enigmas in every life; but no life is all dark. "God is kind even to the unthankful and evil" (Luke 6: 35). Pessimism looks on the world through the distorted medium of blighted hopes, wounded pride, or debilitated faculties.

3. **THE PROBLEM OF THE BOOK.** Is life worth living? What is best for man to do in this sad world? **What profit.** Lit., "net profit"; "surplus"; "balance," after subtracting from the sum of human achievement or happiness all the trouble it has cost to secure it. **Labour**, lit., "toil," "labor to the extent of weariness." The word occurs twenty times in our book. **Under the sun.** So twenty-nine times in Ecclesiastes. Other Hebrew writers prefer "under heaven" (Deut. 2: 25; 4: 19; Job 28: 24, and others).

4-11. NATURE, A FRUITLESS CIRCUITOUS MONOTONY. 4. Lit., "A generation goes, a generation comes." Heb., <sup>דור</sup>, *dôr*, "a group or multitude of men who are in the vigor of manhood together" (Exod. 1: 6; Deut. 2: 14; Isa. 53: 8 B. V.). **The earth abideth.** It adds tragic pathos to the dissatisfied soul, that while the actors appear, and shortly all disappear and give place to others, yet the theatre remains the same. Cox, 121 f. The same thought occurs *Iliad*, VI., 149; Sir. 14: 18. 5. The sun is not to Koheleth the emblem of stability, but of restless revolution and fruitless effort. **Hasteth to his place where he arose, ariseth.** The verb <sup>שאף</sup>, *sha'aph*, implies "panting with eager haste" (Job 7: 2; Ps. 119: 131): longing to accomplish his nocturnal journey, from the west to "his chamber" in the east. Compare Ps. 19: 6; Ovid, *Met.*, II, 5-7; Verg., *Georg.*, I., 250. Koheleth sees no progress anywhere, simply wearisome rotation. 6. The wind is proverbially variable (John 3: 8). It blows south, then north. That is a welcome relief; but it is soon south again, and veers around to the same points of the compass. 6b. Lit., "circling, circling goes the wind." True there is movement, change, yet only a dreary round of change. 7. What scientific theory underlies this verse is uncertain. Targ. explains that the sea feeds the subterranean channels which lead to the springs of the rivers. So Hi., Gin., Pl., Cox., +. But Ibn Ezra, Del., Wr., find here evaporation, as in Job 36: 27 f. That which chafes Koheleth

8 All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.

9 The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.

10 Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us.

11 There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after.

12 I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem.

13 And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith.

8 All things are full of weariness; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. That which hath been is that which shall be; and that which hath been done is that which shall be done:

9 and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there a thing whereof men say, See, this is new? it hath been already, in the ages which were before us.

10 There is no remembrance of the former generations; neither shall there be any remembrance of the latter generations that are to come, among those that shall come after.

11 I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem. And I applied my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven: it is a sore travail that God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised

is the unbroken cyclic movement; a treadmill existence. All change is confined within a narrow circle, and soon the same round repeats itself. Plumptre finds a close parallel in Lucretius, VI., 608, 631-637, where we have the same thought as in Targ.; only adding that in the subterranean passages the sea salt is filtered from the water. **8. All things.** Heb., דְּבָרִים, *d'bhārim*, which meant "words," "things." **Are full of labour.** Only one word in Hebrew and generally rendered "weary" (2 Sam. 23 : 10; Isa. 40 : 30 f.). R. V., "All things are full of weariness." The weary soul sees reflected everywhere its own weariness. It reads into nature its own *ennui*. Nothing seems to go vigorously. Everything seems to need whip and spur. R. V. Marg., "All words are feeble." So Gin., Ty., *i. e.*, "All speech fails." LXX., Targ., "All words are wearisome." So Kal. **The eye is not satisfied.** The eye craves something new, on which to satisfy its activity. The ear yearns for some new sound from bird, or beast, or wind, or sea. But how can eye or ear be "satisfied with this stale, flat, repetition of sameness"? **9. No new thing.** So said the Stoics. "All things pass by, that they may return. I see nothing new. I do nothing new" (Seneca). "He who has seen all that now is has seen all, both what from eternity has been and what will be" (M. Aurelius). There is sufficient variety amid the uniformity of nature to gratify the healthy mind. The sickly, *blasé* pessimist grows giddy with the cyclic movement. **10.** "If unknown now, a search in ancient history would reveal that it was well known long ago." In the East, customs and usages are strangely unchangeable. Koheleth was in ignorance, more or less blissful, of the modern inventions of steam and electricity. **11. Of former (things).** Rather, as R. V., "Of former generations." So Ew., Gin., De.+. Man is soon forgotten. We forget our ancestors; our posterity will soon forget us.

It would be some compensation for a monotonous existence if we could immortalize ourselves; but oblivion is our fate. Only few can say with Horace, *Non omnis moriar*. It made Koheleth angry to think that man and men should be so perishable, and the system of nature, the stars, the streams and the winds so changeless. John Foster might well write on "The vanity of man apart from immortality." To Koheleth's faith, at this time, man's future terminated in a gloomy, cheerless sheol.

**12-18. KOHELETH RECORDS HIS VAIN SEARCH FOR SATISFACTION IN INTELLECTUAL PURSUITS. I was king.** Would Solomon not have said, "I am king"? The Targum, conscious of the difficulty, invents the fiction that Solomon was dethroned by the king of the demons. The Midrash: "I was king, but am not so now." In the Introduction, Sec. 2, we have given many weighty reasons for doubting the Solomonic authorship. Koheleth himself had been rich and powerful; and as in Matt. 16 : 14 we find that the people supposed Christ to be "Elijah or Jeremiah, or one of the prophets," so Koheleth probably persuaded himself that he was living the life of Solomon over again, or at all events repeating many of his experiences. **13. I gave my heart.** (So 1 : 17; 7 : 25; 8 : 9, 16.) "I set myself," "concentrated all my efforts." **To seek and search out.** The first suggests penetration; the second, wide survey. **By wisdom,** by the aid of practical philosophy. **All things that are done under heaven.** The question had come home to him: Is it worth while for men to live a life of bustle and toil? The whole range of human pursuits and employments he calmly and philosophically investigates; computes what they cost in mental or physical expenditure, and what they all amount to when realized, and he concludes that it is a **sore travail**, or "a sad business," "an unprofitable transaction." Certain cares, uncertain results. **God has given.** Koheleth is

14 I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all *is* vanity and vexation of spirit.

15 *That which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered.*

16 I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all *they* that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge.

17 And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also *is* vexation of spirit.

18 For in much wisdom *is* much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.

14 therewith. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all *is* vanity and a striving after wind. That which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered. I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I have gotten me great wisdom above all that were before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart hath had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. 17 And I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also was a striving after wind. For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.

## CHAPTER II.

1 I SAID in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also *is* vanity.

2 I said of laughter, *It is* mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?

3 I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom;

1 I SAID in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also was vanity. I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it? I searched in mine heart how to cheer my flesh with wine, mine heart yet guiding *me* with wis-

no atheist, as are too many modern pessimists, but his God is the God of Eliphaz rather than of Hosea. His conception of God includes power, wisdom, and unflinching righteousness, but no tenderness or emotional interest in man's welfare. 14. **Vexation of spirit.** Marg. A difficult phrase, diversely rendered. The Hebrew word רוּחַ, *ruach* (1) "wind," (2) "spirit"; and רוּת, *ruth*, comes from a verb רוּחַ, *ravah*, which means to "feed," and then to "delight in," "go after," "pursue." Hence, we have R. V. Marg. 1, "a feeding on wind." So Sym., Ag., Pl.+. R. V., "a striving after wind," or "a pursuit of the wind"; as in Hos. 12: 1, "Ephraim pursues the wind and follows after the east wind." "Vexation" derives *ruth* from רוּחַ, *ra'a*, which is contrary to analogy. 15. Investigation discloses incurable ills; crooked things which cannot be straightened, and things lacking which cannot be supplied. 16. Heb. reads: "Lo I have made great and have added wisdom," hence R. V., "Lo I have gotten me great wisdom." The A. V. incorrectly follows Vulg., all . . . before me in Jerusalem; referring to the unknown line of Jebusite kings from Melchizedek (Gen. 14: 18) to Adonizedek (Josh. 10: 3; 2 Sam. 5: 7). We read of wise men in Jerusalem before Solomon (1 Kings 4: 31; 1 Chron. 2: 6); Koheleth does not fall into an anachronism. 17. **To know wisdom.** To unravel mysteries, to master current philosophies. Stoics boasted of their enjoyments, of the self-sufficiency and independence of externals which philosophy gave. Marcus Aurelius derived much joy from the composition of his "self-communications"; but to Koheleth it was a pursuit of the wind. **To know madness and folly.** He here anticipates, impetuously giving the results

of bitter experience. 18. Every student has this gloomy mood. When the overtaxed brain brings sleeplessness, when investigation overturns long cherished doctrines, or gives insight into miseries and woes of men scarcely dreamt of, then we are all ready to say, **he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.** Most primitive peoples ascribe the fall of man to inquisitiveness.

2: 1-11. **WORLDLY PLEASURES GIVE NO ABIDING SATISFACTION.** 1. I said in my heart, or, "I spake with my heart," as Zech. 1: 19. Self-communing, as Ps. 42: 5, 11; 43: 5; Luke 12: 19. The "heart," here and in 1: 16; 2: 15; 3: 17, is that in man which is in quest of satisfaction and craves for rest. I will prove thee. Experiment on thee, to see if mirth will pacify thy unrest. The Stoic of chap. 1 turns Epicurean. He asks: Is man a rational or a sensuous being? This restless, dissatisfied thing, my heart, what is its real nature? Reason? or appetite? Philosophy he has tried in vain. He foolishly resolves to try a life of gayety. Cox gives Goethe's *Faust*, and Pl., Abelard, as parallels. Augustine solved the problem: "Our natures find no rest till they find rest in Thee." **Enjoy.** Heb., "see," *i. e.*, "experience." (Comp. Luke 2: 26; John 3: 36; 8: 51.) 2. J. S. Mill, though a utilitarian, admits that the only way to be happy is to have the mind fixed on some other object than our own happiness. Koheleth erred in making happiness the direct object in life. **What doeth it? What does it yield?** (Rom. 8: 21.) 3. I sought, rather, "explored," as if rummaging in an old chest for some device or plan. **To give myself to wine.** This is a loose paraphrase.

and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life.

4 I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards:

5 I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits:

6 I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees:

7 I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me:

8 I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts.

9 So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me.

10 And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy;

Verb *אָשַׁח*, *mashak*, means in Heb. Bible, to "draw"; in Mishna, to "refresh," "reinvigorate." Hence Hi., Gin., "to draw my flesh with wine," as though the body were a carriage, wine the horses; somewhat as in the *Phædrus* of Plato, the two horses which draw the man are the sensual nature and the loving nature, *nous* being the charioteer. R. V. gives, "to cheer my flesh"; V. & O., "to refresh"; Kal., "to indulge," following the Mishnic usage of *mashak*. Yet acquainting my heart with wisdom. Better, as R. V., "my heart guiding (me) with wisdom." The verb occurs Deut. 4:37; Ps. 80:1; Isa. 11:6. In his enjoyments, like Epicurus, he never gave his flesh the rein quite loose. Wisdom sat as charioteer. **And to lay hold on folly.** He will keep folly firmly in his grasp till he has examined it and found out whether it *does* yield a surplussage of satisfaction over and above the effects of indulgence; whether it is worth while to be foolish. 4. As he sought to maintain some wisdom in his madness, so he will have refinement in his debauchery. He does not go to low taverns; he makes provision to play the fool at home. Compare Tennyson's Palace of Art. Solomon's buildings are described (1 Kings 7:1-19; 9:15-19; 2 Chron. 8:3-6); David's vineyards (1 Chron. 27:27-31). 5. **Orchards.** Heb., *פַּרְדֵּסִים*, *pardesim*, a Persian word used of those vast inclosures of Persian kings, which were at once parks and zoological gardens (Xen., *Anab.*, I., 2:4; *Cyrop.*, 1:4; Cant. 6:11 f.). 6. **Pools.** The word occurs 2 Sam. 4:12; 2 Kings 20:20; Neh. 2:14; Isa. 7:3+. Three pools, said to be Solomon's, still exist at Elam, south of Bethlehem. These reservoirs were used for irrigating cereals and also young trees. 7. He bought foreign male and female slaves (Gen. 17:12; 1 Kings 9:21; 2 Chron. 8:8); besides which, he

had Hebrew servants in mild and loyal hereditary villanage (Gen. 14:14; 17:12). The humanness of Hebrew slavery may be studied, Exod. 21:26 f.; Deut. 5:14; 23:15 f.; 31:10-13. **Cattle.** (Comp. 1 Kings 4:28; 8:63; 1 Chron. 27:29 f.) 8. **Silver and gold.** Solomon's revenue from Ophir was four hundred and twenty talents of gold, besides that which came from his vassals (1 Kings 9:26 f.); in all, six hundred and sixty-six talents (1 Kings 10:14). **Peculiar treasure.** Heb., *סְגֻלָּה*, *s'gullah*. The king's personalty, hoarded up for emergencies, as distinct from that which was his, as absolute monarch, for purposes of government. 1 Chron. 29:3 tells how much David contributed to the temple fund from his *segullah*. In Exod. 19:5; Mal. 3:17, God uses this precious name of his people. **Provinces,** used often of the provinces of Ahasuerus and Darius in Esther and Daniel. Solomon divided his empire into twelve such districts (1 Kings 4:7-19). **Women-singers,** to be used at banquets (2 Sam. 19:55; Isa. 23:16; Amos 6:5; Sir. 9:4). **Musical instruments of all sorts.** Heb., *שִׁדְדָה*, *shiddah*, *שִׁדְדוֹת*, *s'shiddoth*; the same Heb. noun, first in sing., then in pl. Very uncertain, but probably the literal meaning is, "a breast and breasts," implying, as Del., "a mistress and mistresses"; or, more freely, as R. V., "concubines very many." It would be strange if Solomon's seraglio, with its thousand inmates, were not mentioned (1 Kings 11:3; Cant. 6:8). LXX. and Syr., "cupbearers, male and female." Targ., "a bath and bath-houses." 9. **My wisdom remained with me.** He did not allow voluptuousness to imbrute him entirely. Epicurus used strong language to condemn debauchery. "Like Goethe," says Pl., "Kohleth analyzed his voluptuousness and studied his own faculties of enjoyment." 10. He experimented on every-

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for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour.

11 Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.

12 And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly: for what can the man do that cometh after the king? even that which hath been already done.

13 Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness.

14 The wise man's eyes are in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness: and I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all.

15 Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity.

16 For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise man? as the fool.

17 Therefore I hated life; because the work that

my heart from any joy, for my heart rejoiced because of all my labour; and this was my portion from all my labour.

11 Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was no profit under the sun.

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14 darkness. The wise man's eyes are in his head, and the fool walketh in darkness: and yet I perceived that one event happeneth to them

15 all. Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so will it happen even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my

16 heart, that this also was vanity. For of the wise man, even as of the fool, there is no remembrance for ever; seeing that in the days to come all will have been already forgotten.

17 And how doth the wise man die even as the fool! So I hated life; because the work that is wrought

thing which is supposed to titillate man's jaded sensibilities and he confesses that for a while the pleasure was real. There was some little joy, but it was base and unworthy, beneath the dignity of manhood. **My portion.** What a drop for one whose privilege it is to say, "The Lord is my portion" (Ps. 16 : 5; 73 : 26; 142 : 5), to have to say of the low, evanescent joy of the sensualist, "This was my portion"! **11. All was vanity.** Sumptuous banquets, beautiful sights, melodious sounds, sensual gratifications leave man craving for more, with body enervated and nerves debilitated, dissatisfied, unhappy. The second experiment failed.

**12-17. KOHELETH BECOMES A STUDENT AGAIN. HUMAN NATURE HIS THEME.** He puts off his gala dress and puts on the philosopher's cloak. From being an epicure, he becomes a critic—not to say, cynic. He climbs out of the slough and from a point of vantage watches and criticises those left behind. **12. What can the man do that cometh after the king?** Who else has such facilities for enjoyment, such command of experiments as he? If he finds that the game is not worth the candle, all men should accept his verdict as final. They can tap no new vein. The two marginal readings in R. V. have little probability. **13.** Wisdom gives no abiding satisfaction (1 : 16), but as compared with folly, it has great advantage. The pursuit of knowledge is more suitable to a rational being than the indulgence of passion. Light is preferable to darkness after all. Since Koheleth relaxes some little of his pessimism, Sgf. assigns 13 f. to a later editor. How absurd! for if there were no superiority in a wise man over a fool, there would be no injustice in their being treated alike (2 : 15). **14. Eyes in his head.** The

wise man has eyes *where* they should be, and open *as* they should be, and therefore he stumbles not (John 11 : 9). "A fool's eyes are in the ends of the earth" (Prov. 17 : 24). There is a Greek proverb, "He has his brains in his heel." The fool is blinded by his own conceit, heedless, reckless, and thus as if in darkness (Isa. 43 : 8). The wise man is superior to the fool, but not for long; the same dread event awaits both (Ps. 49 : 10; 90 : 5; Eccl. 9 : 2, 11). **15. Why was I then more wise?** Rather, "Why then ('in that case,' see Heb., *אֲז*, 'áz, in 2 Sam. 2 : 27; Job 3 : 13) have I been wise *overmuch*?" Compare this use of Heb., *רַחֵם*, *yôthêr*, in 7 : 16. We seem to hear in this the *Μῆδεν ἄνω*, the *Ne quid nimis*, "nothing in excess," of the Greek and Roman Stoic sages. If toilsome research cannot save from evil even the worst, is it worth while? The answer is given in 2 : 26. There is a "joy" in research, so that men "must philosophize."

**16.** The desire to immortalize himself burns in the heart of Koheleth and he complains that wisdom no more than folly can secure everlasting remembrance. He thus calls in question Ps. 112 : 6; Prov. 10 : 7, and rightly, in all but a few instances, so far as *this* world is concerned; but the believer can rejoice that his name is "written in heaven" (Luke 10 : 20; Phil. 4 : 3). There may be the same death-bed scene, but Koheleth has not pierced the veil. The faint light which even many O. T. saints enjoyed is not his. Jesus, however, has "brought immortality to light" (2 Tim. 1 : 10). In Wisdom 2 : 1-9, we seem to have an intentional exposure of "the wickedness" of the sentiments of this verse. **17. I hated life.** The last utterance of pessimism! Since the career of a wise man, as that of a fool, must terminate in death, and to both posthumous fame is denied, Koheleth decides

is wrought under the sun *is* grievous unto me: for all *is* vanity and vexation of spirit.

18 Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me.

19 And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wise under the sun. This *is* also vanity.

20 Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun.

21 For there is a man whose labour *is* in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity; yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it, *for* his portion. This also *is* vanity and a great evil.

22 For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun?

23 For all his days *are* sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity.

24 *There is* nothing better for a man, *than* that he should eat and drink, and *that* he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God.

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18 And I hated all my labour wherein I laboured under the sun: seeing that I must leave it unto the man that shall be after me. And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed wisdom under the sun. This also is

20 vanity. Therefore I turned about to cause my heart to despair concerning all the labour

21 wherein I had laboured under the sun. For there is a man whose labour is with wisdom,

and with knowledge, and with skillfulness; yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity

22 and a great evil. For what hath a man of all his labour, and of the striving of his heart,

23 wherein he laboureth under the sun? For all his days *are* sorrows, and his travail is grief; yea, even in the night his heart taketh not rest. This also is vanity.

24 There is nothing better for a man *than* that he should eat and drink, and make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it is

that life is not worth living (Job 3 : 20 f.; 7 : 15 f.) The antidote to this is that death is the door of a life far grander than this, where knowledge, purity, and love will be perfected (1 Cor. 13 : 12; Phil. 1 : 23; 1 John 3 : 2; Rev. 21).

**18-23. KOHELETH EXPRESSES HIS DISSATISFACTION WITH RICHES.** 18. Nothing distresses the selfish worldling so much as the thought of leaving behind all his gains when death comes. Pl. reminds us of Mazarin in the galleries of his palace and Frederick William IV. on the terrace at Potsdam, both of whom exclaimed, "All this I must leave behind me!" (Comp. 4 : 8; 5 : 14; 6 : 2.) **The man.** Had Koheleth no son? If so, we might partially excuse his ceaseless selfishness here. 19. The heir may be a Nero, with cruel passions slumbering under apparent docility. He may be a prodigal, all the more extravagant because prudence imposes self-restraint during the lifetime of his benefactor. How distressing to think of some wastrel squandering the fortune accumulated with so much skill and self-denial. If Koheleth were Solomon we should here have his forebodings in watching the unsatisfactory development of young Rehoboam. (Read Job 27 : 17; Ps. 39 : 6; Prov. 23 : 5; Luke 12 : 20 f.) 20. **I went about.** R. V., "I turned about," stopped in my pursuit of wealth, and abandoned myself to hopeless despair. **Despair** (1 Sam. 27 : 1; Job 6 : 26). 21. **In equity.** R. V., "with skillfulness." So Gin., Sgf. +. R. V. Marg., "with success." So Kal., Wr. If Koheleth had had children, he would scarcely have spoken so grudgingly. Targ. takes the liberty of inserting, "and he dies without child." Koheleth is here ruminating the unpleasant morsel of ver. 19. 22.

**What hath man.** Heb., "What is becoming (or, 'coming') to man." What advantage is it to him even if he lives? What anticipations has he? 23. Render, "For sorrows and vexation are his concern all his days." The pretonic kametz in וַיִּשְׁמַר, *vākā'ās*, forbids our separating "sorrows" from "vexation," as A. V., R. V. do. Besides which, "days" and "night" are clearly in antithesis. Koheleth has no conception of the *discipline* of sorrow. He chafes against it, as Job did, and needs an Elihu to teach him (Job 33 : 16 f.; 35 : 10 f.); or, better still, the Beatitudes of the great Master (Matt. 5 : read also Rom. 8 : 35 f.; 2 Cor. 12 : 9 f.; Heb. 12 : 11; Rev. 5 : 19).

**24-26. CONCLUSION FROM THE FOUR FOREGOING EXPERIMENTS.** 24. Heb., "There is no good for the man who eats and drinks and causes his soul to enjoy pleasure in return for his toil." This answers the question propounded in 1 : 3, "What is the net gain?" The reply is, "There is none." "It is not worth while." Koheleth thus condenses the results of his experiments given severally in 1 : 17 f.; 2 : 11, 17, 23. Quite unnecessary is it to alter the Heb. text (also LXX. in most Codd.), as A. V., R. V. do, and all my commentaries except Köhler and V. & O., "There is nothing better for a man (*than*) that he," etc. This contradicts 2 : 11, and is more sensual than Koheleth descends to elsewhere. In 8 : 15 we have an experiment stated, as in 2 : 3, and not the result of an experiment. **The hand of God.** The old, simple faith for a moment reasserts itself. It is no fortuitous incident that man cannot secure permanent good from the indulgences of the table. It is a divinely ordered event. Physical enjoyment is not "man's des-



25 For who can eat, or who else can hasten *hereunto*, more than I?

26 For God giveth to a man that is good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to *him that is good* before God. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit.

25 from the hand of God. For who can eat, or 26 who can have enjoyment, more than I? For to the man that pleaseth him God giveth wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that pleaseth God. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.

## CHAPTER III.

1 TO every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

2 A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;

3 A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;

4 A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

5 A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather

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5 time to dance; a time to cast away stones, and

timed end or way." Koheleth is a bold critic, but not an atheist. 25. Koheleth claims to be fully qualified to pronounce sensual pleasures illusory and unsatisfying. **Who can hasten (hereunto)?** Gin., "Who should hasten (thereunto) more than I?" *i. e.*, "Who has so much right to eat as the laborer?" Syr., LXX., "Who will *drink* more than he?" is a mere guess, to agree with "eat" in 25a. R. V., "Who can have enjoyment?" rests on no linguistic authority. The verb, שָׂשׂוּן, *hāsāh*, in the cognates means (1) to feel, have experience; (2) to *have pain*, to *suffer*; never, to *enjoy*. If scholars had not tampered with the Heb. in ver. 24 they would at once have seen the need for this second meaning here, "Who can *suffer* more than I have? I have sown my wild oats and reaped the terrible harvest of suffering." Syr. and some Heb. MSS. read שָׂשׂוּן, *mimmēnū*, for שָׂשׂוּן, *mimmēnū*, which R. V. Marg. renders "apart from him," *i. e.*, "God." 26. **For**, co-ordinate with "for" in ver. 25. Both must be linked to ver. 24. **God giveth**, contradicting 2: 15, "All things come alike to all." A bright oasis in the desert! For a brief space Koheleth realizes that there is such a thing as moral government. The good do not fare as the wicked. God reigns. Righteousness is on the throne. Wisdom and knowledge and joy are God's gift. (Contrast 1: 18.) Sgf. regards 24b to 26 an interpolation by a pious Jew. See Introduction, Sec. 4. The creed that the wicked man amasses wealth for the righteous is found Job 27: 16 f.; Prov. 13: 22; 28: 8. **This also is vanity**. Not the wisdom and knowledge and joy which God gives, but the exclusion from these benefits of the man who has not been good in God's sight, and the law that his goods, inasmuch as he has been a sinner, must pass into the hands of a godly man. Koheleth admits moral government, but at this dark period of his life he finds reason for complaint because it falls hard on the sinner, checking man's freedom to do as he wills.

**3: 1-8. KOHELETH COMPLAINS THAT HUMAN ACTIVITY IS FETTERED BY RIGID LAW.** Man is in the grip of immutable divine ordinances. A higher power than man's fixes the times and seasons at which events shall occur without taking man into consultation. Rigid law, irrespective of human preferences, fixes a time for everything. So Gin., Wr., Cox, Sgf., V. & O.+. Others, however, see here that there is *suitable* time for doing everything if only man could find it. So Driver, Pl., Mom.

**1. A season.** Aram. loan word, Ezra 5: 3; in Heb., Esther 9: 27; Neh. 2: 6. Root, שָׂשׂוּן, *s'man*, to determine, decree. Hence, not "a suitable time," but "a decreed time." When man has planned to do one thing he finds himself obliged to do another (Prov. 19: 21; Lam. 3: 37; James 4: 15). **Purpose.** Heb., שָׂשׂוּן, *hephets*, desire, pleasure. Here, as in Mishna, a "matter," "event." (so 5: 7.) **2. A time to be born.** So R. V., but Heb. is active, "A time to give birth." So LXX., Targ., Ges., Ros., Ty.+. Nature fixes the period of gestation. Others, with R. V., regard active as laxly used for passive, as in Jer. 25: 34. **To plant.** Parallel to "giving birth." **To pluck up**, to "uproot." A meaning frequent in Aram., not elsewhere in Heb. **3. To kill.** Even instances of violent death, which seem fortuitous, are not really so. An unseen hand guides the arrow or the sword. Others, as Pl., Mom., find throughout the lesson, "Success in life depends on doing everything at the right time." "Buy up opportunities." "Inopportunity is the bane of life." This surely does not suitably apply to birth and death, mourning and losing. **4. Mourn.** Man plans a festival, but his laughter is turned to wailing (Job 20: 23; Amos 8: 10). **5. To cast away stones.** Various understood: 1. Throwing away building material. Targ. 2. Flinging stones on an enemy's arable land. So Hitz.+. 3. Demolishing fortresses. Ros.+. 4. Flinging stones or earth into a grave

stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

6 A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;

7 A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

8 A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

9 What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboreth?

10 I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it.

11 He hath made every thing beautiful in his time; also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.

12 I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life.

13 And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God.

a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep,

7 and a time to cast away; a time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time

8 to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace. What profit

9 hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboreth? I have seen the travail which God

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11 in its time; also he hath set the world in their heart, yet so that man cannot find out the work

12 that God hath done from the beginning even to the end. I know that there is nothing better

13 for them, than to rejoice, and to do good so long as they live. And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy good in all his labour,

at a funeral. Del. †. It is best to take the word vaguely. **Refrain.** Lit., "stand aloof." **6. To get.** Rather, as Heb., "to seek." **To lose.** This meaning of עָבַד, 'abbēdh, is not biblical but Mishnic. In Bible it means "to destroy." Ges., "A time to give up as lost." **To cast away** (2 Kings 7 : 15; Acts 27 : 18 f.). **7. To rend,** perhaps used of garments as a sign of grief, or it may refer to discord. When we intend to stitch God may ordain to rend. Sometimes it seems impossible to avoid σχίσματα in churches and families (Matt. 10 : 34 f.; 1 Cor. 11 : 18). Again, when men wish to rend, God uses the very opposition to stitch men more closely to gether. **To speak.** The resolve to be silent is often broken. It is clearly God's will that we should speak. God's time has come, not ours (Ps. 39 : 8; Jer. 20 : 9; Ezek. 3 : 14).

**9-15. REFLECTIONS ON THE FACT THAT THE SEVERAL EVENTS OF LIFE ARE PREARRANGED BY GOD.** What moral does Koheleth draw from these twenty-eight illustrations? Is it "Take time by the forelock," "Watch for the turn in the tide which leads on to fortune"? No. He gives a lugubrious complaint against divine foreordination. All is fixed, prearranged by Providence. Why then should man toil and exert himself? What has to be will be. Why should man labor industriously to improve his lot when he is liable to be thwarted, frustrated, contradicted at every turn? Koheleth had yet to learn that foreordination is never severed from foreknowledge, wisdom, and love. The power which thwarts men is a Father's hand and is never exerted except to promote their highest welfare. **10. The travail,** the stern, wearisome routine of life (3 : 1-9), all conditioned by an uncontrollable "power, not ourselves." **11. He made every thing beautiful in its time.** An outburst of sunshine through thunder clouds! The cyclic order is tedious to the jaded spirit. It is

irritating to him who would steer his own course through life, but, after all, it is beautiful. The cosmos of one all-ruling mind is vastly preferable to the chaos of a multitude of finite minds, each ambitious to assume the reins of power. **He hath set the world in their heart.** The word, עוֹלָם, 'olām, in Bib. Heb., "eternity," "indefinite duration, post and ante." In later Heb. it takes on the meaning of the Gr. αἰών, "the world" as a time-order. R. V. Marg., with Gin., Del., Pl., Wr., Rev. †, render, "He hath put eternity in their heart," a sense of the infinite, a disposition to be dissatisfied with the temporal. Man is linked to two worlds—to nature by his organism, to eternity by his aspirations. Not so well, Ges., Kal. †, "He hath put worldliness," etc. **So that no man can find out.** Rather, "Only that no man," etc. Man has a sense of infinitude, only he cannot comprehend it, "cannot embrace it all at one view." Ch. There are vast stretches of the past and the whole of the future which he cannot penetrate. Whence came this cosmos? What is its goal? are questions he cannot answer. The beginning and the end are alike hidden. **12. I know.** Rather, "I ascertained." (So 1 : 17; 2 : 14; 3 : 14.) **To do good,** to promote the welfare of others. Another bright ray! (Comp. 7 : 20; Ps. 34 : 14; 37 : 27.) Man seeks to know the how and the whence, but, soaring on high fore and aft, his wings soon beat against the bounds of the unknowable. The living present is all that he can call his own. His wisdom is to use that well, to be happy and to make others so. R. V. Marg., "to get good," i. e., "enjoy pleasures." So Ges., Del., Gin. †. This would be עוֹשֶׂה טוֹב, 'ōshēh, ṭōb, as in the next verse. Even Epicureans included benevolence among the means of securing one's own happiness, and Koheleth would not sink below that level. **13. Man's capacity**

14 I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that *men* should fear before him.

15 That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past.

16 And moreover I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there.

17 I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.

18 I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts.

19 For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts: even one thing befalleth them; as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity.

20 All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.

14 is the gift of God. I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God hath done it, that men should fear before him. That which is hath been already; and that which is to be hath already been: and God seeketh again that which is passed away.

16 And moreover I saw under the sun, in the place of judgement, that wickedness was there; and in the place of righteousness, that wickedness was there. I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose and for every

18 work. I said in mine heart, It is because of the sons of men, that God may prove them, and that they may see that they themselves are but

19 as beasts. For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; and man hath no preeminence above the beasts: for all is

20 vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the

for enjoyment and means of enjoyment are a divine gift. 14. **I know.** Rather, "I have come to know." God's laws are fixed, eternally unalterable. In nature law reigns supreme and in human lives it is the same. There is social and moral law as well as natural. "What man sows that he reaps." It is no use for men "to kick against the goads." Man's wisdom is to bring his life into line with the divine order. He cannot modify it by introducing new laws or changing old ones. God has a beneficent design in hemming us round by rigid law. **That men should fear before him.** "There is no reverential awe," says Pl., "so deep as that which rises from the contemplation of a righteousness that knows no change" (Ps. 40 : 3 ; 64 : 2 ; Isa. 59 : 18 f. ; Mal. 3 : 6 ; Str. 18 : 6). 15. **God requireth that which is past.** Heb., "God seeketh that which is chased away." The idea is: Life is an unbroken sequence of events. One thing chases another across the panorama of life, but events past are not consigned to oblivion. History repeats itself. The same laws reproduce similar phenomena. Old fashions come up anew. The Stoics believed in cyclic repetition of historical events. Tyler, 15; comp. Ovid, *Met.*, XV., 10; Lucretius, III., 977 f. Most of the versions render, "God avenges the persecuted"; but Vulg., "*Deus instaurat quod abiit.*"

3:16 to 4:16. **ANOMALIES IN HUMAN LIFE. MORAL DISORDERS. And moreover.** A fresh difficulty! Injustice on the judgment seat! Iniquity in the congregation of the righteous! 17. **I said in my heart.** The first thought that rises in his heart unbidden (but a belief often clouded over) is that there is a final judgment. Render, "There is a time for (judging) every purpose and every work there." There is emphatic, as in Job 3:17 f. Targ., "At the day of the great judgment." Pl. felicitously cites

Eurip., *Med.*, 1065, "All good be with you, but it must be there. Here it is stolen from you by your sire." Some read  $\text{D}\bar{\text{V}}$ , *sdm*, for  $\text{D}\bar{\text{V}}$ , *shdm*. "He hath appointed a time for," etc. So Ew., *Hi.*, Ch.+. 18. **Concerning.** Rather, "For the sake of," an Aram. prep., as Dan. 2:30; 4:14 (E. V., 17), found as conj., 7:14 of our book. **Manifest.** Heb., "test." God has two motives for allowing the continuance of moral disorder. (1) "That he may test men." Koheleth rests for one moment in the creed of Eliphaz (Job 5:17 f.), that trouble tests character; discloses the man's true self to himself and others. Then, just as Job in 7:17 morosely perverts Ps. 8:4, so Koheleth gives a twist to the doctrine of probation. To test them! yes (2), "to let men see they are but beasts." He was rising to higher hopes, but then the evil spirit conquers, and he is fascinated by the repugnant possibility that after all man may be nothing more than a beast. 19. R. V. Marg., "Men are a chance, beasts are a chance, and one chance is to both." So Del., Wr., Cox, Pl.+. But is not Koheleth murmuring that human life is predestined? And is not chance the very antithesis of destiny? I prefer A. V., or more lit., "For the lot (2:14, 15:9:2, 3) of the sons of men (is) the lot of the beast. They have the same lot." This requires that we read  $\text{מִקְרָה}$ , *mikrāh*, for  $\text{מִקְרָה}$ , *mikrāh*. So LXX., Targ., Kal., Sgf., V. & O.+. The bright intuition of a hereafter is ended. Man has an animal frame. Man and beast breathe the same air. They seem to die alike. The concomitants and physical consequences of death are the same. Appearances are against any superiority in man; but when man can trust his spiritual intuitions he is able to say: "Thou wilt redeem me from the power of the grave, for thou wilt receive me." 20. **One place,** the grave, where man

21 Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?

22 Wherefore I perceive that *there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion; for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?*

21 dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knoweth the spirit of man whether it goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast whether it goeth downward to the earth? Wherefore I saw that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his works; for that is his portion; for who shall bring him back to see what shall be after him?

## CHAPTER IV.

1 SO I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of *such as were* oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors *there was* power; but they had no comforter.

2 Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive.

3 Yea, better *is he* than both they, which hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun.

4 Again, I considered all travail, and every right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour. This *is* also vanity and vexation of spirit.

5 The fool foldeth his hands together, and eateth his own flesh.

1 THEN I returned and saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold, the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power, but they had no comforter.

2 Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive;

3 yea, better than them both *did I esteem* him which hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun.

4 Then I saw all labour and every skillful work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.

5 The fool foldeth his hands together, and eateth

and beast return to dust. For the time he ignores man's infinitely superior mental faculties, his self-consciousness, his moral nature and spiritual intuitions, and hence questions his superior destiny. He has doubts which he utters in his heart (ver. 18), and here he thinks aloud with courageous frankness. Can man who seems so like be really so unlike other animals? 21. Read "Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward," etc. That the *bodies* of men and beasts have the same destiny is capable of ocular demonstration; and as for the destiny of the spirit, "*who knows?*" Immortality presented itself to Koheleth as a postulate of faith, but his faith was fitful. He claimed certainty, to *know* what becomes of the spirit as certainly as he knows that the body decays. He is too sad and gloomy to be logical, or he might have argued that if it is God who has "put eternity in man's heart," man's instincts are not given for deception but for satisfaction. Eventually faith conquers doubt, and Koheleth affirms, "The spirit returns to God who gave it" (12 : 7). **Downward** to the grave with the body, **upward** to God. 22. Once more Koheleth decides that man's wisest course is to make good use of the time present. The future he deems uncertain. There *may* be a hereafter, but he thinks it cannot be proved. The present is an undoubted actuality. Man does wisely therefore to extract all the joy he can out of it, especially as he cannot know what may come of the property and treasure he may accumulate after he is gone. Fitful mortal! This was the gloom Koheleth passed through once.

4 : 1-3. UNREDRESSED OPPRESSION. If a man succeed in life he may be robbed by unjust

accusation and illegal extortion, as in 1 Sam. 12 : 4; Lev. 6 : 2; Mal. 3 : 5. The same noun occurs Job 35 : 9; Amos 3 : 9. **They had (there was) no comforter** (Pa. 69 : 20; Jer. 16 : 7). The iteration intensifies the pathos, as in Lam. 1 : 2, 9, 17, 21. To comfort mourners was to the Jews a sacred duty (Job 29 : 25; John 11 : 19). Contrast this picture with 1 Kings 4 : 20; 10 : 8. Pl. sees a rift in the melancholy, in that he turns from his own miseries to think of the tears of others. **2. I praised, praise, the dead.** How dire the oppression, and how heartrending the misery, before Koheleth could write that! Could Solomon have written it? **3.** Better to have died than live to see such utter wretchedness! Better still, he adds now, never to have lived at all. (Read Job 3 : 11-16.) Sophocles, *Col.*, 1025 : "Never to be at all excels all fame." *Theognis*, 425 : "Best lot for man is never to be born." When Christ used such a phrase it was of one outrageously wicked, not miserable (Matt. 26 : 24). This pessimism of Koheleth's is exalted into a religion in the Buddhist longing for Nirvana.

4-6. RIVALRY AND ENVY. If not robbed he is envied. **Every right work.** Better, "Every successful work," as R. V. Marg. (See 2 : 21; 5 : 18.) Success evokes envy, and thus embitters success. Not, as R. V. Marg., that success is caused by rivalry. So Gin., Del., Ch. Envy leads to false accusations, trumped-up charges. Heb., "This is the envy of a man from his neighbor." **5. The fool.** Heb., *לִפְטוֹן*, *Esil*, one who lives a sluggish, animal life without any ambition or realization of the dignity of manhood (Prov. 1 : 22; 17 : 10, 24; 19 : 29; 26 : 1, 6). **Eats his own flesh,** wastes away, pines to death. Rather, as Gin., Pl., Cox+, "Eats his

6 Better *is* a handful *with* quietness, than both the hands full *with* travail and vexation of spirit.  
7 Then I returned, and I saw vanity under the sun.

8 There is one *alone*, and *there* is not a second; yea, he hath neither child nor brother: yet *is there* no end of all his labour; neither is his eye satisfied with riches; neither *saieth he*, For whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good? This *is* also vanity, yea, it is a sore travail.

9 Two *are* better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour.

10 For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him *that is* alone when he falleth; for *he hath* not another to help him up.

11 Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm *alone*?

12 And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

13 Better *is* a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished.

14 For out of prison he cometh to reign; whereas also *he that is* born in his kingdom becometh poor.

15 I considered all the living which walk under the sun, with the second child that shall stand up in his stead.

16 *There* is no end of all the people, *even* of all that have been before them: they also that come after shall not rejoice in him. Surely this also *is* vanity and vexation of spirit.

ment." The lazy man who sits with folded arms poking fun at passers-by (Prov. 10 : 23 ; 15 : 2 ; 17 : 12) contrives to eat and live somehow, and is therefore to be congratulated rather than he who toils night and day to be rich and makes himself the victim of the tyrant's oppression or neighbor's envy. 6. A handful, a scanty meal is better than satiety with hard work and profitless effort. Pl. pictures a man of disappointed ambitions envying a half-naked Neapolitan relishing a watermelon.

7-12. MISERLY GREED AND ISOLATION. 8. The miser, without kith or kin, hoards his gold, gloating over every coin and yet has no one to leave it to (Ps. 39 : 6). A second. He has no partner or heir. At times he asks himself, For whom am I toiling and pinching myself thus? but he never relaxes his efforts. 9. Two are better than one. Koheleth now cites several cases in which 1 + 1 is more than 2. Two men working together can often *earn* more than the same two singly. Two men with a double saw can saw more timber than if each sawed singly. Hence the lonely miser is a short-sighted wretch. 10. Companionship gives mutual succor. A Jewish proverb says: "A man without a comrade is like the left hand without the right." Christ sent out his disciples two and two (Luke 10 : 1). 11. Companionship gives mutual warmth. Two separately are cold: two together are warm. 12. Mutual strength. In perils of robbers, two together are safer than two severally. Classical parallels are numerous. Euripides, *Heracles*, 274; Aristotle, *Polit.*, III, 7, 12. A threefold cord. If two are better than

6 his own flesh. Better is a handful with quietness, than two handfuls with labour and striving after wind.

7 Then I returned and saw vanity under the sun.

8 There is one that is alone, and he hath not a second; yea, he hath neither son nor brother; yet is there no end of all his labour, neither are his eyes satisfied with riches. For whom then, *saieth he*, do I labour, and deprive my soul of good? This also is vanity, yea, it is

9 a sore travail. Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour.

10 For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth,

11 and hath not another to lift him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have warmth: but

12 how can one be warm *alone*? And if a man prevail against him that is alone, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

13 Better is a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king, who knoweth not how to receive admonition any more. For out of prison

14 he came forth to be king; yea, even in his kingdom he was born poor. I saw all the living

15 which walk under the sun, that they were with the youth, the second, that stood up in his stead.

16 There was no end of all the people, even of all them over whom he was: yet they that come after shall not rejoice in him. Surely this also *is* vanity and a striving after wind.

one, much more are *three*. Each strand might break, but together they may be unbreakable.

13-16. CAPRICES OF ROYALTY. Koheleth has evidently suffered much under the misrule of an aged, self-willed despot, who had ceased to profit from experience or listen to advice, and he pronounces that he would rather live under the rule of a poor, inexperienced youth, if only he were teachable. Poor, an Aram. word (only 9 : 5-16), admonished (12 : 12 ; Ps. 19 : 11 ; Ezek. 3 : 17 f.). 14. Out of prison he (the wise youth) cometh to reign. Heb., "From the house of prisoners he came," etc. An uncertain historic event, reminding one of Cyrus and Astyages, Herod., II., 112, or Onias under Ptolemy Euergetes, Jos., *Ant.* XIII., 4, or Napoleon III. under Louis Philippe. (Comp. Ps. 113 : 7 f.) 14b. Read (as R. V.), "Even in his (the dotard's) kingdom he (the aspirant) was born poor." Whereas Gin., with support of LXX., Targ., renders, "Whilst in his very kingdom (the king) may become poor"; but this gives to Heb., נִלְוָה, *nîlvadh*, a meaning not found elsewhere. 15. Render, "I saw all the living who walk under the sun, with the young man who had been the second, and who stood up in his (the old king's) stead." The wise youth had become, like Joseph, "the second" in the kingdom. He then usurps the throne. Men recognize his ability—fawn around him in immense multitudes—worshipping the rising sun. Every one sides with the usurper *for a time*. 16. Even of all them that have been before him. Rather, "Even of all them before (i. e., over) whom he was (ruler)." A king is said to be

## CHAPTER V.

1 KEEP thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil.

2 Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.

3 For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words.

4 When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed.

5 Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.

6 Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin;

before his people (1 Sam. 18 : 16; 2 Chron. 1 : 10). **Shall not rejoice in him** (the once popular king). In time he too becomes autocratic, and the reign which opened so auspiciously ends as sadly as that of the aged monarch whom he displaced. It is quite uncritical to find here a reference to the "child" of Isa. 7 : 14, and in the three-fold cord to see an allusion to the Trinity.

5 : 1-7. KOHELETH CYNICALLY CORRECTS SOME INCONSISTENCIES IN POPULAR RELIGION. Regarding God as the sole absolute Ruler, the embodiment of power and justice, he advises men to submit to the inevitable and to bow with becoming humility to the almighty autocrat. That the God of power is also a God of love lies quite outside his range of thought. His God is merely an omnipotent sultan, very ready to take offense, very sensitive as to his dignity—in fact, the Allah of Mohammed, or of Job's "friends" (Job 5 : 8 f.; 8 : 5 f.; 11 : 13 f.; 22 : 22). **1. Keep thy foot.** So Heb., Marg. Heb. text has "feet." Compare Ps. 119 : 101, "I have refrained my feet." Here "Watch thy feet," lest they step off the path of reverence and caution. There is no direct reference to the practice of taking off the shoe (Exod. 3 : 5; Josh. 5 : 15). **Be more ready to hear.** Rather, "To draw near to hear is better than when fools give sacrifice." Our pessimist is not an atheist. He is a cynic; and as such regards with contempt the behavior of those who consider sacrifice a mechanical means of absolution; like the harlot in Prov. 7 : 14, who makes the fact that she has just offered her peace offerings and paid her vows, a reason for fresh indulgence. He prefers to this that men should "come empty" (Exod. 23 : 15; 34 : 20), and simply draw near as sincere listeners. **They consider not.** The sage bestows a word of pity on the כֹּסֵל, *Kesil* (stupid man, 4 : 5), who thinks he can cajole the Almighty to overlook his moral delinquen-

1 KEEP thy foot when thou goest to the house of God; for to draw nigh to hear is better than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they know not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few. For a dream cometh with a multitude of business; and a fool's voice with a multitude of words. When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou vowest. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. Suffer not thy

cies. **2. Be not rash.** Heb., "Be not hasty on thy mouth," as if the mouth or the tongue were a spirited horse which might dash off with its rider. His advice is: "Be self-possessed. Don't get excited. Keep your emotions well in hand, lest you promise and vow what you will regret in calmer moments." This is not the stuff that heroes and martyrs are made of. **For God is in heaven.** Here we note the process, so marked in Hebraism, of developing the doctrine of divine aloofness, שָׁמַיִם, *kodhesh*, and of pushing God further away from his world till they eliminated all attributes but power and unemotional justice. **3. Business.** *I. e.*, "worry," "care." The mind that is bewildered by day remains the same by night. **A fool's voice (is known).** It is better to supply a verb from the parallel clause: "A fool's voice," *i. e.*, the tones of voice and the empty bombast which indicate the fool "(comes) through multitude of words"; is produced by loquacity. The two clauses are co-ordinated, as in Prov. 25 : 25. **4.** A citation of Deut. 23 : 21. In 5 : 1 a warning is given against rash vows; but here he grimly enjoins that once made they must be promptly kept. He recognizes a stern moral government which would visit such neglect with infallible nemesis. Hasty vows were quite a feature of late Judaism. It needed a long treatise in the Talmud, מְדוּבָר, *N'dh'rim*, to deal with all the possible evasions. On vows, see Mark 7 : 11 f.; Acts 18 : 18; 21 : 23; read also, Lev. 27. **5.** Vows are optional; but once made they must be respected. There is a blunt honesty in Koheleth which contrasts favorably with the casuistry of many rabbis in devising loopholes of escape from rash vows (Matt. 5 : 33; 23 : 16-22; comp. Prov. 20 : 25). **6. Do not suffer (Gen. 20 : 6; Job 31 : 30) thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin** (Deut. 23 : 21). Flesh, as in 2 : 3; 11 : 10, seems to denote the lower, sensuous nature; not, as Wr., the entire personality. The

neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error; wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?

7 For in the multitude of dreams and many words there are also divers vanities: but fear thou God.

8 If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for he that is higher than the highest regardeth; and there be higher than they.

9 Moreover the profit of the earth is for all: the king himself is served by the field.

10 He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity.

11 When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes?

reference is to vows of abstinence. The advice is: Do not lightly promise to abstain from food or physical pleasures when thy bodily nature is unequal to the strain, and thus cause thy bodily nature to sin and to receive in itself the penalty that is meet. **The angel.** Heb., מַלְאָכִים, *melekkh*. May be (1) the recording angel (Tobit 12 : 12)—so Targ., Gin., Ch.+. (LXX., Syr., “before God”)—the angel who presides over the altar to which every *korban* is brought, and who must report and punish evasion; or (2) a rabbi, set apart to receive applications to be released from rash vows. So Heng., Del., Pl.+ . In Hag. 1 : 13; Mal. 2 : 7, the prophet and priest are severally called the Lord’s *melekkh*. In Rev. 1 : 20 we read of the “angels” of the churches. **An error**, something done unintentionally. The word is used, Lev. 4 : 2; Num. 15, of sins of ignorance, and in Num. 35; Josh. 20, of the man who slays another “at unawares.” Heb., “by error.” **Angry at thy voice.** He sternly believes in divine nemesis. Perjury spells ruin (Job 20 : 23; Zech. 5 : 4). He manifests no sympathy with God’s judicial and punitive visitations, but he believes they will occur with fatal certainty, and deems him a fool who would expose himself and his property to such a peril. Sin is, at any rate, a blunder. 7. The stories of the loquacious, bombastic man are as vain and devoid of reality as a dream. An enforcement of 5 : 2. **Fear thou God.** Koheleth enjoins reverence for God and awe of his vigilance as that which will restrain garrulity (Hab. 2 : 20; Eccl. 7 : 18; 8 : 12; 12 : 13).

8-10. TYRANNY BY SATRAPs. These disorders are mentioned, 3 : 16; 4 : 1. Unjust taxation and iniquitous legal decisions in order to enrich the official. **Marvel not.** May mean, (1) “Don’t let it surprise you”; or (2) “Don’t let it bewilder you and cause you to lose your faith in a moral governor.” If the former is meant, we have an expression like the

mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands? For thus it cometh to pass through the multitude of dreams and vanities and many words: but fear thou God.

8 If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and the violent taking away of judgement and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for one higher than the high regardeth; and there be 9 higher than they. Moreover the profit of the earth is for all: the king himself is served by the field.

10 He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with 11 increase: this also is vanity. When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what advantage is there to the owner thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes?

μὴ δὲσ βασιλέων of Pythagoras, and the *nil admirari* of Horace. **Province.** Heb., מְדִינָה, *m’dhinah*, a late word, found only in Esther, Ezra, Neh., Dan. **Matter.** This is the Mishnic meaning of מַעֲשֵׂה, *hephets*. Render 8b, “For one more exalted than the exalted one is watching, and the most exalted is over them.” Apparently an allusion to the graduated subordination of official life in the Persian or Egyptian domination. The lower officials rob the people, and those higher in office watch for an opportunity to get up fictitious charges against their subordinates and fleece them by exorbitant fines. But who is the “most exalted”? The monarch (as Pl., Sgf., Reu., Kal.+); or God? (as Heng., Del.+). What we may adopt here must affect our meaning of “marvel.” I prefer the former. The king is despotic over the satraps and extorts fines from them by capricious charges. **And there be higher than they** is adopted by Gin., Wr., Ty., Pl.+ . **9. For all.** Rather, “There is a profit from the land in return for all (toil).” So this Heb. prep. in 1 : 3; 3 : 9. We are reminded of Tennyson’s Northern Farmer, who says: “There’s nothing so kind as the lond,” Koheleth looks back longingly on the good old days when kings “loved husbandry,” as Uzziah (2 Chron. 26 : 10). **9b.** “And the king of an agricultural country is revered.” When the king rules over a well-tilled country and is not separated from his subjects by gradations of rapacious officials, he is revered. R. V. Marg., “The profit of a land every way is a king devoted to the field,” finds favor with Pl., Kal., V. & O. **10. Rapacity.** Sycophantic accusations cripple industry and kill the goose that laid the golden eggs. This is certainly “vanity.”

11-17. THE UNSATISFACTORINESS OF WEALTH. 11. The richer a man grows the larger does his domestic establishment become. He can only eat and drink a limited amount.

12 The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep.

13 There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, *namely*, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt.

14 But those riches perish by evil travail: and he begetteth a son, and *there* is nothing in his hand.

15 As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand.

16 And this also is a sore evil, *that* in all points as he came, so shall he go: and what profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind?

17 All his days also he eateth in darkness, and he hath much sorrow and wrath with his sickness.

18 Behold *that* which I have seen: *it* is good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for *it* is his portion.

19 Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; *this* is the gift of God.

12 The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the fulness of the rich will not suffer him to sleep.

13 There is a grievous evil which I have seen under the sun, *namely*, riches kept by the owner thereof to his hurt: and those riches perish by evil adventure; and if he hath begotten a son,

14 there is nothing in his hand. As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he go again as he came, and shall take nothing for his labour, which he may carry away in his hand.

15 And this also is a grievous evil, *that* in all points as he came, so shall he go: and what profit hath he that he laboreth for the wind? All his days also he eateth in darkness, and he is sore vexed and hath sickness and wrath.

16 Behold, that which I have seen to be good, and to be comely is for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy good in all his labour, wherein he laboreth under the sun, all the days of his life which God hath given him: for this is his portion.

17 Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; *this* is the gift of God.

Beyond that he merely increases his retinue and watches others spend or pilfer his money. The very same idea is elaborated in Xenophon, *Cyr.*, VIII., 3. **12. Sleep.** Kocleth congratulates the laborer than he can, at all events, close his eyes at night to the miseries of his lot; but the rich man lives in morbid fear of thieves, wakes at every noise, and since he does not demean himself to hard work, "cannot woo gentle sleep by any stealth." Compare Horace, *Odes*, III., 1: 21-24; *Satires*, I., 1, 66; Shakespeare, *Henry IV.*, Part II., Act III., Sc. 1. **13. Kept.** *I. e.*, hoarded up. **For the owners.** So *Gen.*, after 1 Sam. 9: 24. Rather, "by the owner," as R. V., Del., Wr.+ The Pl. in Heb. is that of majesty. **To his hurt.** Sleeplessness and anxiety injure his health; indulgence undermines his strength, and he dies prematurely old. **14. Perish by evil travail,** *i. e.*, by bad speculation; or, like Antonio, the wealth is in ships that go on rocks. **And he begetteth.** R. V., "and if he hath begotten." The crowning sorrow is, he must leave his son penniless after bringing him up with large expectations. **15. The man dies as poor as he was born. Naked shall he return.** The author seems to have known Job 1: 21: "Naked . . . shall I return *thither*." He omits the difficult word "thither." This word also perplexed Sirach, and he explains it thus: "Till the day they return to the mother of all things" (*Sir.* 40: 1). Pl. considers the earth, or the dust, to be "the mother," from which all emerge and to which they return, as *Gen.* 3: 19. Others think that since pre-existence is clearly taught in *Wisdom* 8: 19 f., and became a popular Jewish belief (*comp.* *John* 9: 2), that "the abode of souls" (called by the rabbis *Guph*), is here meant as the place

from which the naked soul comes and to which it returns naked. **16. In all points as** (*1 Chron.* 24: 31; 26: 12) **he came, so shall he go.** Possibly this implies belief in pre-existence: the soul returns unclad, just as it first came into its corporeal habitation. Or, better, we have an inexact popular expression, meant simply to emphasize that man cannot take his wealth away with him. **For the wind,** the emblem of emptiness, nothingness. (*See* 1: 14; *Prov.* 11: 29; *Job* 16: 8.) **17. He eateth in darkness,** *i. e.*, in gloom and misery. Eating, usually deemed so pleasurable, gives no relief to his settled melancholy. **And (he hath) much sorrow.** R. V., with most moderns, takes *אֲשֶׁר*, *kā'ās*, as a verb: "and he is sore vexed." For Heb., *הָלַלְתָּ*, *hālyō*, *Gen.* suggests *הֵלֵל* *is* (which is really needed to justify R. V.), "and hath sickness and sorrow."

**5: 18 to 6: 9. THE CONDITIONS ON WHICH ALONE MONEY IS A BLESSING. Behold that which I have seen!** This is loyal to Masoretic accents. But R. V., Del., Wr.+ disregard the accents, and render: "Behold that which I have seen to be good, and (that which is) comely." This relieves the difficult word *אֲשֶׁר*, *ashēr*. There is so much rapacity in rulers, so little real enjoyment in great wealth, so little security that one can have a reasonable recompense for his toil, that it really does not pay to strive to get very rich. The value of money is just to enable a man to live frugally and to enjoy himself in a humble way. **19. If a man can really enjoy what he has, be it little or much, he ought to regard it as a special providence. It is the gift of God.** (*Comp.* 2: 24-26; 3: 13.) "Man needs but little here below, nor needs that little long." Happiness is best secured by



20 For he shall not much remember the days of his life; because God answereth *him* in the joy of his heart.

20 For he shall not much remember the days of his life; because God answereth *him* in the joy of his heart.

## CHAPTER VI.

1 THERE is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is common among men:

2 A man to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it: this is vanity, and it is an evil disease.

3 If a man beget an hundred children, and live many years, so that the days of his years be many, and his soul be not filled with good, and also that he have no burial; I say, that an untimely birth is better than he.

4 For he cometh in with vanity, and departeth in darkness, and his name shall be covered with darkness.

5 Moreover he hath not seen the sun, nor known any thing: this hath more rest than the other.

6 Yea, though he live a thousand years twice told, yet hath he seen no good: do not all go to one place?

7 All the labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled.

1 THERE is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is heavy upon men: a man to whom

God giveth riches, wealth, and honour, so that he lacketh nothing for his soul of all that he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it; this is vanity, 3 and it is an evil disease. If a man beget an

hundred children, and live many years, so that the days of his years be many, but his soul be not filled with good, and moreover he have no

burial; I say, that an untimely birth is better 4 than he: for it cometh in vanity, and departeth in darkness, and the name thereof is covered

5 with darkness; moreover it hath not seen the sun nor known it; this hath rest rather than the 6 other: yea, though he live a thousand years twice told, and yet enjoy no good: do not all go

7 to one place? All the labour of man is for his

him who has fewest needs. 20.<sup>1</sup> **He shall, rather, doth, not much remember.** The hardships of a frugal lot are not painfully remembered in after years. Sound health and sound sleep numb the recollection of hard work. **God answereth (him) in the joy.** There are two verbs in Hebrew spelt alike, אָנַח, 'āneh. (1) To respond, answer, sing. (2) To be afflicted, overworked. Thus we obtain (1) A. V., R. V., Pl., Wr., Ty., †, "God answereth him." (2) "God makes him sing." Köster. (3) "Makes him toil" (LXX., περισπᾶ; Kal., "engages him") "with joy in his heart." Gin.

6 : 1 f. Almost the same wail as 4 : 7, 8. The new feature is: **God giveth him not power to eat thereof.** Dyspepsia robs him of his appetite. Ceaseless worry undermines his strength. He is in morbid terror of being robbed. He has made a fortune and cannot enjoy it. Money cannot buy "peace of mind"; and apart from that it is of little use. 3. Even if instead of dying childless (6 : 1) he had a hundred children, and not dying prematurely he lives a long life, yet if he cannot enjoy it, of what use is it? **A hundred children (sons).** Rehoboam had eighty-eight children (2 Chron. 11 : 21). Ahab, at least seventy (2 Kings 10 : 1). Artaxerxes Memnon one hundred and fifteen; his successor, Ochus (362-339 B. C.) was murdered by Bagoas, and had no funeral, his body being thrown to the cats. Wright, 372. **No burial.** A great indignity! (2 Sam. 21 : 10; 1 Kings 13 : 22; 14 : 11; Jer. 7 : 33; 8 : 1; Ezek. 29 : 5.) The unburied dead were supposed

not only to inflict trouble on their family, but also to bring defilement and curse on the land. (Comp. Deut. 21 : 22 f.; 2 Sam. 21 : 10 f.) Tobit's patriotism in burying Jews assassinated in Nineveh is described, Tob. 1 : 18; 2 : 8. Reuss connects the words "no burial" with what is said of the untimely birth. 4. **He cometh.** R. V., "it." The abortion is a mere nothing when it is born; and it is put away at once, without funeral, without name. 5. **Seen the sun,** the equivalent for joyous existence. This the abortion never knows; but it has the priceless boon of rest. Rest from toil and suffering, as Job 3 : 16. We have here almost the Buddhist's appreciation of Nirvāna. 6. **Hath seen no good.** If Koheleth means by "good," worldly, sensuous enjoyment, this is rank hedonism. If "good" implies the perfection or development of the whole man, intellect, emotions, will-power, conscience, and spirit, then the Christian can endorse the sentence: "Better had he not been born." **To one, the same, place.** Ancient Israel believed that all men, good or bad, went to a drowsy existence in sheol; but in Israel, as in Greece, there came a distinct advance to a recognition of a partition in Sheol, Elysium or Paradise, and Tartarus or Gehenna. The antiquity of the book cannot be inferred from this, since even Sirach clings to the old creed. (Sir. 14 : 16; 17 : 28; 41 : 4; 46 : 19.) 7. Still hedonistic. The motive of all labor is the gratification of a man's appetite, and this is insatiable; and therefore "man never is, but always to be, blest." (Comp. Prov. 16 : 26.) 8. Since most men, rich and poor, are never contented, how is one

<sup>1</sup> It will help the student in following the Hebrew to note that in that text this chapter has only nineteen verses.

8 For what hath the wise more than the fool? what hath the poor, that knoweth to walk before the living?

9 Better *is* the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire: this *is* also vanity and vexation of spirit.

10 That which hath been named already, and it is known that it *is* man: neither may he contend with him that is mightier than he.

11 Seeing there be many things that increase living, what *is* man the better?

12 For who knoweth what *is* good for man in *this* life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow? for who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?

8 mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled. For what advantage hath the wise more than the fool? or what hath the poor man, that knoweth to walk before the living? Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire: this also is vanity and a striving after wind.

10 Whatsoever hath been, the name thereof was given long ago, and it is known that it is man: neither can he contend with him that is mightier than he. Seeing there be many things that increase vanity, what is man the better? For who knoweth what is good for man in *his* life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow? for who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?

## CHAPTER VII.

1 A GOOD name *is* better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth.

2 *It is* better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that *is* the end of all men; and the living will lay *it* to his heart.

3 Sorrow *is* better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better,

1 A GOOD name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth. It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart. Sorrow is better than laughter; for by the sadness of the countenance

superior to the other? Even Koheleth, in other moods, contradicts this (2:13; 7:11; 9:16). **What hath the poor (man) who knoweth, etc.** (more than he who does not know). But Gin., Pl., "What advantage hath the poor man over him that knoweth," etc., *i. e.*, can cleverly live a public life. The reference seems to be to the "poor and wise youth" of 4:13, who is ingenious and enterprising and knows the essentials of success or, who knows how to control his appetites (Sgf., Reu.), and Koheleth querulously asks: What better is he? 9. Better the little which one can see and enjoy, than the nebulous immensities of inordinate desire. To yearn for the unattainable is man's destiny (3:11), but none the less is it "a pursuit of the wind."

10-12. DIVINE FOREORDINATION. 10. Render: "Whatever hath been, long ago was its name called; and it was known what man would be." As in chap. 3, Koheleth chafes against the divine predisposal of events. The *name* to the Hebrew mind indicates the character and qualities. When we are told in Judaistic theology that the name of Messiah existed from all eternity, the meaning is, that the character and work of Messiah were foreordained. So the world, its origin, its conformation, and its history are parts of a divine plan, which included man as the consummation of the whole. R. V., "it is known that it is man." **Neither may he contend.** Man's frailty, naturally and morally, is not an accident. It is no surprise to God. Man's sin is not the divine *wish*, but it is in the divine *plan*. Man's very creaturehood precludes him from taking his Creator to task (Job 9:3, 32; Isa. 45:9 f.; Rom. 9:19 f.). 11. **Many things**, or perhaps, "many words"; for the

Heb. noun may mean either. If the latter is intended, the reference is to the disputations among the Jews on the subject of predestination.

12. A shadow. (Comp. Job 8:9; 1 Chron. 29:15.) A man's lifetime is a span between two eternities, both veiled from his vision. Koheleth complains that this ignorance prevents men from putting themselves into line with history; that man's life might be spent much more profitably, if he knew what to aim at, so as to conduce to the events which the future has in store. For the Christian, it is just this fixed belief in the ultimate triumph of eternal righteousness which elevates manhood and dignifies Christian life. The Christian feels that he *is* in line with the glorious future. He *can* tell what shall be after him.

7:1-6. PRACTICAL MAXIMS IN VIEW OF THE UNCERTAINTY OF LIFE. A good name,  $\text{דָּבָר}$ , *shēm*, is better than ointment,  $\text{שֶׁמֶן}$ , *shemen*. Veiled as the future is, it is worth while so to live now as to be missed, so that one's memory may be cherished. To leave behind a revered name is to make the day of one's death far more memorable than the day of one's birth. 2. Koheleth here leaves the hedonistic position. Thoughtful sadness is better than thoughtless mirth. Man's "highest good" therefore is not pleasure, but a good character. The visit of condolence sobers men, checks ambition, fosters sympathy, and gives life its true perspective on the background of eternity. On Jewish "mourning" see Jer. 22:18; Matt. 9:23; Mark 5:38; John 11:31. 3. There was a Greek maxim,  $\text{πάθειν μάθειν}$ , "to suffer is, to learn." The *summum bonum* is distinctly ethical. The betterment is caused by thinking of

4 The heart of the wise *is* in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools *is* in the house of mirth.  
5 *It is* better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools.

6 For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so *is* the laughter of the fool; this also *is* vanity.

7 Surely oppression maketh a wise man mad; and a gift destroyeth the heart.

8 Better *is* the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: *and* the patient in spirit *is* better than the proud in spirit.

9 Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools.

10 Say not thou, What *is* the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.

11 Wisdom *is* good with an inheritance: and *by it* there *is* profit to them that see the sun.

12 For wisdom *is* a defence, *and* money *is* a defence: but the excellency of knowledge *is*, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it.

13 Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight, which he hath made crooked?

14 In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the

4 the heart is made glad. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of

5 fools is in the house of mirth. It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to

6 hear the song of fools. For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the

7 fool: this also is vanity. Surely extortion maketh a wise man foolish; and a gift destroyeth

8 the understanding. Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: *and* the patient in

9 spirit is better than the proud in spirit. Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth

10 in the bosom of fools. Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than

11 these? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this. Wisdom is as good as an inheritance:

12 yea, more excellent is it for them that see the sun. For wisdom is a defence, even as money

is a defence: but the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom preserveth the life of him that

13 hath it. Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight, which he hath made

14 crooked? In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider: God hath even made true one side by side with the other,

the fleetness of life and the hollowness of mirth.

Read Elihu's words in Job 33 : 17-19. 4. The

wise man prefers to ponder over the sad side of

life. It tends to make the soul sensitive with

active sympathy. He who studiously avoids

meditating on the sorrows of others and dwells

only on mirthful memories, is not wise. 5.

**Rebuke** is painful, but develops man's higher

self (Prov. 6 : 23 ; 9 : 8 ; 13 : 18 ; 27 : 5 ; Ps. 141 : 6).

The **song of fools**, however hilarious, is often

obscene, and excites only the animal in man

(Amos 6 : 5). 6. There is an assonance in Heb.,

which Pl. imitates thus : "As crackling nettles

under kettles" (Matt. 6 : 30 ; Ps. 118 : 12).

The **laughter of the fool** (Prov. 29 : 9) is boisterous,

but little worth and soon over.

7-10. **MAXIMS IN VIEW OF OPPRESSION.**

7. It is very severe. **Oppression**, "the act

of oppressing," as 7b shows. The oppressive

exercise of power demoralizes even a wise man.

It is perilous to be "decked in a little brief

authority." **Destroyeth the heart.** Rather,

"leads astray the understanding" (Job 12 : 6 ;

21 : 7, 24). 8. **Better is the end.** Not uni-

versally true. It is not true of the deteriorating

influence of oppression and bribery on a ruler's

character, but it *is* true of the one who patiently

submits to oppression and rebuke. His end is

better than his beginning (7 : 1 ; Rom. 5 : 3 ; James

5 : 11), and therefore **better is the patient**

**than the proud.** 9. **Be not hasty** (5 : 1 ;

James 1 : 19). **Anger resteth.** Angry words

are hard to forget and in a fool find a resting-

place, so as to engender settled hatred (Prov.

20 : 22). 10. Don't blame "the times," for this

is to blame Providence. **The former days**

**were better.** To some minds "distance

lends enchantment." Youth, with fresh vigor-

ous faculties, imparts a glamour to very dull

things. Age, with debilitated nerves, imparts

dullness to very bright incidents. Every age

has its light and shady sides, but God is on the

throne, and therefore, ultimately, "Right the

day must win."

11-14. **MAXIMS IN VIEW OF CHANGEFUL**

**PROVIDENCES. Wisdom is good with an**

**inheritance.** A sage's life is precarious, un-

less he has also inherited wealth. So R. V. M.,

LXX., Vulg., Targ. A saying of R. Gamaliel

is preserved : "It is good to have a secular occu-

pation along with Torah study." R. V., "is as

good as," with Kn., Hi., Gin., Reu.+. See

the sun. (Comp. 11 : 7 ; Ps. 68 : 8.) 12. **A de-**

**fence.** Heb.,  $\text{לִּשְׁלֵט}$ , *tsel*, a shadow or shelter.

He who is wise *and* rich has two shelters. If

one fails, he can run into the other. Riches can

ransom a man's life (Prov. 13 : 8) when wisdom

could not, but wisdom may save a city when

money is of no avail (9 : 14 f.). **Excellency.**

The superiority, or net gain, of knowledge over

money. (See 1 : 8.) **Giveth life.** LXX.,

$\text{ζωοποιήσει}$ , imparts a new and higher life (so

Gin., Reu. + ; comp. Deut. 30 : 19 f. ; Prov. 3 :

18 ; 8 : 35), preparing for the exalted conception

of life in John 5 : 21 ; 6 : 63. R. V., "preserves

the life," with Kal., V. & O., Sgf. ; and Syn-

machus,  $\text{διασώσει}$ . 13. The outward facts of life

are to a large extent beyond our control. They

thwart our purposes and plans. We must, how-

ever, accept things as they are, for what God

has hent we cannot straighten (1 : 15 ; Job 9 : 12 ;

11 : 10 ; 12 : 14). 14. Do not mar the bright to-

day with fears of a cloudy to-morrow, or with

vexation about a stormy yesterday. When real

trouble comes, **consider.** Heb., "look (at

it)." See if it cannot be surmounted, or at all

events endured, if not indeed made subservient

to your welfare (Deut. 8 : 3 ; Job 10 : 2 ; Luke 15 : 17 f.).

one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him.

15 All things have I seen in the days of my vanity : there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his wickedness.

16 Be not righteous over much ; neither make thyself over wise : why shouldst thou destroy thyself ?

17 Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish : why shouldst thou die before thy time ?

18 It is good that thou shouldst take hold of this ; yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand : for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all.

19 Wisdom strengtheneth the wise more than ten mighty men which are in the city.

20 For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.

21 Also take no heed unto all words that are spoken ; lest thou hear thy servant curse thee :

22 For oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others.

23 All this have I proved by wisdom : I said, I will be wise ; but it was far from me.

24 That which is far off, and exceeding deep, who can find it out ?

to the end that man should not find out any thing that shall be after him.

15 All this have I seen in the days of my vanity : there is a righteous man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that

16 prolongeth his life in his evil-doing. Be not righteous over much ; neither make thyself over

17 wise : why shouldst thou destroy thyself ? Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish :

18 why shouldst thou die before thy time ? It is good that thou shouldst take hold of this ; yea,

19 also from that withdraw not thine hand : for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all.

20 Wisdom is a strength to the wise man more than ten rulers which are in a city. Surely there is

21 not a righteous man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not. Also take not heed unto all

22 words that are spoken ; lest thou hear thy servant curse thee : for oftentimes also thine own

23 heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others.

24 All this have I proved in wisdom : I said, I will be wise ; but it was far from me. That

25 which is far off, and exceeding deep ; who

**Be joyful.** LXX. had הַיְיָה, *heyēh*, for הַיְיָה, *heyēh*, "live in contentment" (3 : 22 ; 6 : 18).

**That man should find nothing after him.** R. V., "should not find out anything that shall be after him"; learn nothing of human history after his demise. So Heng., Hi., Del., Wr. †. A. V. is preferable. Human life is so varied, joy and sorrow are set over against one another in such diversity that man may be sure there is nothing else to expect. So Reuss, "have left nothing unaccomplished." Dln.

**15-24. UNCERTAINTIES AS TO THE VALUE OF WISDOM AND GOODNESS.** 15. Israel's ancient creed had been, The righteous have long life (Deut. 4 : 40 ; Exod. 20 : 12 ; Prov. 3 : 2, 16 ; 4 : 10). The wicked do not live out half their days (Ps. 37 : 10 ; 65 : 23 ; 58 : 9 ; 73 : 18 f.), but the disorders of war and captivity showed this creed to be untenable as a universal rule. This is one of Job's complaints (9 : 22 f. ; 12 : 6 ; 21 : 7 f.). **In his righteousness,** his conspicuous integrity and perhaps proof of evil making him offensive to wicked rulers. **16. Be not righteous over much.** A worldly-wise maxim. The world hates its best men, makes martyrs of them. This is true also of men wiser than their times. Science and philosophy have their martyrologies as well as religion. The cynical advice is, Lie low ! Be content to be a unit in the mass, indistinguishable from other units—an insect, not with gaudy wings, but the same color as the leaves on which it feeds. **17. Be not over much wicked.** To be conspicuous for good or evil is to make one's self a target for the despotic ruler's deadly arrow. **Neither be foolish.** Live freely, but leave not the rein too loose, so as to cause disease or nervous

debility and so shorten life (Prov. 10 : 21, 27). This is exactly the advice Epicurus gave. **18. This . . . this.** R. V., "that." The righteousness and the wickedness of ver. 16, 17. Koheleth enforces 1 : 17 : "Know wisdom," "know folly." Life is a road along which you drive with two horses. If you pull one rein too much, you run on the bank of envy and popular hatred. If you pull the other, you go over the precipice of worldly ruin. Steer the middle course ; then, with a wholesome dread of offending God all the while, you will come forth of all the perils of both courses. **19. Ten mighty men.** Better, R. V., "ten rulers." A wise man gets more benefit from his own meditations than from the advice of others who, however powerful, are not sages (Sir. 37 : 14 ; Prov. 21 : 22 ; 24 : 5). **20.** Even the wisest need the strength which reverential awe of God imparts, for all men are liable to sin. **21.** Since you are liable to err, don't be eager to know what men are saying about you. Modernized, "Don't read reviews." **Thy servant curse thee.** "No man is a hero to his valet." The ancients dreaded the injury of the divine name in a malevolent wish. **22. Thou hast cursed others.** It would never do for all thy *sotto voce* utterances about thy friends to be public property. **23. Have I proved.** The advice I give has been tested. I give you the benefit of many a bitter experience. Not that I can always live up to it. Wisdom eludes me like the mirage. **By wisdom,** by wise methods, or, in the pursuit of wisdom. **24. That which is,** the world of nature and history, is far off and deep. (Comp. 1 : 9 ; 3 : 15 ; 6 : 10 ; Wisd. 7 : 17 ; Job 11 : 7 f. ; Rom. 11 : 33 ; contrast Deut. 30 : 11 f.)

25 I applied mine heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of things, and to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness :

26 And I find more bitter than death the woman, whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands : whose pleaseth God shall escape from her ; but the sinner shall be taken by her.

27 Behold, this have I found, saith the preacher, counting one by one, to find out the account :

28 Which yet my soul seeketh, but I find not : one man among a thousand have I found ; but a woman among all those have I not found.

29 Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright ; but they have sought out many inventions.

25 can find it out? I turned about, and my heart was set to know and to search out, and to seek wisdom and the reason of things, and to know that wickedness is folly, and that foolishness is

26 madness : and I find a thing more bitter than death, even the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands : whose pleaseth God shall escape from her ; but the sinner

27 shall be taken by her. Behold, this have I found, saith the Preacher, laying one thing to

28 another, to find out the account : which my soul still seeketh, but I have not found : one man among a thousand have I found ; but a woman

29 among all those have I not found. Behold, this only have I found, that God made man upright ; but they have sought out many inventions.

## CHAPTER VIII.

1 WHO is as the wise man? and who knoweth the interpretation of a thing? a man's wisdom maketh his face to shine, and the boldness of his face shall be changed.

2 I counsel thee to keep the king's commandment, and that in regard of the oath of God.

3 Be not hasty to go out of his sight : stand not in an evil thing ; for he doeth whatsoever pleaseth him.

1 WHO is as the wise man? and who knoweth the interpretation of a thing? A man's wisdom maketh his face to shine, and the hardness of

2 his face is changed. I counsel thee, Keep the king's command, and that in regard of the oath

3 of God. Be not hasty to go out of his presence ; persist not in an evil thing : for he doeth what-

**25-29. KOHELETH'S ESTIMATE OF WOMANHOOD.** 25. I applied my heart to know. Heb., "I turned, I and my heart, to know." Gin., "I and my heart turned to know," recalling Whittier's "My soul and I," but not elsewhere in the Bible. Rather, "I turned, even I, and my heart (was set) to know," "was bent on knowing." To seek wisdom and (the) reason (of things). Rather, "wisdom and speculation"; lit., "computation." Render last clause, "to know wickedness as folly and folly as madness." The Stoics very often call wicked men mad. 26. Bitter (Prov. 6 : 4 ; 9 : 18 ; 22 : 14). The woman whose heart is snares and nets. Heb., "who is nets (9 : 12 ; Job 19 : 6) and her heart snares" (Ezek. 26 : 5 ; Micah 7 : 2 ; Hab. 1 : 15). As to the harlot's craft and subtlety, read Prov. 5 : 3 ; 7 : 10-21 ; 23 : 28. Bands. Word is used elsewhere only of the bands wherewith Delilah bound Samson (Judg. 16 : 12). 27. (Counting) one by one. R. V., "(laying) one thing to another." Del., "adding." The account. Same Heb. noun as "reason" in ver. 25 and "inventions" in ver. 29. (Read Jer. 5 : 1-5.) Compare the story of Diogenes seeking with a lantern for an honest man. 28. One man (rather, "a man, one") among a thousand. In Job 33 : 23, "the angel, one of a thousand," is "the angel of superlative excellence." So here, "an ideal man," "a man who stands head and shoulders, morally, above a thousand." Such a man he had found, but a peerless woman, a woman of superlative excellence, he had not found. He had never found a woman to be "his only one." I fail to see in this verse such

a tirade against women as most find, as, e. g., in Sir. 25 : 13 ; 42 : 14. Pl. collects Greek sayings depreciatory of women, and Wright lays the rabbi and Schopenhauer under tribute. 29. Upright (Gen. 1 : 27). Many inventions, speculations (ver. 25), false doctrines. Regarding civilization as a foe to virtue, he would certainly include polygamy and unnatural incentives to the lower passions, common in the harem, among man's depraved notions.

**8 : 1-9. ADVICE TO MEN UNDER A DESPOTISM.** 1. Who is as the wise man? Koheleth does not now hesitate to eulogize wisdom. Interpretation,  $\text{פֶּשֶׁר}$ , *pesher*, is an Aramaean word (Dan. 4 : 5, 7). Here, perhaps, the solution of a difficulty—how to adapt one's self to a despot. Boldness. Same root occurs in Deut. 28 : 50 "fierce"; Prov. 7 : 13 "impudent." Here R. V., "hardness" is changed. (So Dan. 8 : 19 ; 5 : 6 ; 7 : 28.) Here, "changed" for the better. Culture removes the stern, fierce lines ; gives self-control so as not to show anger, but with seeming cheerfulness to yield to the despot's whims. 2. I (counsel thee). No verb in the original. King's command. This is surely a courtier, not a monarch, who gives such advice. In regard of the oath. Rather, "because of" the oath of fealty to the king. So Rom. 13 : 5, "for the sake of conscience." Prophets condemned violation of oath to Oriental monarchs (Isa. 28 : 15 ; 30 : 1 ; Ezek. 17 : 15). 3. Be not hasty to go out. Be self-possessed under royal reproofs or insults. Stand not in an evil thing. May mean, "Take no part in a conspiracy." Kn., Del., V. & O.-,

4 Where the word of a king is, there is power: and who may say unto him, What doest thou?

5 Whoso keepeth the commandment shall feel no evil thing: and a wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment.

6 Because to every purpose there is time and judgment, therefore the misery of man is great upon him.

7 For he knoweth not that which shall be: for who can tell him when it shall be?

8 There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war; neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it.

9 All this have I seen, and applied my heart unto every work that is done under the sun: there is a time wherein one man ruleth over another to his own hurt.

10 And so I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of the holy, and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done: this is also vanity.

11 Because sentence against an evil work is not

4 soever pleaseth him. Because the king's word hath power; and who may say unto him, What doest thou? Whoso keepeth the commandment shall know no evil thing; and a wise man's heart discerneth time and judgment; for to every purpose there is a time and judgment; because the misery of man is great upon him; 7 for he knoweth not that which shall be; for 8 who can tell him how it shall be? There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power over the day of death; and there is no discharge in that war; neither shall wickedness deliver him that is 9 given to it. All this have I seen, and applied my heart unto every work that is done under the sun: there is a time wherein one man hath power over another to his hurt.

10 And withal I saw the wicked buried, and they came to the grave; and they that had done right went away from the holy place, and were forgotten in the city: this also is vanity. Because sentence against an evil work is not executed

or, "Persist not in anything offensive to the king." 4. Render, "Inasmuch as (2: 16; 7: 2) the word of a king (hath) authority, who may," etc. **What doest thou?** This is used of God (Job 33: 18; Isa. 45: 9 f.), but here it is transferred to a human ruler. (Comp. Job 9: 12; 34: 18 f.; Dan. 4: 32; Wisd. 12: 12.) 5f. **The commandment.** That of the king, not of God. Koheleth gives the same advice as Paul in Rom. 13. Both speak in general terms, and ignore exceptions like Dan. 3: 6. Every stable government must put a premium on integrity. **Discerneth time and judgment.** Even under a despotism he does not advise extreme measures, but to wait patiently, assured that everything has its appointed time and that retribution comes apace.

6. **Because.** The misery of the downtrodden, and their pathetic wail, "O Lord, how long!" loudly claim redress and recompense. 7. The two fors are co-ordinate, and seem to attach to 6b. Man's misery is great because, though he believes in retribution, he does not know what form it will take, or when (R. V., "how") it will come. Del. links 7 to 5b. The wise man believes in retribution and will therefore keep quiet, because he (the despot) knows neither when nor how the stroke of vengeance will fall. So Wr., Pl., Gin. 8. When man's hour is come, man is powerless. **Power over the spirit.** R. V. Marg., "wind." Heb., רוח, ruach, may mean either. Thus Sa may mean, "No one can retain his spirit, when the decree has gone forth for him to give it up to God" (so Heng., Gin. +); or, "As no one can restrain the wind so," etc. Thus Hi., Del., Gr., Wr., Sgf. +. Del. says that suicide puts his "spirit" in a man's power, but "wind" is an emblem of unruliness. **There is no discharge,** "no exemption." Every man must face the dread last enemy (Ps. 37: 13:

1 Sam. 26: 10). The Mosaic code allowed of furlough (Deut. 20: 5 f.; 1 Mac. 3: 56), but Persian and Grecian law was more rigorous in war time. **Those that are given to it.** Heb., "its devotee, נפש, ba'al, joined to abstract nouns, is used of a man who possesses the quality in a high degree, e. g., "anger" (Prov. 22: 24); "wisdom" (Eccl. 7: 2). **Wickedness.** Heb., פשע, resha'. Abn Ezra and Graetz, read נפש, osher. "Wealth shall not deliver." 9. **To his hurt.** Sometimes power injures others, exception to 5a. A. V., "to his own hurt," "injuriously to the ruler." So Sym., Vulg., Kal. +.

10-15. KOHELETH IS AGITATED BY THE HONOR TO WHICH WICKED MEN ATTAIN. **Where they had so done.** "So" in Heb. is יך, ken, but ken may also mean "uprightness" (2 Kings 7: 9; Prov. 28: 2; Jer. 48: 30), and the clause may mean, "they that had done right." So R. V., Del., Gin., Kal., Sgf. +. **Who had come.** The scholars just named refer "come" to the wicked; thus, "and they entered (into their rest)"; or, "and they came (to the grave), but they that had done right went away," etc. **Buried** with solemn ceremonial—a privilege much valued (2 Chron. 16: 14; 28: 27; Jer. 22: 18 f.). **Were forgotten.** By changing one letter, k, into h, we obtain "were praised." So LXX., Ag., Sym., and Jerome. I prefer this reading, and translate the verse as follows: "And thus I saw the wicked buried, and men came and went away from the sacred place (the cemetery) and they (the wicked) were extolled in the city where they had acted thus." R. V., "they that had done right went away from the holy place." Two objections to this are: (1) The order of words in Heb. is unfavorable. (2) The righteous are thus supposed to be dead and being buried. **11. Sentence** (Ezther 1: 20). The same

executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

12 Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him:

13 But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God.

14 There is a vanity which is done upon the earth; that there be just men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; again, there be wicked men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous: I said that this also is vanity.

15 Then I commended mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry; for that shall abide with him of his labour the days of his life, which God giveth him under the sun.

16 When I applied mine heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done upon the earth: (for also there is that neither day nor night seeth sleep with his eyes:)

17 Then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun: because though a man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea farther; though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it.

12 is fully set in them to do evil. Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and prolong his days, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him:

13 but it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God. There is a vanity which is done upon the earth; that there be righteous men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; again, there be wicked men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous: I said that

15 this also is vanity. Then I commended mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry: for that shall abide with him in his labour all the days of his life which God hath given him under the sun.

16 When I applied mine heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done upon the earth: (for also there is that neither day nor

17 night seeth sleep with his eyes:) then I beheld all the work of God, that man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun: because however much a man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea moreover, though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it.

## CHAPTER IX.

1 FOR all this I considered in my heart even to declare all this, that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God: no man

1 FOR all this I laid to my heart, even to explore all this; that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God:

truth is taught in Ps. 10 : 6 ; 50 : 21 ; 94 : 7 ; Isa. 26 : 10 ; 2 Peter 3 : 4. **Is fully set to do.** Heb., "is full to do." (So Esther 7 : 5.) R. V. Marg., "is emboldened." **12. Do evil a hundred times,** and escape the due penalty. Definite for indefinite as Prov. 17 : 10 ; Matt. 18 : 12. **Yet surely I know.** Heb., "I am knowing," or rather, "I am getting to know," "am ascertaining." The gloom of pessimism is dispersing. Granted a God of power and righteousness, it *must* be well with the righteous (Ps. 37 : 11 ; Isa. 3 : 10 f.). **Fear before him.** An expression prompted by reverence for the name. In the Targums man always fears, worships, not God, but *before* God. **13.** Koheleth is learning to trust his intuitions, but it is distressing work. Awakening faith assures him that God cannot favor the wicked. Experience shows him many instances of their apparent prosperity and longevity. "Though a sinner prolong his days," says observation 8 : 12 ; "he shall not prolong his days," says Koheleth's creed. Late Judaism and Christianity found the key of the mystery in the belief in retribution after death. This Koheleth does not seem at present to accept, and hence his agitation. Heb., "prolong his days as a shadow," referring to the inordinate length of shadows at sunset. A. V., R. V. unnecessarily insert "which are." **14.** Experience contradicts intuition. Righteous men are treated as you would expect the wicked to

be, and *vice versa*. Job made the leap; God *must* vindicate the righteous, if not now, *hereafter* (19 : 25 f.). Koheleth is tossed to and fro by the anomalies of the present, as if this world were all. **15.** Faith is again eclipsed. **I commended mirth.** Refrain, as in 2 : 24 ; 3 : 12, 22 ; 5 : 18. Since a man gains no benefit from self-denial and self-control, is it worth while? Why not enjoy one's self? Koheleth again uses *benefit* in a hedonistic sense, of worldly sensuous advantage; whereas in 7 : 2 f., he had grasped that man's real good consists not in what he *has*, but what he *is*.

**16 to 9 : 6.** ANOMALIES CONNECTED WITH DEATH. **16.** Repetition of 1 : 13 ; 3 : 11. **Seeth sleep.** Ros. quotes Terence, "This night I have not seen sleep with my eyes." (Comp. 2 : 28 ; 6 : 12.) **A man cannot find out the work that is done.** (Comp. 7 : 13 ; 11 : 5.) Koheleth, like Zophar (Job 11 : 6-9) realizes that the finite cannot grasp the infinite. In Job 28 we are taught that metaphysics is a hopeless study, but practical ethics is the proper study for mankind. **9 : 1.** There are on all hands apparent contradictions. **The righteous . . . are in the hand of God,** under his special providence (Deut. 33 : 3 ; Isa. 62 : 5). If one thing is more certain than another, it is that the righteous God loveth righteousness, and being wise wishes men to be wise. Yet judging from their outward lot, one could not tell whether God re-

knoweth either love or hatred *by all that is* before them.

2 All things come alike to all : there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked ; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean ; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not : as is the good, so is the sinner ; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath.

3 This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all : yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead.

4 For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope : for a living dog is better than a dead lion.

5 For the living know that they shall die : but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward ; for the memory of them is forgotten.

6 Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished ; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun.

7 Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart ; for God now accepteth thy works.

whether it be love or hatred, man knoweth it 2 not ; all is before them. All things come alike to all : there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked ; to the good and to the clean and to the unclean ; to him that sacrificeth and to him that sacrificeth not : as is the good, so is the sinner ; and he that sweareth, as he that 3 feareth an oath. This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that there is one event unto all : yea also, the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they 4 live, and after that they go to the dead. For to him that is joined with all the living there is hope : for a living dog is better than a dead 5 lion. For the living know that they shall die : but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward ; for the memory of 6 them is forgotten. As well their love, as their hatred and their envy, is now perished ; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun.

7 Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart ; for God hath al-

garded them with love or hatred. **All is before them**, as R. V. The "all" of quality. All possible experiences may be theirs. Ew., Del., "Man knows not whether he will love or hate (others)." A man's affections are not under control. **2. All (things come) alike to all.** The same outward providences come to every man. The Christian admits this, assured that trial has an ethical end, and will work out a great weight of glory ; but it staggered Koheleth, to whom God was the embodiment of loveless justice, and the hereafter shrouded with uncertainty. **To the good.** LXX., Vulg., Syr. add "and to the evil." **Sacrificeth**, is punctilious in his religious observances. **Sweareth.** In the other cases the good quality is named first. If it is so here, "he that sweareth" is one who could substantiate his every utterance by an appeal to a righteous God (Deut. 6 : 18 ; Ps. 63 : 11 ; Isa. 65 : 16). **He that feareth an oath** is, in that case, one who dare not appeal to God. More probably we have here a *chiasm* ; and "the swearer" is, as in Zech. 5 : 3, conceived of as a loose person ; and the one "who fears an oath" is one who dreads to use the name of God, and deems his word his bond, as did the Essenes. Josephus, B. J., II., 8 : 6. (Comp. Matt. 5 : 34 ; James 5 : 12.) **3.** Koheleth dolefully repeats 2 : 14 ; 3 : 19 ; 5 : 15 ; 6 : 12. Most clearly does this verse show that Koheleth did not believe in gehenna, but that all men go to hades, and spend the time in silence or sleep (Job 30 : 23 ; Ps. 6 : 5 ; Isa. 14 : 9 f. ; 38 : 18 ; Ezek. 32 : 17 f.). Koheleth sees a gross anomaly in that wicked men should merely die as good men die, and go to eternal rest. The Lord Jesus depicted the lot of the luxurious Dives very dif-

ferently, and that was the current view in Christ's time. **4.** In Heb. there are two readings : (1) **בְּחַר**, *vbahur*, and (2) **שְׁחַבַר**, *shubar*. (1) is in the text and may mean : "Who is he that is selected ?" or "exempted" from the common lot of death. So Ros., Gin., R. V. Marg. 1+ ; or b, "Who can choose" ? R. V. Marg. 2 (2) is the Heb. marginal reading, but is found in all versions : "Who is joined to all the living, to him there is hope." So Kal., Sgf., V. & O.+. **A living dog.** Gin. dwells on the contrast between us and the ancients in the estimate of the dog. (Comp. Exod. 22 : 31 ; 1 Kings 14 : 11 ; 2 Kings 9 : 36 ; Prov. 26 : 11 ; 2 Peter 2 : 22.) The lion was the symbol of might and majesty (Prov. 30 : 30). **5 f.** Sarcasm. The living have knowledge, not much it is true, but this much they do know, that they must die. **The dead know not anything.** This is ancient Heb. eschatology (Ps. 88 : 10 ; 115 : 17). **Reward.** No advantage from their labors when on earth ; while in their city they are soon forgotten ; their kind or unkind actions are soon lost sight of ; friend and foe lie peaceably together. (Comp. Isa. 38 : 9-20.)

**7-10.** ADVICE IN VIEW OF THE ABOVE.

**7.** Since the outlook hereafter is so gloomy to Koheleth he advises men to enjoy life while they may, and not to be ascetic or morose. He holds that it does not mend matters to be gloomy here as well. **Wine** has not been named before. (Comp. Prov. 31 : 6 f. ; Ps. 104 : 15.) **God now accepteth thy works.** God can in this life give the tokens of his approval of our works by providing things needful for innocent enjoyment, and allowing us our share of them, but the future life was to Koheleth a never-ending sleep. How grateful we ought to be that Jesus Christ



8 Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment.

9 Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun.

10 Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.

11 I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.

12 For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.

13 This wisdom have I seen also under the sun, and it seemed great unto me:

14 There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it:

15 Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man.

16 Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength; nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard.

17 The words of wise men are heard in quiet more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools.

18 Wisdom is better than weapons of war: but one sinner destroyeth much good.

8 ready accepted thy works. Let thy garments be always white; and let not thy head lack

9 ointment. Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in life, and in thy labour wherein thou labourst

10 under the sun. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.

11 I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth

12 to them all. For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare, even so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.

13 I have also seen wisdom under the sun on this

14 wise, and it seemed great unto me: there was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it,

15 and built great bulwarks against it: now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remem-

16 bered that same poor man. Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength: nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard.

17 The words of the wise spoken in quiet are heard more than the cry of him that ruleth

18 among fools. Wisdom is better than weapons of war: but one sinner destroyeth much good.

has brought life and immortality to light! (2 Tim. 1: 10.) 8. White garments symbolize pure enjoyment. Used of angels (Mark 16: 5; John 20: 12) and of saints in heaven (Rev. 3: 4f.; 6: 11; 7: 9; 19: 8). Ointment. Another emblem of festivity (2 Sam. 12: 20; 14: 2; Luke 7: 46). 9. Conjugal enjoyments and the comforts of home have divine sanction (Gen. 1: 28; 9: 1). Days of thy vanity. These may leave much to be desired, but don't refuse a little solid satisfaction because it is not more. Choose carefully a woman you can love and "faithfully keep thee to her alone, so long as ye both shall live." 10. Koheleth uses the gloomy outlook hereafter to foster, not indolence, but zealous activity. Acquire all the skill and knowledge you can, and do all the good you can, for the night is coming. Findeth, "is able." So Vulg. Grave. Heb., "sheol," the abode of the spirits of the dead. (Read Job 10: 22; 26: 5; Ps. 63: 9; 86: 18; Ezek. 26: 20.)

11-16. DISPERSION IN HUMAN AWARDS. Reward is not according to merit. Deserving men are balked of their well-earned prize. The swiftest man does not always win the race, nor the strong the battle. Wise and clever men often fail to get on in life. Chance. Not the word found 3: 19 R. V., but occurring only 1 Kings 5: 4. 12. There is nothing so certain as uncertainty. The best laid schemes are liable to be frustrated by some little

unforeseen circumstance. Snare of the fowler is used of sudden disaster, Prov. 1: 17; 6: 5; Ps. 91: 3; 124: 7; Hos. 7: 12. Net. Heb. word occurs Ezek. 12: 13; 32: 3. 13 f. A veiled allusion to some historical event. A besieged city, delivered by the counsel of a poor wise man. Hitzig identifies it with Dora, a town unsuccessfully besieged by Antiochus. Jos., Ant., XIII, 7: 2. To regard the city as Mansoul besieged by the hosts of Satan is allegory, not exegesis. Bulwarks (Ezek. 4: 2). The tower erected on the artificial mound (Jer. 6: 6), from which to view the town, or hurl missiles. 15. A poor wise man, or, perhaps, "a wise beggar"; for the word denotes extreme poverty, and is used as a noun in the Pal.-Syr. Lectionary, of Lazarus (Luke 16: 20). Read 2 Sam. 20: 14-20, where a town was delivered by a wise woman. 16. When the danger was past, instead of being raised to the eldership, he was allowed to remain a beggar still. The world is ungrateful to its deliverers.

17 to 10: 7. THE WORLD'S INGRATITUDE TO ITS WISE MEN. 17. In quiet, wise men are heard; but in times of excitement, the pompous sophist, or the blustering demagogue, is the favorite. It gives us an unwelcome peep into early church history that Jerome applies this text to "popular preachers." Gin., 421. 18. A little skill saves a deal of strength, but one sinner: rather, "one blunderer" may

## CHAPTER X.

1 DEAD flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: *so doth* a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom *and* honour.

2 A wise man's heart *is* at his right hand; but a fool's heart at his left.

3 Yea also, when he that is a fool walketh by the way, his wisdom faileth *him*, and he saith to every one *that* he is a fool.

4 If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place; for yielding pacifieth great offences.

5 There is an evil *which* I have seen under the sun, as an error *which* proceedeth from the ruler:

6 Folly is set in great dignity, and the rich sit in low place.

7 I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth.

8 He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it; and whose breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him.

9 Whoso removeth stones shall be hurt therewith; *and* he that cleaveth wood shall be endangered thereby.

10 If the iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge, then must he put to more strength: but wisdom *is* profitable to direct.

1 DEAD flies cause the ointment of the perfumer to send forth a stinking savour: *so doth* a little

2 folly outweigh wisdom and honour. A wise man's heart is at his right hand; but a fool's

3 heart at his left. Yea also, when the fool walketh by the way, his understanding faileth him,

4 and he saith to every one *that* he is a fool. If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave

not thy place; for yielding allayeth great

5 offences. There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, as it were an error which pro-

6 ceedeth from the ruler: folly is set in great dig-

7 nity, and the rich sit in low place. I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as

8 servants upon the earth. He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it; and whose breaketh through

9 a fence, a serpent shall bite him. Whoso heweth out stones shall be hurt therewith; *and* he

10 that cleaveth wood is endangered thereby. If the iron be blunt, and one do not whet the edge, then must he put to more strength: but

render much heroism of no avail. **10 : 1.** In some cases wise men have themselves to blame for popular disregard. Little sins often mar the nobleness of a great character. "Procrastination, talkativeness, indecision, over-sensitiveness to praise and blame, undue levity or undue despondency, want of self-control, give a somewhat ill savor to the fragrance of a good name." **Pl. Dead flies.** Heb., "flies of death." Which may mean "poisonous flies," as LXX., Targ., Del., Pl. +; but *any* fly, decomposing in ointment, would cause a bad smell. Render 1b thus: "More weighty than wisdom (and) than glory is a little folly": "weighty," *i. e.*, in the world's esteem. The world has a keen eye for inconsistencies, and a large memory for a wise man's little mistakes. Sgf. reads כִּכְרִי, *mbhdh*, for כִּכְרִי, *mbhdh*, "a little folly ruins the glory of wisdom." **2.** Wisdom gives a man a fund of immediate and effective resource; a fool's resources are far to seek and clumsy in execution. **3. A fool** exhibits his true character even on the highway. He charges every man he meets with being a fool. An early symptom of insanity is to think others insane. **4.** Whereas the fool abuses and quarrels with everybody, the wise man is advised to be submissive, even when provoked. **Yielding allayeth** (*pacifieth*). Wise advice for the individual, but disastrous to the State. This timid, cringing submission to rulers makes all the difference between the East and West to-day. The East has given us assassinations enough, but few men actuated by great principles, like our Puritan fathers. **Leave not thy place.** Do not resign thy office. So Del., Gin., Pl. **Yielding allayeth** (*pacifieth*) **great offences.**

Heb., "Healing (measures) leave great sins undone," prevent the ruler from committing deeds of tyranny. "Least said, soonest mended." **5 f.** Koheleth names a flaw in God's moral government which seems to resemble the blunders of worldly magnates. To exalt fools to posts of honor and to doom wealthy men, presumably of ancestral rank, to subordinate posts. Compare the favorites of Edward II. **7. Servants upon horses.** To ride a horse was a privilege in ancient States (Jer. 17 : 25; 2 Chron. 25 : 28; Esther 6 : 8). Justin says of the Parthians that only the slaves walk.

**8-15. THE PERILS AWAITING THE WORLD'S REFORMERS.** In gnomic phrase Koheleth seeks to dissuade those who plot to undermine governments. **8a** agrees verbatim with Targ. of Prov. 26 : 27. It recalls Ps. 7 : 15; 9 : 15; 57 : 6. **A hedge**, or "a garden wall," the crannies of which are the haunts of serpents (Amos 5 : 19). **Breaketh**, R. V., "breaketh through" (2 Chron. 25 : 23; 26 : 6; 32 : 5). **Bite him**, *i. e.*, sting him (Gen. 49 : 17). **9. Removeth stones**, probably landmarks (Deut. 19 : 14); metaphor for long established governments. R. V., "heweth out stones," on the doubtful authority of 1 Kings 5 : 17. **Cleaveth wood.** Rather, "cuts down trees" (Deut. 19 : 5). Trees were sacred and forbidden to be felled even in siege (Deut. 20 : 19 f.), and thus an emblem of established institutions. **10. If the iron be blunt.** Heb., כִּהְיֶה, *kehah*, elsewhere only of setting teeth on edge (Jer. 31 : 29 f.; Ezek. 18 : 2). In Mishna this verb means to "slip off." (So LXX., ἐκτρέσθ). Hence I would render: "If the axe-head (2 Kings 6 : 5) slip off." **And he do not whet the edge.** No instance can be

11 Surely the serpent will bite without enchantment; and a babbler is no better.

12 The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself.

13 The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness: and the end of his talk is mischievous madness.

14 A fool also is full of words: a man cannot tell what shall be; and what shall be after him, who can tell him?

15 The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city.

16 Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child, and thy princes eat in the morning!

17 Blessed art thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles, and thy princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness!

18 By much slothfulness the building decayeth; and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through.

19 A feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh merry: but money answereth all things.

20 Curse not the king, no, not in thy thought;

11 wisdom is profitable to direct. If the serpent

bite before it be charmed, then is there no advantage in the charmer. The words of a wise

man's mouth are gracious; but the lips of a fool

will swallow up himself. The beginning of the

words of his mouth is foolishness: and the end

of his talk is mischievous madness. A fool also

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go to the city. Woe to thee, O land, when thy

king is a child, and thy princes eat in the

17 morning! Happy art thou, O land, when thy

king is the son of nobles, and thy princes eat in

due season, for strength, and not for drunken-

ness! By slothfulness the roof sinketh in; and

through idleness of the hands the house leaketh.

19 A feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh

glad the life: and money answereth all things.

20 Curse not the king, no, not in thy thought; and

given in which  $\text{D}^{\prime}\text{J}$ , *panim*, means "edge," or  $\text{L}^{\prime}\text{L}^{\prime}$ , *kilkal*, means to "whet." The *primæ facie* rendering is: "and this does not injure (his) face." On omission of "his," cf. Prov. 26: 6. **Then must he put to more strength.** Lit., "must strengthen his resources." The passage is intentionally obscure; but I interpret thus: "When revolution is resolved on, sanguinary measures may miscarry, the axe-head may hit the rebel's own face; if he escape this, strength may avail, but that which gives the turn between success and failure is wisdom." Gin.: "If you will go to work with a blunt axe you may make the tyrant increase his forces." The literal rendering of the last clause is: "The plus-quantity of success (over failure) is wisdom," *i. e.*, "The difference between failure and success is wisdom." 11. Render, "If the serpent bite in the absence of enchantment, then there is no advantage in (procuring) a charmer." The charmer is of no more use than any other man when the mischief is done. **Babbler.** Heb., "Master of the tongue," *i. e.*, "master of magical incantations," "a charmer." 12. **Gracious**, winsome, evoking admiration, whereas a fool's talk is self-destructive. 13. At first a fool's words are merely inanity, but so irascible is he, that before long, he is violent and unsafe (Prov. 10: 8; 15: 2; 17: 12; 18: 7; 29: 9). 14. May mean (1) "Fools talk most of what they know least, making bold affirmations as to the future in this life or the next," or, (2) "Fools talk so fast and so indiscreetly as to keep one in constant trepidation as to what they may say next; and what far-reaching consequences may ensue from their garrulity, no one can compute." They may undo the very wisest schemes. It is unsafe for

them to know anything (Prov. 10: 23; 15: 2; 23: 9; 29: 11). 15. The fool is bone-idle; cannot do the simplest thing. Send him on the broad highway to the nearest town, he sits down, forgets his errand, begins quarreling, or gets lost (Prov. 10: 26; 26: 6; Eccl. 4: 6).

**16-20. THE EVILS OF MISGOVERNMENT. When thy king is a child.** Heb.,  $\text{N}^{\prime}\text{L}$ , *na'ar*, is used vaguely: of a babe, Exod. 2: 6; Judg. 13: 5; a child, 1 Sam. 3: 1; a youth, Jer. 1: 6; 1 Kings 3: 7. It is also used of a servant, 1 Sam. 2: 13; 2 Sam. 19: 17; 2 Kings 4: 12; Job 1: 15. **Thy princes, who have the minor in their power. Eat in the morning.** Spend in revelry the hours that should be devoted to the administration of justice. (Comp. Isa. 5: 11; Acts 2: 15.) 17. **A son of nobles.** R. V. Marg., "a free man." The name  $\text{D}^{\prime}\text{N}^{\prime}\text{N}$ , *horim*, occurs of the "nobles" of Jezreel, 1 Kings 21: 8, 11; and of Judah, Neh. 6: 17; 13: 17. 18. **Slothfulness:** a dual noun to denote intensity. The  $\text{L}^{\prime}\text{S}^{\prime}\text{L}$ , *'atsel*, is the sluggard of Prov. 6: 6; 10: 26; 20: 4; 24: 30; 26: 13 f. **The building decayeth.** R. V., "The roof sinketh in." In Amos 9: 11 the State is compared to a dilapidated house. **Droppeth through,** leaks, lets in the rain (Prov. 19: 18). 19. The profligate regency prepares meals for revelry, but (rather, "and") money answereth all things. Answers every demand. They have wealth in abundance, and can gratify every wish. Satirists in every age have spoken of the power of the purse. LXX., Syr., add "oil" after "wine." 20. Koheleth ironically advises obsequiousness. Espionage was carried to absurd lengths in Oriental monarchies. **The rich** denotes, as in ver. 6, the oligarchy. **In thy thought.** Heb.,  $\text{E}^{\prime}\text{D}$ , *madda'*, a late word

and curse not the rich in thy bedchamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter.

curse not the rich in thy bed-chamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter.

## CHAPTER XI.

1 CAST thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.

2 Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.

3 If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.

4 He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.

5 As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all.

6 In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.

7 Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun:

8 But if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that cometh is vanity.

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yea, even unto eight; for thou knowest not 3 what evil shall be upon the earth. If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if a tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree

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7 good. Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant

8 thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun. Yea, if a man live many years, let him rejoice in them all; but let him remember the days of

darkness, for they shall be many. All that cometh is vanity.

(2 Chron. 1: 10; Dan. 1: 4, 17). LXX., "Among thy familiar friends," reading מִדְּבַר, *mōdha*. **Bedchamber**, the innermost room (2 Kings 6: 12). **A bird (birds) of the air**. Grotius sees an allusion to the cranes of Ibycus (Wr., 223); and Kitto to carrier pigeons. Probably a mere proverb, like "hedges have ears."

11: 1-6. KOHELETH COUNSELS BENEVOLENCE. 1. **Cast thy bread upon the waters.** (1) Lowth, Sgf., V. & O.+ see here an allusion to the practice of sowing rice before the inundation of the Nile had quite subsided. **Bread**, Heb. חֶמֶד, *lêhem*, grains of corn (Isa. 28: 28; Ps. 104: 14). (2) Gin., "Cast thy cake on the water, and some day thou mayest find it when thou art hungry." (3) R. V. Marg., *Send forth* thy corn in maritime commerce. So Del., Ch. (4) Targ., "Give thy bread to those who go in ships on the waters." Whatever be the figure, the lesson seems to be: practise liberality, without thought of immediate recompense, but with a deep conviction that God is "mindful of his own," and will reward you in ways you least expect. 2. **Give a portion to seven.** Be profusely liberal, for some of those whom you relieve in prosperity may relieve you when evil days befall you. Del., Sgf., Ch., "Don't send all your merchandise in one ship." "Ships are but boards, sailors but men." Divide your capital into many investments. 3. The mere mention of evil makes Koheleth pensive. "Thou knowest not" of ver. 2 is the ground tone of 3-6. Man's ignorance has often chafed

him before. Life has so many perils unforeseen, beyond control. Just as the rain descends when the clouds are full, and the tree falls in the direction the wind blows, so the events in your life are outside of your power. 4. Though man cannot control wind or rain, that does not put a stop to agriculture. Man is bound to act as if all were under his control. Too minute observation of winds and clouds may, like ambition, "overleap itself" (saddle). If you never sow nor reap till you have an ideal day and perfect prospects, alas for the harvest. 5. **The way of the spirit**, animating the fetus in the womb. So Vulg., Targ., Ges.+ But R. V., "The way of the wind," connecting it with 11: 4 and John 3: 8. So Del., Gin., Sgf., Kal.+ **The bones.** The growth of the osseous structure causes wonder (Job 10: 11; Ps. 139: 13-17). These are but samples of the inscrutability of all God's works. 6. Connect with 11: 4. Sow in all weathers, early and late, and leave the future with God. Man's expectations are often disappointed, for better or worse.

7 to 12: 8. KOHELETH'S ADVICE TO YOUNG MEN. **Light is sweet.** The pessimist is mellowing. Life and light are sweet after all. Youth has many bright, sunny days. 8. **Live many years.** Trouble comes to all sooner or later. After the sunshine will come many dark days. The advice is: "Do not be unduly elated by prosperity. Spend youth wisely, and do not by excess impair the faculties for the placid endurance of adversity and old age." Herodotus tells that the figure of a corpse was carried

9 Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.

10 Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity.

9 Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.

10 Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for youth and the prime of life are vanity.

## CHAPTER XII.

1 REMEMBER now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;

2 While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain:

3 In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened,

4 And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when

1 REMEMBER also thy Creator in the days of thy youth, or ever the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no

2 pleasure in them; or ever the sun, and the light, and the moon, and the stars, be darkened, and

3 the clouds return after the rain: in the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened,

4 ened, and the doors shall be shut in the street;

about at Egyptian banquets. **9. Rejoice in thy youth.** This is not Epicurean advice—to crowd every day with merriment, or to thrill every nerve fibre with ever new excitement till like the strings of a worn-out harp, they respond to the touch no longer. Koheleth now realizes that there are joys in life worth having. He would not have young people live a mournful, ascetic life. He would have them enjoy life while they may; only they must keep the fact ever in view that they are responsible to God for the use or abuse of their mercies. **Judgment** may come in this life; nervous debility, remorse, emaciated body; but if not now, hereafter. If God is in all our thoughts, this will regulate our conduct and restrain our enjoyments. **10. Remove sorrow.** R. V. Marg., “vexation,” rather, “discontent,” “moroseness.” The physician is healing himself. Our book has abounded with this querulousness which Koheleth now asks us to lay aside. **Evil from thy flesh.** That which causes evil: debilitates, enervates thy body. **Childhood and youth.** R. V., “Youth and the prime of life.” Targ., “Youth and the days of black hair.” Gr., Del., “The dawn of life.” Sgf., Ty., “Youth, like the morning dawn, is vanity.” Kal. **12: 1. Remember thy Creator.** Cheyne, quite unjustifiably, would alter the word “Creator” to “cistern,” a synonym for “wife” (so Bi., Gr.). This is done on purely *a priori* grounds, viz, that Koheleth does not seem to him to have emerged sufficiently from the nightmare of doubt, to give such religious advice. “Creator” is pl. in form, implying majesty. So “the Holy One” is pl., Prov. 9: 10; 30: 3; Hos. 12: 1 (E. V. 11: 12). Three things young men are to keep ever in mind: the days of darkness (11: 8), the judgment (11: 9), and their ob-

ligation to God as Creator. As our Creator, God has a right to our best, our all (Ps. 100: 5; Prov. 8: 17; 22: 6; Jer. 3: 4; Lam. 3: 27). **The evil days.** Koheleth conceives that when a man’s mind is soured by disappointment, and his conscience seared by neglect, and the body shattered by indulgence, that it is very unlikely he will turn to the Lord then. In pictorial phrase, these evil days are now described to us, (1) in ver. 2, under the figure of a stormy day in a Palestinian winter; when the luminaries are obscured (Acts 27: 20) and after a heavy rain, **ἄστρον**, *gashēm* (Gen. 7: 12; 8: 2; 1 Kings 18: 45; Ps. 68: 9; Song 2: 11, and others), instead of the azure vault becoming visible, fresh clouds gather. **3 f.** Old age is now described (2) under the figure of a *sirocco*. (Read Thomson, *Land and Book*, Chap. 35.) This is the dry “heat with the shadow of a cloud” (Isa. 25: 5) which terrifies men and beasts and produces an awful stillness. The sentinels tremble, and the men of valor writhe, and the grinding women cease from their toil (Exod. 11: 5; Job 31: 10; Matt. 24: 41), and the women and children whose chief occupation is to look out of the window (Judg. 5: 28; 2 Sam. 6: 16; 2 Kings 9: 30) are in darkness. **Cease.** An Aram. word, here only in Bible, to “keep a holiday,” “be at leisure,” “be inactive.” **Because they are few.** Grinding was done daily in the evening, and the noise of many mills at once was a familiar sound indicative of happiness and peace. Some women are too scared to come to the mill and those who are there are too much awed by the absence of the sound of other mills to dare to work. **Grinders** is fem. in Heb.: “grinding women.” **Are darkened.** The verb is not causative. Rather, “are in darkness.” (Job 8: 9; 18: 6.) **4.** The street door is closed, as if it were night. All is

the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of musick shall be brought low;

5 Also when they shall be afraid of *that which is high*, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets:

6 Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.

7 Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

8 Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity.

so deathly still that the twitter of a bird makes one start, the sound of the mill is hushed, and all the songsters of the wood are in hiding-places—forbear to fly aloft. This seems to me quite straightforward, but most commentators, from the rabbis downward, take the passage *allegorically*. The "sun" (12:2) is the spirit; the "moon," the reason; the "stars," the senses. The "keepers" (12:3) are the loins (Talm.), or the knees (Targ.), or the arms (Del.). The "mighty men" are the arms (Targ.) or the legs (Del.). The "grinders" are the teeth, and the "women in the window," the eyes. The "door" (12:4) is the mouth. The "startling at the noise of a bird," sleeplessness; and the "daughters of music," the vocal organs. 5. The figure drops. (3) Old age is described, in the main, literally. The aged are afraid of what is high, deem a hillock a mountain; as Midrash says, are ever asking, "How many steps are there?" **Fears are in the way.** Most true to life! The aged grow very timid. **The almond tree.** Emblem of snowy hair. Almond blossom is pink first, but turns snowy white (Del., 413). **Shall flourish**, or, "blossom," as R. V. But Ges., Gin., "shall be despised," evokes no admiration, though so exquisitely beautiful. **And the grasshopper**, or, "the locust." So LXX., Vulg.+; Lev. 11:22; Num. 13:33; Isa. 40:22+. **Shall be a burden.** Hyperbole for extreme weakness. But Del., Wr.+, "crawls along" LXX., Vulg., Syr., "becomes fat." Gin., "shall be loathed." **Desire.** So Jewish lexicographers, but LXX., Syr., Vulg., "the caper berry," and so R. V. and most moderns. The caper has long been used as an appetizer, but here, in old age it **fails**, is ineffective to rouse the flagging appetite. But Ew., Ros., Sgf.+, "the caper *bursts*," figurative of the soul bursting the capsule of the body. **His long home.** Heb., "his eternal home," sheel. (So Tob. 3:6; Luke 16:9.) **Mourners** (2 Sam. 3:31; Jer. 22:10, 18; Mark 5:38). **Go round.** Targ., of the *voceratrici*, or elegiac

when the sound of the grinding is low, and one shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low: yea, they shall be afraid of *that which is high*, and terrors shall be in the way; and the almond tree shall blossom, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and the caper-berry shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern; and the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit return unto God who gave it. Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher; all is vanity.

poets, who go about gathering information about the dying man. 6. SYMBOLS OF DEATH. (1) A BROKEN LAMP. Life is like a lamp of gold or gilded glass, suspended by a cord of silver strands, shedding a welcome and cheerful light. **Loosed.** Lit., "come apart," "snap asunder." Heb. Marg. has פתל, *r th k*, for פתל, *r h k*, to be "struck," or "knocked" (Mat. 7:7, Pal. Lect.). **Bowl.** Used Zech. 4:3 of the bowl from which the golden oil flowed into the lamp; though here, probably of the bowl containing the oil. The strands of the silver cord will come apart some day and the gilded bowl be dashed to the ground. (2) A RUINED WIND-LASS. Water is drawn from the fountain by a pitcher, with a rope wound round a wheel. A shattered pitcher, and a time-worn wheel, fallen from its rotten supports is Koheleth's figure of death. The "anatomists" are here divided as to whether the "silver cord" is the spinal marrow, or the tongue, or the soul, and the "fountain," the lungs, or the heart.

7. Koheleth comes out into the sunshine at last. He was acquainted with the doctrine of immortality in 3:21, but he treated it agnostically, as devoid of sufficient evidence; as a matter of faith or conjecture, whereas he insisted on definite *knowledge*. Who *knows* whether it is so? he asked; but now faith conquers. **Return to God.** Tyler sees here nothing more than the Stoic doctrine of the absorption of human souls in the great world-soul. **Who gave it.** This implies more than the pantheistic world-soul. It implies a personal God and a personal immortality.

12:8-12. EPILOGUE, DESCRIBING KOHELETH'S CHARACTER AND WORK. 8. **Vanity of vanities.** Either Koheleth did not fully understand the doctrine of ver. 7, or he did not write these words. One who realizes all that is implied by saying that death is the entrance to spiritual life with God, could not say **all is vanity**. It seems probable that ver. 9-12, in which Koheleth is spoken of—whereas in the rest

9 And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs.

10 The preacher sought to find out acceptable words; and that which was written was upright, even words of truth.

11 The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd.

12 And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

14 For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

of the work he is the speaker—are an insertion by a later sage, giving a commendatory attestation to Koheleth and his work. The words saith the Preacher point to the same conclusion. 9. This self-praise also seems unlike Koheleth's own utterance. And moreover. This seems to connect ver. 9 with ver. 8, as from the same pen. Render 9:10: "He listened to and searched for (and) arranged proverbs in abundance." 10. Acceptable words. R. V. Marg., "words of delight." Gin., "words of comfort." This gives to  $\Psi\Phi\Gamma$ , *hiphets*, its meaning in biblical Hebrew; but in our book, *hiphets*, a "matter," a "fact" (3:1; 5:8; 8:6). Hence probably here, "words of fact." The sage strove to strip his mind of cant, and to gaze at bald, literal facts. Written. The versions supplied different vowels to the Hebrew consonants giving "and he wrote." Uprightly. Gin., "frankly." 11. As goads. Painful at present, but impelling men to vigorous thought and action (Acts 9:5; 26:14). The figure is that of a herd of cattle being driven by a number of men (wise Jewish teachers) all employed by one herdman (God), and therefore having unity of aim—men who are skilled in collecting those that are scattered, first by means of goads, to rouse and impel, and then by stakes to restrain, or rather, to guide them into the one fold, or pasture-ground (of truth). This rendering causes the figures of the verse to hang consistently together. Nails, better "stakes," as Gin., Cox. Fastened. Heb., "planted"; "driven home" into the ground: to restrain within limits those who are restive under the goads, and to guide them into the well-fenced fold of the congregation of the wise. (See Introduction, §§ 1-5.) Masters of assemblies. Lit., "those skilled in collecting," i. e., able to draw and hold an audience. Given from one shepherd, i. e., God, "who alone imparts these different lessons of heavenly wisdom to his inspired servants." Gin. This verse seems to be a claim by the redactor for the

9 And further, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he pondered, and sought out, and set in order many 10 proverbs. The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words, and that which was written uprightly, even words of truth.

11 The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails well fastened are the words of the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd. And furthermore, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

13 This is the end of the matter: all hath been heard: fear God, and keep his commandments; 14 for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgement, with every hidden thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.

inspiration and canonicity of our book. Though the words of Koheleth differ so much from other Old Testament books, they are in reality "goads" and "stakes" given by the same divine Shepherd as the other books. 12. And further. Better: "And as for all beyond them." So Ch., Gin.+. As for the books which are not divinely inspired, be warned. My son, only here in Ecclesiastes. (See Prov. 1:1; 2:1; 10:1, 5+.) Much study is a weariness. There is probably here a veiled comparison between the oral instruction of Jewish Teachers (ver. 11), and the reading of Greek philosophy. The former is profitable. Wise Jews receive their goading words and their guiding words all from one Source. The writings of Greeks are misleading. There is no unity in them. They distract the mind, causing sleepless anxiety and lassitude.

13 f. KOHELETH'S SUMMING-UP. Link this to ver. 7. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Rather, as R. V., "(This is) the end of the matter. All hath been heard." The anomalies of Providence, the many genuine causes for dejection and misery have all been frankly faced and stated. In face of all this, what is best for man to do? The answer is, Fear God and keep his commandments. There is no certitude in the speculations of philosophy, or satisfaction in the undue indulgence of sense or appetite. Religion alone gives rest and security. This is the whole (duty) of man. Man's moral nature is higher than intellect and sensation. Its culture is therefore most obligatory on us. No desire for sensuous enjoyment or for secular learning must cause us to neglect the culture of the soul. Whether prosperity or adversity be our lot, this does not affect our duty to "trust in God and do the right." 14. God will bring every work into judgment. Del. calls this "the Ariadne thread by which at last Koheleth brings himself out of the labyrinth of speculation." He names it as an intuition of his heart in 3:17, though at that

time he is too miserable and perverse to draw comfort from it; but in 11 : 9, as here, he states it as a deliberate conviction, that God holds every man responsible for the use he makes of his life. Every work of ours done openly or secretly God will judge, and "whatsoever a man

soweth that shall he also reap." Read Salmond's Christian Doctrine of Immortality, Chap. 5. For other interpretations of this Epilogue read Cheyne, Job and Solomon, 229 f.; Wright, 439 f.