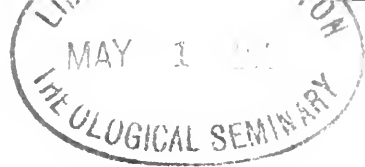


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AN
ATTEMPT
TO
ILLUSTRATE
THE BOOK
OF
ECCLESIASTES.

BY THE
REV. GEORGE HOLDEN, M.A.

Σολομων δε, επει σοφian ητησεν, απεδεχθη· και της σοφias αυτου
τα ιχνη εστιν εν τοις συγγραμμασι θεωρησαι, μεγαλην εχοντα εν
βραχυλογια περινοιαν· εν οis αν ευροις πολλα εγκωμια της σοφias,
και προτρεπτικα, περι την σοφian δειν αναλαβειν.—ORIGEN CONTRA
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PREFACE.

WHEN the Author first applied to theological studies, he felt, in common with most other students, much perplexed by the many difficulties in the book of Ecclesiastes. From the widely-diversified opinions of critics and commentators he derived but little satisfaction. In the progress, however, of his inquiries, he fancied that he had discovered the right clue to unravel the intricacies in which the Ecclesiastes, more, perhaps, than any other book among the Hebrew Scriptures, is involved. He then sketched the draught of the present performance, and, after keeping it some time by him, was emboldened,

in the beginning of the year 1817, to submit it to the Lord Bishop of Chester, who, with that friendly attention which he pays to all the Clergy of his Diocese, took the trouble of perusing it, and, in the most kind and condescending manner, encouraged the Author to persevere in the attempt. He therefore proceeded to fill up the outline: the more he reflected upon the subject, the more he was convinced that the view which he had taken of the book was correct; and such additions have been made as naturally result from repeated revisions, and from continued application to Biblical studies.

The work was transcribed, and ready to be put into the hands of the printer, when the Author saw announced, as already in the press, “Lectures on the Book of Ecclesiastes, by Ralph Wardlaw, D.D.” As his Attempt might thus be superseded, immediate publication would have been premature. Dr. Wardlaw’s Lectures, however, which appeared towards the end of 1821, in 2 vols. 8vo, are wholly of a practical nature, without aiming at “critical or philological disquisition.”

As Dr. Wardlaw's plan and the Author's are totally different, and as he could not but hope that something has been contributed by his labours to the critical illustration of the Ecclesiastes, he finally determined upon publication. But though he had no view to emolument, yet, from the small circulation of such works, he found that he had no mode of venturing to the press, with the prospect of *a mere indemnification*, except through the medium of a subscription. He resolved, therefore, to appeal to the public; and for this purpose he drew up a Prospectus, briefly describing the design and object of the proposed work. In this appeal he has been successful beyond his anticipations. His list of Subscribers is numerous and respectable; and while he feels himself under particular obligations to a few zealous friends, to whose kind exertions his success is principally to be ascribed, he gladly takes this opportunity of expressing his acknowledgments to all who have supported his undertaking.

Such has been the origin and progress of this publication: a more particular account of its

nature and object may be found in the Preliminary Dissertation. Whatever may be its merits or defects, he cannot, in extenuation of the latter, urge that it has been a hasty publication; it has long occupied his thoughts; he has diligently endeavoured to render it worthy of the public eye, for, though of small dimensions, it has been a work of much labour; and he now sends it into the world, being fully prepared to submit to the decision of that tribunal by which all literary pretensions must be judged.

HALSALL, LANCASHIRE,
August, 1822.

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ERRATA.

IN THE PRELIMINARY DISSERTATION.

PAGE

xxviii. Note, line 3, for ἀποκρυπτειν, read ἀποκρυπτειν.

——— Note, line 2 from the bottom, after *were only forbidden to be read*, add *by young persons*.

xxxiv. Note, line 2 from the bottom, for *fastidat*, read *fastidit*.

lii. line 2, for *a future state of retributive justice could not, consistently, be revealed during, ' &c.,* read *could not, consistently, be enjoined as an article of faith during, &c.*

lxi. line 20, for *Jewishs age*, read *Jewish sage*.

lxiii. line 2, for *contributed*, read *contributes*.

lxxxiv. Note *, line 1, }
lxxxv. Note †, line 2, } for *Guoguet*, read *Goguet*.

IN THE PARAPHRASE.

10, last line, for *This [is] labour in secular works, also vanity*, read *This labour in secular works [is] also vanity*.

48, line 20, for *child*, read *childhood*.

50, line 9, for *wheels*, read *wheel*.

IN THE NOTES.

74, Critical Note *, line 19, for *derivate*, read *derivative*.

87, —————, line 2, for *rolur*, read *robur*.

170, —————, line 7, for *purchra imago est homines*, read *pulchra imago est hominis*.

174, line 12, for *is one more*, read *is the more*.

———, line 15, for *most unfounded*, read *mostly unfounded*.

In a few places, for *Bishop Patric*, read *Bishop Patrick*.

In page xcix it is stated, that the CRITICAL NOTES are placed at the end, in an Appendix; but, after the Preliminary Dissertation was worked off, it was judged more convenient to place them under the EXPLANATORY NOTES, on the same page. As the CRITICAL NOTES are still kept distinct from the EXPLANATORY NOTES, it was thought unnecessary to cancel page xcix of the Preliminary Dissertation.

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PRELIMINARY DISSERTATION.

THE
PRELIMINARY DISSERTATION.

THE Old Testament, whether we consider its inspiration or its indispensable importance to the elucidation of the New, ought to be attentively studied by every Christian divine. Yet it must be confessed, that many parts of it are very difficult to interpret; and, though the most acute critical talents, aided by profound erudition, have been employed in its illustration, they have not entirely removed the obscurities which antiquity hath spread over its sacred pages. The idea that the Bible is easily understood, flatters the self-sufficiency of ignorance and fanaticism; but the great difficulty attending its interpretation is a fact too palpable to be denied, except by those who are benighted in the mists of prejudice, or who have never doubted, only because they have never inquired. It can be no easy matter to

explain a volume by much the most ancient in the world, including compositions on various subjects and of different character, historic, poetic, and prophetic, alluding to events of which no contemporary records exist, referring to manners and customs wholly dissimilar to ours, and written in a language remote from European phrase and idiom, and which, moreover, has ceased to be vernacular for more than two thousand years.

Of all the Hebrew writings, none present greater obstacles to the expositor than the book of Ecclesiastes. Together with the obscurities which it has in common with the other Jewish canonical Scriptures, it possesses some peculiar to itself; and, with respect to the style of the work, the author's design, the nature of his argument, and the chain of his reasoning, the opinions of critics and commentators have diverged to an incredible distance. The book, however, has descended to us as a part of the Volume of Inspiration, which is a sufficient guarantee, that it contains nothing unworthy the Source from which it springs, and that its tendency is, when properly understood, to cherish the sacred principles of morality and religion. Some passages, it must be acknowledged, *seem*, at the first glance, to recommend Epicurean enjoyments, and to countenance atheistic folly; but, we may rest assured, there are none such in reality, and that whatever *appears*

contrary to piety and virtue, arises solely from our misapprehension. Much as the Ecclesiastes has been perverted by sensualists, and ridiculed by profane wits, if it be a part of Holy Scripture, it must admit a full and ample vindication.

A critical inquiry, therefore, into its scope and meaning is highly important, in order to silence the cavils of the scorner, and to satisfy the scruples of the religiously disposed. There has, indeed, been no want of expositors; but their labours have not been altogether successful, as is abundantly proved by their widely-different views of the book, which serve rather to perplex than to assist the inquirer. Notwithstanding what has been hitherto done, something is still wanting to its complete illustration: to this conviction, at least, is owing the present performance, in the commencement of which it may be proper to premise some general observations.

SECTION I.

THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK.

The author is expressly styled, in the initiatory verse, “the son of David, king in Jerusalem,” and in the twelfth verse he is described as “king over Israel, in Jerusalem.” These passages are

found in every known manuscript, and in all the ancient versions ; and Solomon, as is well known, was the only son of David who ever reigned in Jerusalem. The book has thus been admitted into the sacred canon of the Jews as the production of Solomon, to whom it has also been ascribed by a regular and concurrent tradition. A collateral proof arises from the contents of the work itself, in which the author is stated to have excelled in wisdom beyond all who were before him in Jerusalem, (chap. i. 16, ii. 15, xii. 9,) and to have composed many Proverbs ; (chap. xii. 9;) circumstances descriptive of Solomon, and of no other personage whose name is recorded in the Holy Scriptures. The writer is likewise represented as abounding in wealth and treasure, in palaces, gardens, retinues, and other articles of elegant and royal luxury, extremely applicable to Solomon, during whose reign the throne of Israel was surrounded with all the pomp of Asiatic splendour and magnificence.

Strong as this evidence is for ascribing the work to Solomon, it has been questioned, not only by the infidel Voltaire, but by several Christian writers of great learning and celebrity. Grotius, Hermann von der Hardt, Dathe, Jahn, Eichhorn, and Doederlein, have advocated the opinion, that the Ecclesiastes is not the production of Solomon, but of some writer in a

subsequent age; and, if we may believe Professor Dathe, the two latter have established this point, by arguments so weighty, that none, except very stubborn defenders of ancient traditions, can deny it.* The sceptical Semler pronounces it a matter of doubt, whether it be the production of the Hebrew monarch, or of some writer of a later age, who assumes his character.† Without bowing with implicit deference to the authority of these learned Germans, let us collect and review the principal arguments of the above-named critics; and, should they be found, upon an impartial examination, not to be invincible, we need not hesitate to acquiesce in the generally received opinion, that Solomon was the author of the Ecclesiastes.

I. *Objection.* “Solomon was not the author, because the Rabbins attribute it either to Hezekiah, or Isaiah, the most distinguished contemporary of that monarch.”‡ This statement is undoubtedly agreeable to the common interpretation of the Talmudical language, which the reader will find in the margin;¶ but nothing more may,

* Dathii *Versio Lat. not. a. in Eccles.*

† Semleri *Apparatus in Vet. Test.* p. 203.

‡ Voltaire, *Philosoph. Dict.* art. Solomon.

¶ The words of the Talmudists are, מְשָׁלִי שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים קָהֵלֶת, Ezechias et cœtus ejus scripserunt Esaiam, Proverbia, Canticum, et Ecclesiasten.—*Bava Bathra*, c. 1, fol. 15, a. And in *Shulsheleth Hakkabalah*, fol. 66, b. we read, that Isaiah wrote כְּתָב, his own book, Proverbs, Canticles, and Ecclesiastes.

perhaps, be meant, than that the Ecclesiastes was inserted into the canon of Scripture by Isaiah or Hezekiah, not that it was written by either of them; or, it may only intimate, that, though Solomon was the author of the book, it was first committed to writing by them, it having been previously handed down by oral tradition; or, the meaning may only be, that these eminent men copied the book, and disseminated faithful transcripts of it among the people.* In some such way the words of the Talmudists here referred to must be explained; for it is elsewhere expressly asserted, that Solomon was the author.† And this is confirmed by its being placed in the canon as his work, which is indisputable evidence, that he was believed to be the author by the ancient Jews. It would not have been transmitted to posterity as his work, in so sacred a manner, except it had been ascribed to him by an universal consent. There could be no reason for palming a spurious book upon the world for Solomon's, no motive for attributing it to him falsely; or, if this had been attempted, the deceit would have been immediately detected, as the light of inspiration and prophecy was not

* Waehner, *Antiq. Heb.* sect. 1, cap. 30. Simon, *Critique de la Biblioth. du Pin*, vol. iv. p. 107. Wolf, *Bibliotheca Hebræa*, vol. ii. p. 117. Carpzov, *Introductio ad Lib. Bibl.* par. ii. cap. 4, § 4. Gray, *Key to the Old Testament*.

† See the authorities in Wolf, *Biblioth. Heb.* vol. ii. p. 121. Carpzov, *Introd. ad Lib. Biblicos*, par. ii. cap. 4, § 4.

extinguished till after the return from the Babylonian captivity ; and, subsequently to that event, the veneration of the Jews for their Scriptures precludes the possibility of any designed alteration in the canon. Its reception into the canon, therefore, as the production of Solomon, could only have proceeded from its being known to be his work by those who, as to this circumstance, were incapable either of deceiving, or of being deceived.

II. *Obj.* “ The Ecclesiastes cannot be supposed to be the production of Solomon, because the style is very different from that of his acknowledged writings.”* Without alleging that arguments drawn from difference of style rest upon precarious grounds, we may admit the fact, while we deny the inference attempted to be deduced from it. By comparing the book with the Proverbs and Canticles, the competent scholar must, I think, perceive some diversity in language and phraseology ; but it would be unfair to infer, from this circumstance, that they have not emanated from the same mind. Intercourse with foreigners, new studies, advancing years, a change in habits of thinking, in inclinations and desires, with a

* Eichhorn, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, § 658. In referring to Eichhorn, I am indebted to the kindness of a friend, who has favoured me with a translation of such parts of the *Einleitung* as relate to the book of Ecclesiastes. See also J. H. van der Palm, *Diss. de Lib. Eccles.* p. 44.

multiplicity of other circumstances, contribute to the alteration of style; so that the latest productions of the same person are not unfrequently wholly dissimilar, in the external dress and colouring, to those which have been composed in early life. The diversity of style, in the present instance, is not of such a kind as necessarily leads us to attribute them to different authors. It may be accounted for partly from the different nature of the subjects; the Canticles abounding in sentiments of love and sensibility, in images of pastoral poetry replete with mystic significance: the Proverbs consisting of short sententious maxims, designed to impress the memory by their beauty and terseness; and the Ecclesiastes being a regular philosophical disquisition; and partly from the two first having been written in the prime of life, and the last in the vale of years.

According to the tradition of the Jews, the book of Ecclesiastes was written by Solomon in his old age, after he had repented of his former vicious practices, and had become, by sad experience, fully convinced of the vanity of every thing terrestrial, except piety and wisdom.* Many parts of the work itself corroborate this tradition. The acknowledgment of numerous follies and delusions implies, that it was composed

* Jerom, in *Eccles.* i. 12. Huet. *Demonst. Evangel.* prop. iv. p. 246. Michaelis, *Notæ Uberiores*, Præf. § 2.

after the author had apostatized from Jehovah, and had subsequently repented of his past misconduct. The frequent assertion of the emptiness of earthly greatness; the declaration that human enjoyments are unsatisfactory; the enumeration of gardens, edifices, and possessions, requiring a long life for their completion; the deep condemnation of former pursuits; the expression of satiety and disgust at past pleasures; and the tone of cool and philosophical reflection which pervades the whole, are strikingly characteristic of an advanced period of life; and the production of a king, bowed with the infirmities of age, wearied with the pomp of royalty, sated with luxury, humbled with a sense of past guilt, and prostrate in penitence, can scarcely be similar in style to those of the same monarch in the vigour of health and manhood, and buoyant on the full tide of popularity and glory.

III. *Obj.* “The proper name of Solomon is not prefixed to the book, as in the Proverbs and Canticles.”* This can be no valid objection, so long as he is designated to be the author by another unequivocal title; and there may have been reasons for the omission with which we are not acquainted. As this answer is perfectly

* Hermann von der Hardt, *De Libro Koheleth.*

satisfactory, it cannot be necessary, and may be presumptuous, to attempt to account for the author's not mentioning his proper name; but it is, at least, no improbable conjecture, that, as the word Solomon signifies *peace*, the omission of it might be intended to intimate, that he had forfeited his name of peace, since, by his former transgression, he had troubled Israel; (1 Kings xi. 14, 23;) and as the name Koheleth, or Preacher, is derived from his custom of addressing assembled auditories, he might design, by the assumption of this title, to declare himself a true penitent, and a sincere advocate of religion. As, notwithstanding his former vices, he was now become a real convert, and a zealous preacher of righteousness, there seems a peculiar propriety in selecting an appellation expressive of this circumstance.

IV. *Obj.* "Foreign, and particularly Chaldaic, expressions occur in the book, which evince its origin in an age later than that of Solomon."* From the great importance attached to this objection by the advocates of the late composition of the book, they appear to consider themselves as having here occupied unassailable ground; it is, nevertheless, untenable, as must be evident from the consideration, that words and inflections pronounced by

* Grotius, *Prolegom. in Eccles.* Eichhorn, *Einleitung*, § 658.

some critics to be Aramæan, are discovered in books decidedly more ancient than Solomon. Granting, therefore, the existence of some expressions bearing the impression of a foreign stamp, this will be no proof of its being a production of so late a date as the Babylonian captivity; especially as it would be so easy, in the present instance, to account for their introduction, since Solomon might have acquired them by conversation with the many foreign women whom he loved; (1 Kings xi. 1, 2;) or they might have been imported in the intercourse which subsisted at that period between the Israelites and the neighbouring nations.*

But we may go farther, and fairly question whether the objection be founded in fact. Although a few words used by the author of the Ecclesiastes occur nowhere else, except in the Chaldee part of Daniel and in the Targums, none have been produced in form and inflection *unequivocally* Chaldaic; and, for any thing that appears to the contrary, they may have been pure Hebrew words, in familiar circulation while that language continued to be vernacular. That words employed by any of the Old Testament writers are found in the sister dialects, is no argument against

* 1 Kings iv. 24, 34, x. 24, 25, 28. 2 Chron. i. 16, ix. 14, 23, 24, 26. Pococke, *Notæ in Porta Mosis*, p. 151, ed. Twells. Huet, *Dem. Evangel.* prop. iv. p. 247.

their purity, for this is very often the case with such as are confessedly genuine Hebrew. Neither are the *απαξ λεγόμενα*, or words occurring only once, any evidence of a foreign origin; they are discoverable in almost every book of the Old Testament, and only serve to demonstrate the immense wreck which the Hebrew language has sustained in the lapse of time.

Chaldaisms, in fact, supply no sure criterion to determine the late origin of a work in which they are found; for Hebrew, Syriac, Chaldee, and Arabic, having emanated from one common source, the higher we ascend, the greater will be the resemblance.* Hence the numerous dialectical coincidences which have been observed in the book of Job, the most ancient of all the canonical writings.

In short, the argument I have been combating is completely hollow and unsound. It can neither be proved, that the author of the Ecclesiastes has used words or phrases which are not pure Hebrew, nor, if it could, would it be conclusive evidence against ascribing it to the royal son of David. It is not required, therefore, to enter into a minute examination of the words

* Michaelis, *Not. et Epim. in Lowth*, p. 200, Oxon. 1810. Bishop Magee, *On Atonement*, No. 59.

which have been pointed out as indicative of an age posterior to Solomon's; but a brief review of them is given in the subjoined note, from which it will further appear, that the objection is entirely groundless.*

* Of the four words pronounced by Grotius to be foreign, and not pure Hebrew, namely, **סִיר**, **אֲבִינָה**, **פֶּשֶׁר**, **גִּוּמָץ**, only two can at all be considered as belonging to his argument; for the first occurs *Exod. xvi. 3*, and the second may be derived from a genuine Hebrew root, as may be seen in the following note to *ch. xii. 5*. The two last only occur *ch. viii. 1*, and *x. 8*, and, though they are found in Chaldee, they may likewise be Hebrew.—(See Calovius, *Proleg. in Eccles.*; Bossuet, *Pref. in Eccles.*; Huet, *ut supra*; Findlay, *Vindication of the Sacred Books*, par. iii. § 4, p. 471; Witsius, *Miscel. Sac. l. i. cap. 18*, § 36; Carpzov, *Introd. ad Lib. Bibl.* par. ii. cap. 5, § 2.) Eichhorn has been more copious in his appeals than Grotius, and notices the following words as modern or Aramæan. 1. **בְּשַׁל** in *ch. viii. 17*. But it occurs in *Jonas i. 7, 12*; it is a compound particle, and is found nearly in the same form in *Canticles iii. 7*. 2. **הוּה** *ch. ii. 22*; which occurs, however, in *Job*, *Proverbs*, and often in the *Psalms*. 3. **עֵרֵן** *ch. iv. 2, 3*; a contraction for **הֵנָּה**, which is used in *Genesis*, &c. 4. **כִּבֵּר**, a particle only occurring in the *Ecclesiastes*, yet it betrays no marks of a Chaldaic or foreign form. 5. **כִּשְׂרִין**, like the former, only occurs in the *Ecclesiastes*, at the same time it has all the appearance of being pure Hebrew. 6. **רַעוּת רוּח** and **רַעִיּוֹן רוּח**, which occur nowhere else, but the roots are of frequent occurrence. 7. **הַמַּאֲלֵךְ**, *a priest*, *ch. v. 5*, and in this sense it occurs *Malachi iii. 1*. It is, however, often applied to human agents, for which reason it cannot be inferred that a book, where it is found in the sense of *a priest*, is of later origin than the age of Solomon. 8. **פִּתְגָם** *ch. viii. 11*; but, though it occurs *Esther i. 20*, and in the Chaldee of *Daniel*, why should we suppose it not to have been in use among the ancient Hebrews, since the form is not specifically Chaldaic? 9. **פִּרְדָּסִים** *ch. ii. 5*; yet this occurs also in *Canticles iv. 13*. Such are the words instanced by Eichhorn as being more modern than Solomon; yet of these it may justly be said, *first*, that not one of them is indubitably, or even probably, of the Chaldaic form: *secondly*, some are *απαξ λεγ.* from which nothing can be concluded; and, *thirdly*, others are found either in Solomon's acknowledged writings, or in older books; consequently, none of them can be evidence of the late composition of the *Ecclesiastes*.

It is further observed by Eichhorn, that the genius of the Chaldee language appears still stronger in the frequent compounded words with

V. *Obj.* “ The book contains some of the peculiar notions of the Pharisees and Sadducees, against which it appears to be directed; and since these sects arose, as is generally supposed, about the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, it cannot be allowed an earlier date.”* This objection is built upon the assumption, that the Pharisean and Sadducean notions are discoverable in it; an assumption resting upon no substantial basis. There appears, on the contrary, the strongest reason for believing, that it could not receive any colouring from the peculiar opinions of these sects; for, if it were adopted into the canon previous to their existence, the thing is impossible; or, if afterwards, it is inconceivable that

the prefix Ψ , which, says he, coincides with the Chaldee γ . One is surprised at such an observation from any Hebrew scholar, since it is as clear as the day, that the prefix Ψ is very common in the Psalms, and in Solomon's other productions, and is likewise found in Judges and Genesis. It certainly occurs frequently, about seventeen or eighteen times, in the Ecclesiastes, and Desvieux thinks it is employed to form the parallelism of the versification; (Philol. Obs. l. ii. c. 1, § 2;) but, whatever may be thought of this conjecture, it would be uncritical to infer, from its frequent occurrence, that the book was not written by Solomon. There are also, says Eichhorn, other Chaldaic-like expressions; but he has given no examples, and other Oriental scholars cannot perceive in the book of Ecclesiastes any thing, either in the style or composition, unsuitable to the age of Solomon.

Zerkel, in his *Untersuchungen*, or Researches respecting the Preacher, pretends to discover some Greek expressions in the Ecclesiastes, which, however, is a palpable mistake. See Jahn, *Introduct. ad Vet. Test.* § 213.

* Jahn, *Introduct. ad Vet. Test.* § 213, 215. Bauer, *Hermeneut. Sac.* § 68. Horne, *Introduction to the Scriptures*, vol. iv. p. 130, ed. 2da. Le Clerc apud Witsii *Miscel. Sac.* vol. i. p. 227.

they would permit a work directed against themselves to be inserted in the sacred canon. With as much reason might it be asserted, that the Pentateuch was levelled against the opinions of the Pharisees and Sadducees as the book of Ecclesiastes.

VI. *Obj.* “The name of JEHOVAH does not occur throughout the work, which seems to refer its origin to the age of Alexander; about which time the use of the Tetragrammaton was forbidden.”* Whenever the superstitious veneration for the name of Jehovah arose among the Jews, it is certain, that the pronunciation alone, not the writing of it, was forbidden, for it is found in some of the Chaldee paraphrases of a much more recent date.

VII. *Obj.* “Solomon cannot be the writer of the Ecclesiastes; for, if he were, in complaining as he does of oppressions, of unjust judgment, of the elevation of foolish servants to dignity and office, he would have condemned himself.”† Perfection is unattainable in human institutions: in the best regulated governments, much vice, folly, and misery will exist; and, under the administration of Solomon, the wisest prince that ever swayed a sceptre, the great and powerful were,

* Jahn, *Introduct.* § 215.

† Jahn, *Introduct. ut supra.*

doubtless, at times tyrannical, judges were often partial, and men were sometimes preferred to offices for which they were neither fitted by their talents nor their virtues. These evils, which the most consummate wisdom cannot entirely prevent, the king himself might lament, as well as any of his subjects, without being self-condemned. In these complaints, moreover, of oppression and injustice, the royal philosopher may have had an eye to what was passing in surrounding states. A mind of such sagacity and research would ardently inquire into the manners and civil polity of other nations; and it is not improbable, that his remarks on despotic cruelty and perverted justice may have referred to the conduct of governors beyond the boundaries of his empire.

VIII. *Obj.* “Had Solomon been the author, he would not have said, ‘I was, or I am king in Jerusalem,’ as it would have been idle to affirm a fact so universally known.”* As well might it be argued, that the Proverbs are not the work of Solomon, because he calls himself, in the beginning, “king of Israel.” The mention of his exalted rank is, in both cases, probably made, the better to recommend his compositions to the attention of mankind; for it has ever been found by experience, that the world is inclined to

* Jahn, *Introduct. ad V. T. ut supra.*

admire the productions of royal and noble authors, more particularly while the influence of their wealth and dignity remains unimpaired. This natural deference to rank and title would be much augmented in the present case, by characterizing the book as the work of that monarch, who was so renowned for knowledge, and whose wisdom contributed so much to the glory and happiness of his people. It is usual, likewise, with the sacred writers to describe themselves by personal titles and characters, which must have been well known to their contemporaries. Thus Isaiah denominates himself “the son of Amoz;” Jeremiah, “the son of Hilkiah;” Ezekiel, “the priest;” Hosea, “the son of Beeri;” Amos, “the herdman of Tekoa;” St. Paul, “the servant and apostle of Christ.” As the addition of such personal designations, though not absolutely necessary, is very common, Solomon might, without impropriety, style himself “the son of David, king in Jerusalem.” The assumption, then, of a title, which not only *might* be used by Solomon, but in the use of which there is a peculiar fitness, cannot form even a colourable objection against his being the author of the Ecclesiastes.

IX. *Obj.* “The writer says, ‘I was king over Israel in Jerusalem;’ (ch. i. 12;) but why is it added ‘in Jerusalem,’ unless the book was

published when the kings of the Israelites had another royal residence, namely, Samaria? ”* David reigned both in Hebron and in Jerusalem ; (2 Sam. ii. 11, v. 5 ; 1 Kings ii. 11 ;) but Solomon, as it should seem, only in the latter city, which may possibly account for the place of residence being specified. Besides, it is somewhat absurd to infer, because the Preacher is said to be king in Jerusalem, that another king reigned at the same time in Samaria : with as much truth it might be concluded, that a contemporary king reigned in any other place within the borders of Palestine. Solomon was king in, or at, Jerusalem ; that city was the metropolis of his kingdom ; there he kept his court ; there was the seat of his government ; and he might, with equal propriety, mention the place of his royal residence, as the fact of his being king over Israel, a title, as above shown, perfectly compatible with his being the author of the book.

X. *Obj.* “ In chapter iv. 15, allusion is made to Solomon’s successor, and to his inability to govern the people. Now, supposing the work to be the production of Solomon, he must have foreseen, that his son would be unequal to the task of government ; and, in that case, so wise a monarch, instead of wishing him to be his successor, would have taken measures to ensure the

* Doederlein, *Scholia in Eccles.* p. 171. Eichhorn, *Einleitung*, § 658.

succession of some fitter person to the throne of Israel. As he did not adopt this course, the only one consistent with the accounts which we have of his wisdom, it is concluded, that the Ecclesiastes was written in a subsequent period.”* But, in the passage appealed to, there is, in all probability, no allusion to the successor of Solomon in the royal power; it appears to be only a combination of general remarks upon the vanity of empire and dominion. Or, if even it should be thought to glance at Rehoboam, yet Solomon may be the author, as he might have wished his son to succeed him on the throne, though he had foreseen his incapacity for government; for how often is the judgment of the best and most enlightened men blinded by paternal affection? Solomon, notwithstanding his distinguished wisdom, was far from being a perfect character. Nor would it be easy to prove, what the objection supposes, the utter incompetency of Rehoboam to sway the sceptre of Israel. Though his conduct, immediately after his accession, was the occasion of an extensive, lasting, and ruinous revolt, it was a conduct rather to be ascribed to energy and vigour than to weakness and imbecility. He took time to deliberate, he asked counsel both from the old and youthful senators; and deliberate consultation is not the characteristic of

* Doederlein, *Scholia ut supra*. Eichhorn, *Einführung*, § 658.

a weak and pusillanimous mind. That his first measures were disastrous is certain; that he was ill advised is not improbable; but such has been the case with monarchs who cannot justly be charged with incompetency to hold the reins of government.

XI. *Obj.* “The author says, ‘I keep the king’s commandment,’ (ch. viii. 2,) which could not come from Solomon, who was a king himself, and obeyed no monarch upon earth.”* This objection scarcely deserves notice, as it rests upon a translation of the original which is erroneous, though supported by the Vulgate; the true version being, “I counsel thee to keep the king’s commandment,” where, by “the king,” is meant Jehovah, who was, in a peculiar sense, the king of the Israelites; consequently, the words contain an exhortation to reverence and obey God.

XII. *Obj.* “The book contains assertions inconsistent with the wisdom of Solomon; as, for example, that death is better than life; (ch. iv. 2;) that the creatures of God are vain; (ch. i. 2, &c. ;) that nothing is preferable to eating, and drinking, and enjoying the pleasures of this world; (ch. ii. 24, iii. 12, 13, 22, v. 18, viii. 15, ix. 7, xi. 9;) that man

* Huet, *Demonst. Evangel.* prop. iv. p. 248. See the following note on chap. viii. 2.

hath no advantage over the beasts: (ch. iii. 18, 19;) and some parts are contradictory to each other, as ch. iii. 19, compared with ch. xii. 7, which can scarcely be accounted for, on the supposition of its being the work of one man, much less of so wise a man as Solomon.”* This objection is built upon a misconception of the scope and meaning of the book; it is unnecessary, however, to examine, at present, the particular passages referred to, as the following paraphrase and notes, it is confidently believed, will convince the attentive reader, that no real contradictions exist, nor a single sentence which militates against its divine authority. When the design of the author is considered, and the chain of reasoning is attended to, every part appears consistent, harmonious, and admirable; the argument is sound, the sentiments pious, the observations highly valuable, the subject most important, and the effect of the whole is to excite frail man to the love, and study, and practice of celestial wisdom.

XIII. *Obj.* “The writer describes himself as richer than all those who were before him in Jerusalem (ch. ii. 7.) Now a king can only compare himself with kings, for it would be degrading to draw a parallel between himself and private

* Jerom, in *Eccles.* 12, 13. Bauer, *Hermeneut. Sacra*, § 64. Voltaire, *Philosoph. Dict.* art. Solomon; and other writers.

men; but how could Solomon speak of *many*, when David was the first who placed in Jerusalem the throne of the Hebrew empire? The author of the Ecclesiastes, therefore, lived in a later age.”* Solomon however might, without derogation, compare himself with foreign kings, as such a comparison is made by the sacred historian; (1 Kings x. 23;) and there are grounds for believing, that many princes actually reigned in Jerusalem previous to the Israelitish monarchs. Jerusalem is, probably, the same city which is called Salem, where Melchisedeck was king; and, before its subjugation by David, it was in the possession of the Jebusites, (Joshua xv. 8, 63; Judges i. 21,) who certainly were ruled by supreme governors, or kings, for express mention is made of one who was both a Jebusite and a king (2 Sam. xxiv. 18, 22.) Nor is it easy to discover what indignity it could be, supposing Solomon merely wished to draw a parallel between himself and persons of inferior rank. Would not his wealth and magnificence be the more apparent from the contrast? Nay, is there not a peculiar fitness in the observation, that he had wealth and possessions above all before him in Jerusalem, when we consider the superb mansions he built, the magnitude and splendour of the temple he erected, the brilliancy of his court, the state and royal luxury which

* Eichhorn, *Einleitung*, § 655.

surrounded him ? With equal propriety he might describe himself as having gotten more wisdom than all who had been before him in Jerusalem, (ch. i. 16,) since the fame of his knowledge had spread throughout every adjoining realm. Both passages, indeed, are so evidently in character, and so suitable to the circumstances of the wise monarch, that they in no small degree confirm the opinion which attributes this production to Solomon.

XIV. *Obj.* “ The expressions, ‘ of making many books there is no end,’ and ‘ much study is a weariness of the flesh,’ (ch. xii. 12,) are incompatible with the character and circumstances of the Solomonic age, in which the existence of many books, or of a prevailing inclination to study, cannot be supposed.”* Eichhorn, by whom the objection is advanced, supplies the answer himself, in observing, that, “ under Solomon, when the Hebrews arrived at a period to enjoy their late victories, such wisdom as this book teaches might have gained a foundation;” for, in that case, many would addict themselves to speculation, the result of which would be a gradually increasing number of publications. It is consonant with reason to suppose, that many books actually existed at the period of which we are speaking. It was an age

* Eichhorn, *ibid.*

of internal peace and tranquillity, when the arts that contribute to the elegance and refinement of society were greatly improved; circumstances extremely favourable to the cultivation of literature. The monarch himself was, for these times, a voluminous author; and this bright example of royal ardour in the cause of letters would be eagerly followed by many who neither possessed his wisdom, nor his inspiration.

Yet it is very doubtful, whether the words of the preacher above quoted really imply the multiplication of books in that age. It is, in my judgment, more natural to interpret them of the *possibility* of writing innumerable books upon the topics discoursed upon in this treatise of the royal philosopher, and yet with little utility, since all important truths relating to them may be comprehended within narrow limits. Or the observation may be meant comparatively, namely, read and meditate in the pages of inspiration more than in books of mere human composition, which may be multiplied without end, and of which an over-anxious study wearies and impairs the bodily powers.

Such are the chief reasons which have been brought forward against ascribing the Ecclesiastes to Solomon; and they are manifestly far from overthrowing the evidence adduced for its being the genuine production of that monarch.

They are mere plausibilities ; and, however multiplied, would still be outbalanced by a single grain of historical testimony. So weak, indeed, and futile are they, that it might be sufficient to reply to them generally, that they are drawn from internal probabilities, or from the style and phraseology, and that no argument of this description can be admitted against positive evidence. The work is expressly ascribed to the philosophic son of David, in the first and twelfth verses of the first chapter ; it has been admitted into the Jewish canon as his production, which would not have been the case, unless undeniable grounds had existed for ascribing it to him ; and it has been handed down as his by a regular tradition, as appears from the consent of manuscripts and versions, and from the concurrent voice of antiquity. It would, therefore, be injudicious, it would be dangerous, it would be irreligious to desert this combined testimony for bold assertion and ingenious conjecture.

To disregard or reject such a body of evidence would be attended with consequences the most detrimental to the interests of revealed religion. Were any book enrolled among the Holy Scriptures as sacred, while it was only a mere human production, and ascribed to an author by whom it was not written, how could this be reconcilable with the infallibility of the word of God,

with the existence of divine inspiration, with the spirit of prophecy, which continued among the Jews till the completion of their canon? Such a circumstance is so inconsistent with the idea of a divine communication, and with the design of selecting the Hebrews to be the depositories of the Oracles of God, that, were it indubitably proved, the whole superstructure of revelation would totter to its fall. The authority of the canon would be much diminished, were it to carry upon its very front a palpable mistake; the conviction of one error might reasonably excite a suspicion of the existence of many others; and that collection of writings which must be weeded and curtailed, before its universal canonicity can be allowed, would be entitled to little reverence or respect.

There is gone abroad, at the present day, and particularly in modern Germany, a spirit of rash, presumptuous literature, which tends, in its daring progress, to overthrow every thing holy and venerable. It presumes to penetrate the veil which separates the sanctuary of heaven from mortal vision, and subjects to its polluted touch the hallowed realities of our religion. Truths hitherto deemed sacred, opinions consecrated by time and universal reception, and doctrines revered as the essence of celestial revelation, are proudly trampled upon in the desolation of its march. Yet our

age has many redeeming virtues, which forbid us to look at the state of religion with a desponding eye. If the pride of unchastised literature has borne an extensive sway, orthodoxy has to boast of champions never excelled for intellectual ability and profundity of erudition. Their efforts have been noble, their success incalculable, so that we may anticipate the period when philosophy shall be no longer exalted into the throne of revealed religion, and when its meteorous rays shall be extinguished by the effulgence of Scripture truth. And, to hasten this happy event, let all who are called to minister the word, study the sacred writings with pious and reverent attention, devoutly praying for that illumination from above, without which, learning becomes inert, and all human efforts are ineffectual.

As ancient institutions are not only venerable for their antiquity, but are commonly suited to the character and circumstances of the people among whom they exist; so opinions which have been generally received, for a series of ages, are, for the most part, founded in eternal and immutable truth. It is but little consistent with wisdom to indulge a reforming spirit, in regard to ancient establishments, except the necessity be urgent and the improvement evident; it is equally remote from sound judgment to reject long

prevailing opinions without the most substantial reasons ; and as, in the present instance, no valid arguments have been produced to the contrary, we may, without hesitation, concur in the almost universal belief that Solomon was the author of the Ecclesiastes.

SECTION II.

CANONICAL AUTHORITY OF THE ECCLESIASTES.

It is related, that the Rabbins had once a design to degrade the book of Ecclesiastes, as well as the Proverbs and Canticles, into the number of apocryphal writings, on account of some contradictions and immoral sentiments which, they imagined, it contained ; but, upon more mature consideration, they admitted it as canonical Scripture.* Even some Christian divines and

* Maimonides, *More Nevoch.* par. ii. cap. 28. Wolf, *Biblioth. Heb.* vol. ii. p. 122. Carpzov, *Introduct. ad Lib. Bibl.* par. ii. cap. 5, § 7. The word used by the Rabbins is ׀׀׀, *abscondere*, ἀποκρυπτειν, *to place among the apocryphal books, to declare apocryphal* ; but Bishop Marsh, in a note to *Michaelis's Introduction to the N. T.* cap. iii. § 1, affirms, that ׀׀׀ does not mean “ apocryphal, as we understand the word, for the ancient Jews never doubted the divine authority of the Proverbs, Solomon’s Song, or Ecclesiastes ;” and that “ it was applied to books divinely inspired, and included in the sacred canon.” The word ׀׀׀, it is true, does sometimes denote those parts of the canonical Scriptures which were only forbidden to be read ; (Castel, *Lex. Hept. in voc.* ;) but the reason given for the Jews wishing ׀׀׀׀׀ *to conceal or lay aside* the Ecclesiastes, namely, that it

critics have doubted or denied its divine authority. Its canonicity, however, rests upon unimpeachable grounds. Solomon had twice witnessed the especial presence of God; (1 Kings iii. 5, ix. 1, xi. 11;) he was endowed by the Most High with inspired wisdom to govern the people over whom he reigned; (1 Kings iii. 5—14, iv. 29;) he was furnished with all outward means for the successful prosecution of his natural and moral inquiries; (2 Chron. ix. 22;) he was educated from his tender years by his pious father and the prophet Nathan; (Prov. iv. 3, 4; 2 Sam. xii. 25; 1 Kings i. 11;) and was likewise himself gifted with the prophetic spirit; (1 Kings iii. 5, et seq. vi. 11, 12, ix. 1, et seq. xi. 9—11;) and can it be supposed, that the illumination of the Spirit forsook him in the composition of a work destined to be enrolled among the Oracles of God, and intended to afford religious instruction to every succeeding age?

That the divine authors of the New Testament have not given it their infallible sanction by direct appeals to it, as an inspired writing, must be acknowledged; and though, perhaps, no instance can be produced where they have *indisputably* alluded to it, there are, nevertheless, passages

contained contradictions and immoralities, seems to imply rejection from the canon. The observations in my Translation of Proverbs, Prel. Diss. p. xxviii. are applicable to this question.

where they seem to have had it in view.* It was inserted, however, in that canon which received the approval and ratification of our blessed Lord, (Luke xxiv. 44,) a circumstance completely establishing its canonical authority; and formed a part of that Scripture which, St. Paul affirms, was “given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” (2 Tim. iii. 16.) This testimony is completely decisive; nor will it make any difference in the Apostle’s assertion, if the passage be rendered, agreeably to the opinion of several critics, “All inspired Scripture is profitable,” &c.; for in these expressions he must be understood to speak of the Jewish canonical Scriptures, the whole of which are thus pronounced to be inspired. But the correctness of the authorized version, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God,” may be abundantly vindicated; and thus we have apostolic and infallible evidence to the divine inspiration of the *whole* Old Testament.†

* The following table of references is given by Carpzov, *Introduct. ut supra* :

Eccles. xi. 5, with John iii. 8.	Eccles. vii. 15, with Matt. vi. 34.
v. 1, xii. 14, Matt. xii. 36.	xii. 14, Rom. ii. 6, et seq.
i. 2, 8, Rom. viii. 20.	xi. 9, 1 Cor. iv. 5, 2 Cor.
x. 20, Rom. xiii. 2.	v. 10.
xi. 1, 2, 2 Cor. ix. 9, 10.	vii. 17, Rom. xii. 3.
v. 14, 1 Tim. vi. 7.	vii. 4, 2 Cor. vii. 10, 11.
xii. 11, Matt. xxiii. 34.	xii. 13, 1 Tim. i. 5.
John x. 11, 14.	vii. 21, 1 John i. 8.

† See Dr. Findlay, *Divine Inspiration of the Old Testament asserted by St. Paul*, 2 Tim. iii. 16. Dr. Blomfield, *Diss. on the Traditional Knowledge of a Redeemer*, p. 124. Bishop Middleton’s *Doctrine of the Greek Article*, p. 566.

SECTION III.

OF THE TITLE KOHELETH.

The Hebrew title assumed by the author of the book is כהלת, *Koheleth*, respecting the meaning of which various opinions have prevailed among the learned. Lud. de Dieu explains it by the assistance of the Syriac *kuhaltho*, which signifies *exclamation*; and he thus makes the inscription of the book to denote, “the words of the voice of one exclaiming,” comparing it with the title assumed by John the Baptist (John i. 23.) But, were this interpretation of the Syriac word correct, which is, perhaps, doubtful, it would not confirm the notion of de Dieu, as the Hebrew root כהל, *kahal*, nowhere conveys a meaning analogous to the Syriac *kuhaltho*.

Grotius renders *Koheleth* by “collector,” συναθροιστης, which, he supposes, was intended to denote, that the various opinions concerning happiness of such as have been reputed wise are collected together in this book; an interpretation completely indefensible, since the root *kahal* never signifies to collect *things*, but to assemble *men* together for sacred, civil, or military purposes.

Nor is it true, that the dogmata of divers wise men are collected and delivered in the work, as the same argument is pursued throughout, and the several parts contribute to one and the same object.

Some, preserving the radical idea of the term, understand it passively, namely, one re-united or gathered to the people of God, thereby signifying Solomon's readmission to the church, and reconciliation with it, in consequence of his repentance.* This, however, though according with the meaning of the root, is inadmissible, inasmuch as *Koheleth*, agreeably to its grammatical form, cannot be taken in a passive sense. For this reason, namely, the active form of the word, we must reject the opinion of certain Rabbins, who affirm that Solomon is denominated *Koheleth*, on account of the wisdom which was so abundantly collected or accumulated in him, not by his own talents and assiduity, but by the divine blessing.†

D. Jo. Hen. Michaelis maintains, that Solomon assumed the title *Koheleth*, because he wrote the book for the purpose of recalling erring mortals from vain and unsatisfactory pursuits to a sacred

* Cocceius, *Comm. in loc.* and *Lex. Heb. in voc.* Cartwright, *in Eccles.* Bishop Reynolds, *Comm. on Eccles.* i. 1. Leigh, *Critica Sacra, in voc.*

† Carpzov, *Introduct. at Lib. Bibl.* par. ii. cap. 5, § 1.

reverence of God.* This explanation nearly agrees with that formerly proposed by the profoundly-learned Lightfoot, who says, “After his great fall, Solomon recovereth again by repentance, and writeth this book of Ecclesiastes, as his peculiar dirge for that his folly. He calleth himself in it *Kohleth*, or the *Gathering-soul*, either *recollecting itself*, or *by admonition gathering others* that go astray after vanity.”† In a similar manner the title is explained by Findlay, who considers it well accommodated to Solomon in this work, “where his aim is to unite wandering souls from the pursuit of vanities to the prosecution of the supreme good, and where he, as it were, calls a multitude together, to hear and learn from him the path to true felicity.”‡ This gives a pleasing representation of the title, but is rather fanciful than just, as no authority is produced for attributing either to *kahal*, or its derivatives, the sense of reclaiming from sin, and conducting to a new and holy life.

The title *Kohleth* is considered by Desvoeux as equivalent to Sophist, according to its primitive

* “Ceterum ideo hoc nomen sumsisse videtur, quia homines vagabundos ad Deum rursus ejusque timorem congregaturus totum librum conscripsit, insignis hac in parte Jesu Christi typus.”—Michaelis, *Notæ Uberiores in Hagiographos V. T. Libros*, 3 vols. 4to, Hææ. 1720, Pref. § 1. In the portion of this work relating to Ecclesiastes, Michaelis was only author of the *Preface*, the *Notæ* being written by Rambadius; but I always cite them in this work thus, “Michaelis, *Not. Uber.*”

† Lightfoot, *Works*, vol. i. p. 76.

‡ Findlay, *Vindication of the Sacred Books*, p. 472.

signification; but as the term Sophist, from being originally an honourable denomination, became at length an appellation of reproach, he prefers rendering it by the word “Orator,” as the nearest in signification to the original meaning of Sophist.* The conjecture, though certainly ingenious, is altogether unsupported by scriptural evidence.

Schultens, Schroeder, and Storr, having recourse to their favourite Arabic, consider *Koheleth* as properly signifying *repentance*, and as used, by a metonymy, for a penitent person;† an interpretation accurately descriptive of the state, character, and circumstances of Solomon, when he wrote the book; but as the root *kahal*, though of frequent occurrence, never has any relation to penitence, this explanation of the derivative *Koheleth* cannot be admitted.

Simonis, appealing to the Arabic language, conjectures that *Koheleth* means *an old man, senex*,

* Desvieux, *Philosophical and Critical Essay on Eccles.* Obs. lib. ii. cap. 8, § 2—7.

† Schultens, *Diss. de Utilitate Dialect. Orient.* p. 6. Schroeder, *Instit. Ling. Heb. Syntax.* xxii. Storr, *Observat. ad Anal. et Syntax. Heb.* p. 368. Compare Cocceii *Lex. Heb.* ed. Schulz, in voc. The Arabic word appealed to is *جذ* *exaruit cutis*. Another exposition is mentioned by J. H. van der Palm, (*Diss. de Lib. Eccles.* p. 48,) “quam dedit SCHEIDIUS, cujusque mentio fit a cl. BONNET; scil. secundum hanc תלהל *marcidum* et veluti *exsiccatum* significat, qui omnia fastidat atque aversatur.” I have not seen the authors here cited by van der Palm.

Solomon having written the book of Ecclesiastes in his old age; and that he takes to himself this name, with a feminine termination, to insinuate the debilitated state of his mind, when he suffered himself to be drawn into idolatry by his wives.* An explanation so completely foreign from the undoubted signification of the root cannot deserve a refutation.

The learned Professor Doederlein understands the term as denoting *an academy* of wise men, in which Solomon, probably, often discoursed; and hence the book may be so called by reason of its containing orations delivered in this academy. Learned and philosophical assemblies, we know, have been frequent among the Orientals, and it is more than probable, that something of this kind existed at the court of Solomon; for if Eastern monarchs, as far as history carries us back, have always encouraged societies for literary discussion, we must suppose, that such would be patronised by a king who excelled all the wisdom of Egypt and of the East. When it is also considered, that the noun קהל *kahal* means an assembly or congregation, and that several

* Simonis, *Lex. Heb.* p. 1409, ed. Eichhorn. Though the Arabic words كس and كس to which he appeals, possess the signification of *advanced age*, as may be seen in Castell, *Lex. Hept.* p. 1689, 3316, and Golius, *Lex. Arab.* p. 1859, 2075; yet קהל cannot be referred to them, as they are roots of different radical letters. It is singular, that Simonis does not take notice of *Koheleth* in his valuable *Onomasticon*.

parts of the book well comport with this interpretation, it must be acknowledged to have some semblance of truth. Yet, upon a nearer inspection, we shall be compelled to renounce it, since some passages cannot be made to agree with this hypothesis, as the initiatory expressions, “The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem,” and, “I, the Preacher, am king over Israel, in Jerusalem,” which cannot denote the academy of Solomon, but plainly designate that royal personage himself.* Nor does the title *Koheleth* properly belong to the treatise itself, as this interpretation supposes. Though the great reformer, Martin Luther, in the Preface to his Commentary on the Ecclesiastes, asserts that it is rather to be referred to the name of the book than of the author, it must be evident, upon an examination of the places where it occurs, that it is a personal designation applied to the author of the book; and this is an insuperable objection to the opinion advanced by Doederlein.

Another interpretation has been brought forward by Sir John David Michaelis, an author of vast erudition and undoubted genius, but whose learning often bewildered his judgment, and whose genius frequently blazed with wild eccentricity. He takes *Koheleth* to denote, him

* See Schulz et Bauer, *Prolegom. in Eccles.* § 1.

who presides over the assembly or academy of philosophers, the president and teacher.* Schools or colleges, it is undeniable, existed among the Jews in later ages;† but that fixed and endowed seminaries were established in the time of Solomon, or, indeed, previous to the Babylonian captivity, is a conjecture for which there is no foundation in the sacred writings.‡ Academies, with a president and teachers, are institutions not adapted to the simplicity of primitive times; and if they had existed at the period alluded to, some intimation would, probably, have been given of them in the circumstantial history of the Hebrew monarchs. As to the Schools of the Prophets, we are but little acquainted with their nature; yet, from the few hints given of them in Scripture, they do not appear to have been regular and endowed seminaries.§ But, whatever might be the nature of these institutions, we find not the least hint of Solomon's having been the president of such a school; and some circumstances respecting the author, particularly ch. i. 1, 12, and ch. ii. 4—10,

* “Cæterum eum denotat, qui coetui seu academix philosophorum præsit, præsidem ejus et doctorem.”—Michaelis, *Supplem. ad Lex. Heb.* in תלמוד.

† See Ikenius, *Antiq. Heb.* par. i. cap. 5; Buxtorf, *Synag. Judaica*, cap. x.; Jennings, *Jewish Antiquities*, lib. ii. cap. 2.

‡ Campbell, *Translation of the Gospels*, Prel. Diss. vii. part 2, § 2.

§ An excellent account of the Schools of the Prophets is given by Stillingfleet, *Origines Sacræ*, lib. ii. cap. 4. See also Vitringa, *De Synag. Vet.* par. ii. cap. 6; Warburton, *Div. Legat.* lib. iv. § 6; and the authors referred to in the two former notes.

are inconsistent with the character and office of a superintendent of an academy.

Though the explanation of the title by Michaelis, in the precise form in which he has stated it, must, for these reasons, be rejected, I am persuaded that it is not very far from the truth; for I accede to the opinion of those who derive it from the verb קָהַל , *kahal*, *to assemble together*, and who suppose that Solomon adopted this appellation from his custom of assembling the principal persons among the people; and communicating to them the wisdom of his divinely-illuminated mind. According to this view of the term *Koheleth*, it means one who convenes the people together, and imparts to them the lessons of wisdom and virtue. Of all the interpretations of the word with which I am acquainted, this is by much the best supported. It results, in a natural and unforced manner, from the acknowledged meaning of the root of which it is a derivative; and is confirmed by the LXX, who have translated it by the word ἐκκλησιαστής , immediately derived from ἐκκλησιαζω , denoting *to call an assembly*, and *to preach*, or *harangue*.* In this they were followed by the author of the Latin Vulgate, from whence it was adopted by our translators as the

* See Suicer, *Thesaurus*, vol. i. p. 1060, and Scapula, *Lex.* in voc. It is observed by Bishop Patric, in his *Preface* to Ecclesiastes, that *Koheleth*, in the Æthiopic language, according to Ludolph, signifies “a circle, or a company of men gathered together in the form of a circle.”

title of the book, while in other places, where *Koheleth* occurs, they render it by the word “Preacher.” The terms “gatherer” or “assembler,” adopted by Parkhurst, may indeed seem more agreeable to etymology; but they do not so well convey the notion of communicating instruction, which is included in the appellation *Koheleth*; and, upon the whole, though “Preacher” does not quite express the full force of the original, the English language does not, I think, afford a more appropriate word.

This interpretation, it is true, depends upon the supposition, that Solomon was accustomed to assemble and instruct the people; and that such was his practice may be gathered, not only from the import of the term, according to its Hebraical derivation, but likewise from several other considerations. The Orientals, in later ages, have always been fond of meeting together in companies, to entertain themselves with hearing and reciting compositions in prose and verse. In these assemblies they were sometimes edified by the delivery of grave discourses, on subjects of a moral and philosophical nature; though they were more frequently amused with the recital of tales and romantic stories, or listened, with Asiatic rapture, to the effusions of poetic imagination. Several productions, delivered, or supposed to be delivered, in such assemblies, are

still extant, of which we have examples in the *Macamet*, or *Academical Discourses*, of Hamadani and Hariri.* The Arabian tribes had anciently, once a year, at Ocadh, a general assembly, which lasted a whole month, during which time they were employed, together with subjects of traffic, in reciting poetical compositions, to the most excellent of which a prize was adjudged.† A passion for these recreations, so worthy rational beings, pervaded all classes; even persons of the most elevated rank honoured these assemblies with their presence;‡ and they continue, to this day, to afford amusement and instruction to the inhabitants of the East.§ This, it must be acknowledged, is no absolute proof of similar assemblies in the age of Solomon; but it forms a strong presumption in their favour, and serves to show, that a prince's convening and teaching the people comports with Oriental manners and customs.

* See D'Herbelot, *Bibliothèque Orientale*, in voc. "Macamat," says this great Orientalist, denotes "assemblies et conversations, lieux communs et pieces d'eloquence, ou discours academiques, qui se recitent dans les compagnies de gens de lettres. Cette maniere de reciter dans les assemblies des ouvrages en prose et en vers est aussi frequente parmy Orientaux, qu'elle étoit autrefois chez les Romains, et qu'elle est encore aujourd'huy dans nos academies. Les Arabs ont plusieurs livres qui contiennent de ces sortes de discours, qui passent parmy eux pour des chef-d'œuvres d'eloquence."—*Biblioth. Orientale*, voc. Macamat. See Abulfeda, *Annal. Moslem.* vol. iii. p. 728.

† Pococke, *Specimen Hist. Arab.* p. 164, Oxon. 1806. Sale, *Prel. Diss. to Koran*, p. 36, Lond. 1812.

‡ D'Herbelot, *Bibliothèque Orientale*, voc. Amak.

§ Niebuhr, *Travels*, sect. iv. cap. 6, and sect. xxvii. cap. 3.

The sacred writings, however, supply some particulars, from which it is reasonable to infer, that, even so early as the time of Solomon, auditories were occasionally collected, in which moral and literary discourses were pronounced. The author of the Ecclesiastes has been supposed to allude to these assemblies in ch. xii. 11, which is thus interpreted: "The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by THE MASTERS OF ASSEMBLIES, which are given from one shepherd." The original words בעלי אספות *baali asuphoth*, Mr. Harmer thinks, strictly signify *lords of assemblies*, by which he understands, persons who distinguished themselves by the superiority of their compositions in those assemblies so frequent among the Orientals, in which literary productions were recited.* But, even admitting the correctness of this rendering, and it is not destitute of support, as observed in the critical notes upon the passage, it will scarcely establish his interpretation; for "the masters, or lords of assemblies" may rather denote those who were appointed to preside over and instruct the congregations of Israel. Independent of this, it is equally agreeable to the literal meaning of the phrase to render it "lords, or masters of collections," a Hebraism for "collectors;" by which expression the author might intend to designate those eminent persons

* Harmer, *Observations*, &c. vol. iii. p. 215, ed. Clarke.

who collected and disposed in order the sayings of men divinely inspired, as the men of Hezekiah mentioned in Prov. xxv. 1; and this exposition is adopted in the following paraphrase.

Granting, however, that the passage above-cited does not make for our present purpose, another, in the same chapter of the Ecclesiastes, may be appealed to with more confidence, wherein Solomon informs us, that “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.”—(Ch. xii. 9.) Here Solomon’s teaching the people knowledge is contradistinguished to his composing or writing proverbs: this teaching, then, must have been a *viva voce* instruction, which could only be imparted to auditories collected for the purpose of hearing him discourse upon topics proper for edification.

We are informed by the sacred historian, that “there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom;” (1 Kings iv. 34;) that is, very many inhabitants of the surrounding states came of their own accord, and others were commissioned by foreign princes, to hear and profit by the wisdom of the Jewish monarch. In 1 Kings x. 24, it is said, that “all the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had

put in his heart;" and, in 2 Chron. ix. 23, it is stated, that "all kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom that God had put in his heart;" from which, compared with the passage first quoted from 1 Kings, we learn, that the sovereigns of the adjoining countries sometimes came personally, and sometimes by deputy, to ascertain, from Solomon's own lips, the reality of his far-renowned wisdom, and to profit by the counsels of a monarch so celebrated for understanding and knowledge. Now it is barely possible, that all these might hear his wisdom in private interviews; but it is much more probable, that they were collected into assemblies, in commodious rooms, where the royal sage delivered to them the maxims and admonitions of his enlightened mind.

If such was the monarch's practice, we may account rationally for the "very great company" who attended the queen of Sheba when she visited Solomon, "to prove him with hard questions."—(1 Kings x. 2; 2 Chron. ix. 1.) They were, doubtless, not merely intended for state and pomp, but to be present at the interview of these exalted personages, and to witness "the keen encounter of their wits." The Jewish monarch, also, would be attended with his officers and courtiers, and in this splendid divan the king returned the answers of experienced

wisdom to the questions propounded by the Arabian queen. Whatever were the subjects discussed in this conference, or in whatever manner it was conducted, it undoubtedly formed an assembly expressly convened for literary discussion and the exercise of intellectual talent. Nor can any other conclusion be drawn from what the queen of Sheba says to the king, "Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom," (1 Kings x. 8; 2 Chron. ix. 7,) which implies that Solomon was surrounded by his servants and ministers, to whom he was in the habit of communicating the suggestions of inspired wisdom.

The same inference may be fairly drawn from the description of Solomon's understanding and knowledge, in the first book of Kings, where it is affirmed, that "he SPAKE three thousand proverbs; and his songs were a thousand and five. And he SPAKE of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he SPAKE also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes."—(Chapter iv. 32, 33.) It is not said, that these were *written* compositions, but that he *spake* them; and it is most consistent with the manners of the age, as well as with the dignity of the monarch, to suppose them spoken in assemblies

collected for the purpose of hearing him discourse. These circumstances, put together, go to prove, that this philosophical monarch was wont to assemble the people and to instruct them; which confirms the opinion that, in the production of his declining years, he assumed the appellation *Koheleth*, as being expressive of this custom.

Such appears to be the true explication of the title; but, however it may be explained, another question, of no small difficulty, arises respecting the feminine form of the term. Solomon undoubtedly styles himself *Koheleth*, which, notwithstanding what has been advanced to the contrary, is evidently in the form of the feminine participle Benoni; how, then, are we to account for this circumstance? In reference to this question it has been asserted, that it is in reality masculine, though the termination may seem to imply the contrary, it not being unusual for proper names to have a feminine termination, and yet be of an opposite gender, as Lapidoth, Mephibosheth, Zoheth, Benzoheth, Alamath, Mispereth, and others.* It may likewise be observed, that, out of seven places where it occurs, it is six times construed with nouns or

* Judges iv. 4. 2 Sam. xxi. 8. 1 Chron. iv. 20, vii. 8. Nehem. vii. 7. Sophereth and Pochereth have been adduced as instances; but they are more probably the names of women.—See Simonis, *Onomasticon*, p. 414, 415.

verbs masculine, while it is only once joined with a feminine verb, and even this single instance may admit of some doubt.* Yet, supposing *Koheleth* to be masculine, it certainly has a feminine form; and the question still recurs, why was an appellation in a feminine form chosen, rather than a noun unequivocally masculine? If nothing more was implied in the term than the wise monarch's custom of convening and instructing the people, a masculine termination would have more aptly suited the office, and better represented the dignity of the Preacher. A word, however, with a feminine termination was selected; and, since it would be derogatory to the authority of Holy Scripture to suppose this preference without meaning, particularly when the admirable expressiveness and picturesque energy of the Hebrew language are considered, we must conclude, that there was some further view in its adoption. And what could this be, agreeably with all the circumstances of the case, but an intention to represent wisdom, חכמה, divine and heavenly wisdom inspired by the Almighty, speaking by the mouth of the king of Israel?

* The only place where it is construed with a feminine verb is chapter vii. 27, where we find אמרה קהלת; but the ה in אמרה may be paragogic, and in that case the verb will be masculine; (see Wolf, *Biblioth. Heb.* vol. iv. p. 32;) or the true reading may be אמר הקהלת, as we find in chapter xii. 8, which is the conjecture of Michaelis, (*Supplem. ad Lex.* No. 2236,) and Jahn (*Introduct. ad Lib. Sac.* § 209.) It is clearly joined with masculine nouns or verbs chapter i. 1, 2, 12, xii. 8, 9, 10.

This is the judicious opinion of several eminent critics ; and it not only accounts for the feminine termination of *Koheleth*, but also for its being sometimes construed with a feminine, (supposing the Masoretic text and punctuation of chapter vii. 27 to be correct,) and sometimes with a masculine word ; for nouns used metonymically are construed either according to their proper or figurative signification.*

Thus we have a satisfactory explanation, both of the meaning and form of the appellation ; its etymology being designed to intimate the wise monarch's custom of convening and teaching the people ; and its feminine form to imply, that the doctrines which he inculcated were not the result of his own reason, but the suggestions of divine inspiration.

SECTION IV.

THE SCOPE AND DESIGN OF THE ECCLESIASTES.

The opinions of expositors, in regard to the scope and design of the book, are not less diversified than concerning the origin and meaning of the title. The greater part of them, however, are

* Schroeder, *Instit. Ling. Heb.* reg. 22.

so evidently fanciful and erroneous, as scarcely to require a serious refutation, which would, indeed, be at present a superfluous labour, as most of them have been collected and discussed by Desvieux, in his learned and ingenious work on the Ecclesiastes. A scheme different from all others has been proposed by that commentator; and as it has been lately sanctioned by so excellent a writer as Dr. Graves, in his highly valuable *Lectures on the Pentateuch*,* it demands a particular examination. The object of the royal Preacher, according to Desvieux, is “to prove the immortality of the soul, or rather the necessity of another state after this life, from such arguments as may be afforded by reason and experience.”† Were this, however, the object of the Ecclesiastes, it is strange that it should ever be questioned, as it has been by critics of acknowledged learning and abilities, whether it contains any intimation whatever of a future period of retribution. But, admitting these writers to be mistaken, and that the work actually presents some intimations of a future state, as will be shown in a subsequent page; yet we may clearly infer from the observation, that, if the leading object had been to enforce that sublime doctrine, it would not have been left in so much darkness and obscurity. It would rather have

* Part iii. Lect. 4, § 2.

† Desvieux, *Diss. on the Eccles.* p. 79.

been clearly announced as the head and front of the treatise, exhibited in lively colours, and exposed to view in too circumstantial a manner to be mistaken. Of each part of the work it would have formed the prominent feature ; and it would have appeared, as well from the mode of illustration as the tendency of the argument, to be the principal object of the disquisition. But the doctrine of a future life, though implied in a few passages, is not set in that prominent light, nor so frequently mentioned, nor so strongly insisted upon as might be expected, had it constituted the basis of the discourse. And, what may be regarded as decisive of the question is, that, where a future state is mentioned, it arises incidentally in the course of the argument ; and, so far from being the groundwork of the reasoning, seems intended only to illustrate and confirm it.

Independently of this, other considerations evince, that the scope of the book is not to vindicate “ the necessity of another state after this life.”

It has been proved by Bishop Warburton, and is acknowledged by Dr. Graves, that the rewards and punishments of a future life were not inculcated by the Jewish Legislator as *sanctions* of his laws. Temporal sanctions only were employed by Moses, because they were necessary to confute idolatry, adapted to the moral and intellectual

character of the Hebrews, and suitable to that superintending providence which God exercised over the Jewish people. A full and express revelation of the doctrine concerning a future state would have been inconsistent with the divine economy during the continuance of the Theocracy; for the rewards and punishments of another stage of being, necessarily implied in that doctrine, would have nullified the temporal threats of the law. It would have been a glaring absurdity to promulgate spiritual and invisible sanctions, during the existence of a dispensation supported only by those of a temporal nature. Accordingly, a future state is nowhere in the Hebrew Scriptures announced as a fundamental truth. Neither in the Pentateuch, nor in the prophetic writings, does it constitute the essence and leading truth of what is there delivered; it is much oftener glanced at than mentioned in direct terms; incidentally rather than as the principal subject; it is sometimes implied in the sacred narrative, or typically shadowed forth, and frequently indicated by a variety of allusions; but in no passage whatever is it declared to be a necessary article of faith. While this grand doctrine is the foundation of Christianity, pervading every part of the New Testament, without which Christ died in vain, and our faith is vain, it is, even in the most explicit declarations of the Old Testament, involved in no small degree of doubt and obscurity;

and it was reserved for the Apostles of our Lord to place this great truth in the full effulgence of Evangelic light.

The ancient Jews, it is true, grounded their belief of a future state upon the intimations communicated in their Sacred Writings; but that this momentous doctrine was, previous to the promulgation of Christianity, dark and obscure, may be gathered from the apostolic affirmation of Christ having “brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.”* This, however, would not have been the case, it is presumed, had Solomon composed a work for the express purpose of proving that important tenet. Is it likely that he should have an object in view, and yet fail in the attainment of it; that he should attempt to illustrate a subject, and yet leave it in obscurity; that he should have laboured in vain, whose “wisdom excelled all the wisdom of the East country, and all the wisdom of Egypt,” (1 Kings iv. 30,) and whose understanding was enlarged and enlightened by holy inspiration?

* 2 Tim. i. 10. Though the original may, perhaps, be better rendered, with Macknight, “hath made life and immortality clear;” yet the authorized version equally proves, that the doctrine was obscurely delivered before the Christian era. With Macknight agree the Vulgate, which renders *φωτισαντος* by “illuminavit,” and probably the Syriac, which has *ܩܠܐ* a word denoting *to manifest*, &c. Schleusner renders it “patefecit et manifestavit.” Rosenmüller explains it, “per doctrinam suam nos fecit certos de felicitate æterna.”—*Scholia* in loc. See Wolfius, *Curæ Philol.* in loc.

If we likewise take into consideration, that a future state of retributive justice could not, consistently, be revealed during the continuance of a dispensation supported by temporal sanctions only, it cannot be imagined, that this doctrine would form the basis of any book in the Hebrew Volume. To suppose so, would be to attribute inconsistency to the Divine counsels, and mutability to an unchanged and unchangeable Deity.

In another point of view, it is improbable that Solomon should have been commissioned by the Almighty to promulgate, in a particular treatise, the sublime dogma of a future retribution. By comparing together all the records of revelation, we find it has been the plan of Divine Providence to develop gradually the grand scheme of redemption; to reveal it in successive ages with still increasing clearness and force, till, at the advent of Christ, the world was illuminated with the splendour of celestial truth. The Prophets, whose works have reached posterity, were all subsequent to the age of Solomon; and it cannot be credited, that the royal Preacher had a clearer knowledge of the scheme of redemption, and of a future state, than those worthies who were raised up in succession by Jehovah to unfold the sacred truths of providence and grace. That the king of Israel should teach expressly what the Prophets have scarcely declared openly

and without reserve, cannot be reconciled with the plan pursued by Omnipotent Wisdom, of the gradual development of religious truth.

These reasons clearly warrant the conclusion, that the book of Ecclesiastes was not designed, as Desvieux affirms, to enforce the doctrine of immortality, and of a future state of rewards and punishments. Whatever incidental intimations of these doctrines may be discovered in the book, it is not the scope and leading object of it to promulgate them. And this is a distinction necessary to be urged upon the reader. Though it appears to be unanswerably established, by the preceding observations, that it is not the *chief object* and *primary design* of the work to inculcate a future state of retribution, it appears equally clear, that it contains some strong proofs of this article of religious faith. And here the writer of these pages may, it is hoped, be permitted to digress a little, in order to state the grounds of this conviction.

The strongest testimonies to an eternal existence hereafter which the discourse supplies are, chapter iii. 21, xii. 7, xii. 14. In the two former we read, "Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?" and, "The dust shall return to the earth as it was,

and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." These passages, according to Bishop Warburton, only express the survivorship of the soul, without implying its distinct personality, and coincide with the sentiments of those ancient philosophers who considered the soul as a substance, and held the refusion of it into the universal nature, or $\tau\omicron$ EN, while they denied it all personality, and disbelieved a future state of rewards and punishments.* Or it may be alleged, that the same expressions might be used by those who maintained the metempsychosis, without believing a proper resurrection and an eternal state of retribution.† But, ingenious as these interpretations may appear, proof is still wanting of their accordance with the opinions of the learned Jews in the age of Solomon; and, what is more, they are inconsistent with other passages of the work. We meet with repeated declarations of a divine retribution;‡ but if this retribution is not absolutely perfect here below; if vice often prospers, while virtue is depressed; if oppression and misery await the good equally with the bad; if,

* *Divine Legation*, lib. v. § 6. Compare lib. iii. § 2.

† The transmigration of souls seems to have been the doctrine of at least some of the Jews in our Saviour's time; (John ix. 2; see Whitby;) but others deny it.—(See Kuinöel in loc.) The Pharisees, according to some, held the metempsychosis, but others are of a different opinion.—See Reland, *Antiquitates*, par. ii. cap. 9, § 14; Pritius, *Introductio in Nov. Test.* cap. xxxiii. § 11; Lardner, *Works*, vol. i. p. 66, ed. 4to.

‡ Chap. iii. 17, viii. 11, xi. 9, xii. 14. See Oxlee, *On the Trinity and Incarnation*, vol. i. p. 47, and Witsius, *Œconomia Foederis*, lib. iii. cap. 13, § 15.

in short, all that this world has to bestow is vain and delusive, the divine retribution, so frequently urged by the Preacher, must, consequently, take place in a future state. Since, then, “the spirit of man goeth upward,” and “returns to God who gave it,” it is most reasonable to understand these expressions of the soul’s personal existence in another stage of being, where every one will receive rewards or punishments, according to a righteous retribution.

From several observations in this book it may be inferred, that the extraordinary Providence under the Theocracy was not so equally administered in the age of Solomon as invariably to dispense rewards to the virtuous and punishments to the vicious. The Preacher declares, that one event, death, happens as well to the righteous as the unjust; (ch. ii. 16, iii. 19, ix. 2;) that he beheld “the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power, but they (*i. e.* the oppressed) had no comforter;” (ch. iv. 1;) 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;” (ch. ix. 11;) that “the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province,” was not

unusual.—(Ch. v. 8.) It is also observed, that “there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that longeth his life in his wickedness;” 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.”—(Ch. vii. 15, viii. 14.) These, it is true, are stated by the author of the book as the cavils of profane scoffers; but they must have had some foundation in truth, for it would be irrational to build an objection upon a circumstance plainly contrary to general observation and experience. Now such declarations could scarcely have been made unless these inequalities had existed; yet we find the author expressing a conviction, that they would *somewhere* be rectified; and therefore, as this did not *always* take place in the present life, he must have concluded, that God would call mankind to judgment in another world, where sentence would be passed upon them according to their merits. All mankind, of whatever moral character, being alike subject to calamity and death, affords the surest grounds for believing that an equitable distinction will be made in another stage of existence. The royal philosopher himself has reasoned in the same manner, in the Ninth Section, according to the division in the annexed Paraphrase, when, though he acknowledges the

prevalence of iniquity, he at the same time asserts, that “ God will judge the righteous and the wicked, (for there is a season for every purpose of God,) and he will determine concerning every work.” And this equitable judgment, he continues to argue in the next Section, will take effect, though men as well as beasts must die; and though the good and the bad seem to be treated alike in this world, yet it will not *always* be so; for when we look beyond the grave, we discover that “ the spirit of man goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast downward to the earth,” where the opposition shows, that, as the spirit of the beast perishes, the spirit of man lives for ever; it ascends into heaven, unto God who gave it, to receive the righteous recompense of reward.

Hence, “in asserting that “ the spirit of man goeth upward,” and “ returns to God who gave it,” the Preacher must have meant to assert its existence in a future state, where alone it can be subjected to the just retribution which, he constantly maintained, would, at some time or other, take effect. This becomes still more apparent from the remaining passage appealed to at the outset, wherein it is affirmed, that “ God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.”—(Ch. xii. 14.) The terms themselves, in

this text, so obviously imply the strict immortality of the soul and a future retribution, that a man must be strangely biassed by an hypothesis who searches for any other exposition. Yet Le Clerc and others suppose, that all this might be asserted by one who expected only temporal rewards and punishments, provided he believed, as every Jew did, in a superintending and extraordinary Providence.

That this interpretation, however, is erroneous, and that the passage cannot relate to the judgment of God exercised in this world, may be inferred from the universality of the expressions. If God be a righteous judge, and “will bring *every work* into judgment, with *every secret thing*,” it is utterly impossible to understand this of any other than a future day of judgment. Every work, it is manifest, is not judged in this world, nor is every secret thing brought to light, and if this be done at all, and we are assured of the fact, it must be in another world. It will not avail to reply, that, while God exercised a particular and extraordinary Providence over the Israelites, a just retribution might invariably take effect; for, even under the Theocracy, there were always some apparent exceptions to the temporal administration of divine justice, an undeviating retribution being, as far as we are able to judge, incompatible with a state of probation; and, as we have

just seen, such an extraordinary Providence was not constantly administered in the age of Solomon. Hence, as the Preacher asserts a righteous and universal judgment of *every* work, and of *every* secret thing, he must have believed it to take place, not on earth, but in a future state.

The proposition delivered in this verse forms the reason for the exhortation immediately preceding. “*Let us hear*, says the Preacher, *the conclusion of the whole matter* contained in the second part of this discourse; and if, as has been demonstrated, Wisdom is the only substantial good, then *fear God and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man*, and will constitute his supreme good: *for God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*” Supposing these last words to refer only to God’s judgments in the earth, they supply no reason whatever for the observation of the precept; for what inducement could there be to fear God, and to keep his commandments, if this world were our all, a world which, with all its pleasures and advantages, the Preacher had decidedly maintained to be only vanity and vexation of spirit? Why did he paint, in such glowing colours, the emptiness of all terrestrial things, if no better prospect awaited us beyond the grave? And why did he

recommend the attainment of Wisdom so earnestly, if it were only to be rewarded with the perishable and unsatisfactory things which this world has to bestow? The declaration, that “God will bring every work into judgment,” if it merely refers to his dealings with mankind on earth, neither agrees with the scope of the whole discourse, nor forms a reason for the precept delivered immediately before. Take it, however, in its true light, and all the expressions will be found correct, and the argument cogent. Since every thing in this transitory scene is unsubstantial; since much oppression, pain, misery, and vice prevail; and since the righteous, equally with the wicked, are subject to misfortune and death, it follows that, if God be just, a period will arrive when every thing will be set to rights, when the inequalities of this world will be adjusted, and men be punished or rewarded, according as they have obeyed or disobeyed the divine commands. It must, therefore, be the great duty and principal concern of every man, in this life, *to fear God* in a filial and reverential manner, and *to keep his commandments*, because, in a future state, *God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.**

* The objections of Le Clerc to this interpretation of Ecclesiastes xii. 14 are solidly refuted by Peters, *Critical Dissertation on Job*, part iii. § 12.

The result of the foregoing investigation is, that the book of Ecclesiastes is not designed to inculcate the immortality of the soul and a future retribution, though it supplies some very clear intimations of that important doctrine.

The opinion most generally received respecting the scope and design of the Ecclesiastes is, that it is an inquiry into the *Summum Bonum*, or Chief Good, the frequent subject of speculation among the philosophers of Greece and Rome. To this opinion the Author of the present performance accedes, and upon this basis the following Paraphrase is constructed. But, in characterizing the discourse as a discussion of this interesting topic, the Chief Good is not understood in the same sense as by the ancient philosophers. Much confusion and error have arisen from applying to the illustration of this subject notions derived from the classical schools of philosophy. The real good of man, as portrayed by the Jewish age, is essentially different, both in its nature and object, from that which was sought after by the learned of Pagan antiquity.

“The Sovereign Good,” says Mr. Harris, “is that, the possession of which make us happy.”*

* Harris, *Dialogue on Happiness*, part i. With this agree the various descriptions of the *Summum Bonum* enumerated by Stobæus, *Eclog. Ethic.* lib. ii. cap. 7, ed. Heeren; Aristotle, *Rhetorica*, lib. i. cap. 6; Lactantius,

The essence of the philosophical *Summum Bonum*, according to this definition, consists in its power of producing happiness. Amidst all the diversity of opinions as to the thing itself, in this the philosophers are universally agreed.* The very characteristic of the Chief Good, in which they are all unanimous, is, that it is desirable for its own sake, and all other things only as means conducing to it; that it is the ultimate end to which every thing is to be referred, and itself to nothing further, which shows it to have been, in their apprehension, but another term for human felicity.† But it is manifestly not the sole object of the author of the *Ecclesiastes* to investigate

Instit. lib. iii. The *Summum Bonum* is ably discussed in Dr. Ireland's *Paganism and Christianity compared*, chap. viii. See also Rutherford's *Essay on Virtue*, chap. ix.

* Ονοματι (scil. το αγαθον) μεν ουν σχεδον υπο των πλειστων ομολογεται· την γαρ ευδαιμονιαν και οι πολλοι, και οι χαριεντες λεγουσι, “as to the name of the Chief Good it is universally agreed, for both the multitude and the learned call it happiness.”—(Aristotle, *Ethic. Nichom.* lib. i. cap. 4.) In Plato's Dialogue on the *Summum Bonum*, entitled *Philebus*, it is described to be that habit or disposition of mind which renders human life happy, εξιν ψυχης και διαθεσιν, την δυναμενην ανθρωποις πασι τον βιον ευδαιμονα παρεχειν.—*Opera*, vol. iv. p. 209, ed. Bipont. See also Augustine, *De Civit. Dei*, lib. xix. cap. 1, 2, 3; Cicero, *De Finibus*, *passim*.; Stobæus, *Eclog. Ethic.* lib. ii. cap. 7, p. 138, and 274 et seq. ed. Heeren.

† “Quærimus quid sit extremum et ultimum bonorum; quod omnium philosophorum sententia tale debet esse, ut ad id omnia referri oporteat, ipsum autem nusquam.”—(Cicero, *De Finibus*, lib. i. cap. 9. See also cap. 12; Maximus Tyrius, *Diss.* 19. *sub. fin.*; Aristotle, *Ethic. Nichom.* lib. i. cap. 7; Stobæus, *Eclog. Ethic.* vol. iii. p. 80 et seq.) Indeed, the great object of ancient philosophy was the promoting the happiness of the present life alone, as Cicero observes, in his fine treatise on the Sovereign Good, “omnis summa philosophiæ ad beate vivendum refertur.”—*De Finibus*, lib. ii. cap. 27.

what may enable us to lead happy lives. Though the Wisdom which he panegyryzes contributed more to happiness than the fleeting pleasures of a fleeting world, it is not on this account that he emblazons it with unceasing praise. He attributes effects to it far more noble and sacred; recommending it to our esteem and cultivation, because it is the only means of living conformably to the will of Heaven, and of obtaining the favour of Omnipotence. It would not have accorded with Solomon's reputation for piety and wisdom, to propose aught as the Chief Good unconnected with religion. While Pagan philosophy never taught the glory and service which are due to the Supreme Being, he could never cease to inculcate the necessity of reverence to the divine law, and the unparalleled importance of fearing God and keeping his commandments. Educated in the strictest principles of Judaism, he must ever have considered, and ever have represented, these as man's highest interest and supreme good.

The *Summum Bonum*, as understood by the ancient philosophers, was that which constituted happiness in *the present life*. That none of the ancient philosophers believed the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments, though, on account of its great utility, all the theistical ones sedulously taught it to the people, is

strenuously maintained by the learned Warburton;* but, without giving entirely into this opinion, he who impartially examines their writings will be convinced, that their ideas were confined principally to the limits of terrestrial existence; that their reasonings about the nature of the soul and immortality, when they rose the highest, were still involved in uncertainty; and that whenever they cast a glance beyond the grave, it was considered as a subject of curiosity and amusing speculation, rather than as leading to any useful and practical result. But the Jewish philosopher looks beyond the narrow bounds of this world; he contemplates the time when, after the termination of life, “the spirit shall return to God who gave it;” and elevates his thoughts to another stage of existence, where “God will bring every work into judgment.” His intimations of these truths, it is confessed, are indefinite and general; and, even while he mounts to the very confines of the etherial regions, we are compelled to acknowledge, that his conceptions of a future state were surrounded with shade and obscurity. But, confused as his notions might be, he was too well convinced of a future life to regard aught as the Chief Good which is restricted to the present,

* *Divine Legation*, lib. iii. See Dr. Ireland’s *Paganism and Christianity compared*, chap. v., and Dr. Leland’s *Advantage and Necessity of Revelation*, part iii.

and which affords not the promise of advancing the happiness of the soul, after the body has crumbled into dust.

The Sovereign Good, as understood by the author of the Ecclesiastes, is that which is ultimately good, that which, in all its bearings and relations, is conducive to the best interests of man. This is the object of the Preacher's inquiry; and, after discussing various erroneous opinions, he finally determines that it consists in **TRUE WISDOM**. The scope of the whole argument, therefore, is the praise and recommendation of **WISDOM**, as the supreme good to creatures responsible for their actions. In this **Wisdom** is not included a single particle of that which is worldly and carnal, so frequently possessed by men addicted to vice, the minions of avarice, and the slaves of their passions; but that which is from above, that which is holy, spiritual, undefiled, and which, in the writings of Solomon, is but another word for Religion. Guided by this clue, we can easily traverse the intricate windings and mazes in which so many commentators upon the Ecclesiastes have been lost and bewildered. By keeping steadily in view the Preacher's object, to eulogize Heavenly Wisdom, the whole admits an easy and natural interpretation; light is diffused around its obscurities; connexion is discovered in that which was before disjointed; the

argument receives additional force, the sentiments new beauty; and every part of the discourse, when considered in reference to this object, tends to develop the nature of True Wisdom, to display its excellence, or to recommend its acquirement.

In a work intended to induce mankind to cultivate Religion, it is natural, if not necessary, to begin with pointing out the insignificance of the things which the multitude, in their search of happiness, so eagerly covet and pursue. If once convinced that wealth, the idol of so many, cannot mitigate a single pang of its possessor; that the splendours of rank are but empty pomp and idle pageantry; and that voluptuous pleasures are too transitory to be the source of felicity, and even pall in the enjoyment, the mind is prepared to reject what, instead of producing happiness, ends only in weariness and disappointment. When, on the other hand, the captivating aspect of Religion is portrayed in all its beauty; when her intrinsic value is described with poetic warmth and imagery, the solid comforts she imparts in life, the sublime prospect she opens beyond the grave, the heart becomes enraptured with the view, and, forsaking the gilded objects of sense, seeks enduring joys and tranquillity under her banners. The emptiness and insufficiency of all human pursuits and enjoyments, contrasted with the native charms and real blessings of

Religion, evince that nothing in this world, however loved and admired, can be put in competition with Religious Wisdom.

After this manner Aristotle, the most profound and universal genius of antiquity, discusses the Sovereign Good, in his *Nichomachæan Ethics*; first proving, that it does not consist in pleasure and leading a sensual life, nor in the pursuit of honour, nor in a life of contemplation, nor in amassing wealth; and thence concluding, that it must be what is perfect and complete in itself, what is desirable, not as the means, but the end, desirable for its own sake alone, and the ultimate object of all our actions: he, therefore, places it in the virtuous exercise of the energies of the soul continued through life.* The mighty Stagirite saw clearly, that external things cannot constitute man's Chief Good; that it must refer to his moral and intellectual nature; and he only fails in a true conception of it for want of juster notions of a Providence and a future state.† His method, however, of treating the subject is the same which the equally penetrating and enlarged understanding of the Jewish philosopher adopts in

* Το ανθρωπινον αγαθον ψυχης ενεργεια γινεται κατ' αρετην* ει δε πλειους αι αρεται, κατα την αριστην και τελειοτατην* επι δε εν βιω τελειω.—*Ethic. Nichom.* lib. i. cap. 7.

† “Summum Bonum, quod beatum facit, non potest esse, nisi in ea religione atque doctrina, cui spes immortalitatis adjuncta est.”—*Lactantius, Institut.* lib. iii. cap. 12.

promulgating the true Sovereign Good. He first delineates the fleeting and unsubstantial nature of whatever is most prized by those whose minds are grovelling upon earth. By a rapid, but scrutinizing view of the circumstances attending human life, he demonstrates the vanity of worldly pursuits, and the insufficiency of worldly pleasures. Neither the soft smiles of prosperity, nor the magnificence of pomp and greatness, can satisfy the desires of the soul; every gratification that wealth and power can procure is empty, momentary, and delusive: in whatever condition he is placed, man is still the heir of disappointment and anxiety; and, whether struggling under the pressure of poverty and toil, or cradled in the lap of luxurious indulgence, highly-purchased experience will convince him, that secular things oftener produce vexation of spirit than substantial happiness. After this mournful, but too faithful picture of human life, the royal Preacher proceeds to unfold, in language the most impressive, the immense worth and advantage of Religious Wisdom.

Hence he commences with the declaration, that “all is vanity;” which is not to be understood as implying any censure upon the works of creation, for God does nothing in vain, every thing being properly adapted to its end, and excellently fitted to display the power, wisdom,

and goodness of the Almighty. Yet when the things of this world are applied to improper purposes; when they are considered as the end, while they are only intended to be the means; and are rested in as the source of happiness which they were not designed to afford, vanity is discovered to be their character. That which is most excellent becomes useless, if not injurious, by the abuse; and the works of Omnipotence, however wise and good in themselves, are unprofitable to those who misuse and pervert them. It were a kind of blasphemy to vilify whatever has proceeded from Omniscient Power; and Solomon can only be supposed to pronounce all things here below vain, when they are applied to a wrong use, by the ignorance and wickedness of man. Nor does he so denominate all things universally and without any exception, but only all *earthly* things, as wealth, pleasure, pomp, luxury, power, and whatever is merely human and terrestrial. If these are placed in competition with divine and heavenly things, or are foolishly regarded as the means of real happiness, they become useless and unprofitable, because they are uncertain and transitory, never fully satisfying the desires of the soul, nor producing permanent felicity.*

* “ It is true, the works of the Lord are all great and excellent, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein, good in their kind and order, of excellent use to set forth the divine wisdom, power, goodness,

If worldly things are vain in these respects, it would, nevertheless, be presumption and impiety to represent them as actually bad. They are good in themselves, and, when rightly used, tend only to good, since they contribute to the enjoyment of life, and, in an eminent degree, to the ultimate and real interest of man. But if they are pursued as the only “portion in this life,” as constituting the happiness of beings formed for immortality, they are not estimated on right principles, and the result will be vexation and disappointment. Their vanity, then, arises from the folly and baseness of men, who, in forgetfulness of eternity, are too apt to regard this world as their sole and final abode, and to expect that satisfaction from them which they cannot give. Nor are they to be condemned on this account. That they are insufficient to render man happy is itself the ordination of Infinite Wisdom, and, consequently, best suited to a probationary state; wisely calculated for the trial of man’s virtue, and, by weaning him from too fond attachment

and glory; and necessary to the use and service of man; (1 Tim. iv. 4, 5;) yet vain in other respects: first, comparatively vain, when put in the balance with God and heavenly things.—(Job xv. 15; Isaiah xl. 15, 16, 17.) Secondly, vain by that superinduced vanity to which they are subjected by man’s transgression.—(Rom. viii. 20.) Thirdly, vain in order to happiness, the full possession and the most vigorous fruition of them not being capable of affording real satisfaction to the immortal soul; man himself, the noblest of them all, being, ‘at his best estate, altogether vanity.’—(Ps. xxxix. 5, 6, 11, lxii. 9, cxliv. 3, 4.)”—Bishop Reynolds, *Commentary on Ecclesiastes* i. 2.

to things on earth, to stimulate his desires and exertions after the blessedness of another life.

In prosecuting his inquiry into the Chief Good, Solomon has divided his work into two parts. The first, which extends to the tenth verse of the sixth chapter, is taken up in demonstrating the vanity of all earthly conditions, occupations, and pleasures; the second part, which includes the remainder of the book, is occupied in eulogizing WISDOM, and in describing its nature, its excellence, its beneficial effects.* This division, indeed, is not adhered to throughout with logical accuracy; some deviations from strict method are allowable in a popular discourse; and the author occasionally diverges to topics incidentally suggested; but, amidst these digressions, the distinctions of the two parts cannot escape the attentive reader. It is not the manner of the sacred writers to form their discourses in a regular series of deductions and concatenated arguments: they adopt a species of composition, less logical indeed, but better adapted to common capacities, in which the subject is still kept in view, though not handled according to the rules of dialectics. Even St. Paul, whose reasoning powers are unquestionable, frequently

* That the book consists of two parts, or divisions, has been observed by several commentators, and especially by Dr. Wells, *Help for understanding the Scriptures*, Preface to Ecclesiastes.

digresses from his subject, breaks off abruptly in the middle of his argument, and departs from the strictness of order and arrangement. In the same way has the royal Preacher treated his subject; not with exact, philosophical method, but in a free and popular manner, giving an uncontrolled range to his capacious intellect, and suffering himself to be borne along by the exuberance of his thoughts and the vehemence of his feelings. But, though the methodical disposition of his ideas is occasionally interrupted, his plan is still discernible; and perhaps he never wanders more from his principal object than most of the other writers in the Sacred Volume.

This account of the scope and design of the Ecclesiastes might be further confirmed by an analysis of the work, which, however, it is unnecessary to attempt at present, as the subjoined Paraphrase and Notes will sufficiently show the author's design and his chain of argument; and a general idea may be obtained with facility from the prefixed Table of Contents. We may therefore conclude, without further enlargement, that the leading object of the Ecclesiastes is an inquiry into the Sovereign Good, which the author conducts upon the plan of first proving what does not constitute it, though too often regarded in that light by the folly of mankind; and, in the

next place, showing that it consists in WISDOM, or RELIGION, which, for that reason, is highly extolled. The book, in fact, may be considered as designed to praise and recommend True Wisdom to the observance of men, as the only real and permanent good.

How greatly does this view of the work exalt the character of Solomon! At an early period of life, when the Almighty granted him the option, his innate sagacity prompted him to prefer Wisdom to every other possession; in consequence of which he was enabled, by the Divine favour, to attain unparalleled knowledge.—(1 Kings iii. 5, *et seq.*; 2 Chron. i. 7, *et seq.*) But, not content with its silent acquisition, or with the renown which it procured him throughout the then known world, he laboured diligently to impart the fruits of it to others, and composed several imperishable works for the benefit of his subjects and of posterity. Some of his works are unfortunately lost; but the most valuable of them, those relating to morality and religion, are still extant, and serve to demonstrate as well the piety and benevolence of his heart as the depth of his understanding. In the Proverbs he gives advice and directions to such as desire to become practically wise: in the Ecclesiastes, by delineating the excellence, he recommends the love and acquirement of Wisdom; and, in the Canticles, he refines

and spiritualizes the same subject, under the veil of allegorical and pastoral poetry. A life thus employed in the inculcation of Religion, as well as in extending the prosperity of his country, while it dignified the monarch, ennobled the man. He who, amid the pomp and pleasures of royalty, entertains the desire, and, amid the toils of government, finds the leisure, to instruct the world in religious truth, must be pronounced an ornament to humanity. Yet the character of Solomon is not without its spots; the impartiality of Scripture narrative records that his heart, though it owned the generous pulsations of virtue, was, notwithstanding, betrayed into sin; and, ensnared by the soft seduction of female charms, he fell into great and lamentable errors. But when, by the grace of that Almighty Being whom he had offended, he was made sensible of his transgression, he became a sincere penitent; and published to the world the evidence of a broken and contrite heart in the book of Ecclesiastes; a work designed to withdraw the affections of mankind from all sublunary things, and to attach them to wisdom and virtue, which can alone secure their real and lasting happiness. Thus, if benevolence pities, and stern justice condemns, the fall of the monarch, piety exults at his recovery; and though his criminality was confessedly great, yet his heart-felt sorrow, his sincere repentance, and his complete reformation, exalt his character to

the degree of excellence which we have been accustomed to associate with and admire in the name of Solomon.

SECTION V.

THE STYLE AND LANGUAGE OF THE ECCLESIASTES.

The obscurities of the Ecclesiastes have furnished matter of complaint to almost every commentator; and that they are not without foundation is the opinion of a distinguished prelate, whose literary labours have done more towards illustrating the nature and beauties of Hebrew poetry than those of all his predecessors in the department of sacred criticism. “The style of this book,” says Bishop Lowth, “is peculiar; the diction is, for the most part, low, but exceedingly obscure; often loose, unconnected, and resembling conversation; neither is the poetical character very apparent in the composition and structure, which may, perhaps, in some measure, be attributed to the nature of the argument.”* The

* “Stylus hujusce operis est plane singularis; dictio est humilis plerumque et submissa, sed imprimis obscura; sæpe laxa et dissoluta, et sermoni proprior; nec in compositione et structura multum viget poeticus character; quæ forsàn videri possunt argumenti naturæ aliquatenus tribuenda.”—(*Prælect.* 24.) “Stylus est humilis et ad prosam accedit.”—Jahn, *Introductio. ad V. T.* § 213.

style, moreover, abounds with inversions, with abrupt transitions, with bold ellipses, and with a few words and idioms by some denominated Chaldaic, but which may rather be numbered among the writer's peculiarities, as they have not any indisputable marks of an Aramæan origin, and, though uncommon, seem agreeable to the analogy of the Hebrew tongue.

The book has been pronounced, by some critics, to be written in the way of dialogue, between a religious man on one side, and an Epicurean worldling on the other; while others, as Herder and Eichhorn, though they do not regard it as a regular dialogue, characterize it as a singular and artificial composition, in which two speakers, a rash Investigator and a considerate Instructor, are introduced, whose opposite character and sentiments are discernible throughout. However these writers may differ in their particular views, they all agree in principle; and Dean Yeard, in his *Paraphrase upon the Ecclesiastes*, has endeavoured to reduce it to a consistent form. But all such attempts must be unsuccessful, as there is not the most distant hint, in any part of the work, of its being a discussion between two or more persons. It has none of those breaks, nor of those glances upon incidental topics, and rejoinders, by which

dialogistic compositions are distinguished. The subject matter and the chain of the argument prove, in the most convincing manner, that it is an investigation conducted by the author in his own person and character.

Still, though it is not a regular dialogue, the author sometimes starts objections against his reasoning, to which he afterwards replies. It is not material whether these be considered to proceed from Solomon himself, or to be stated as the objections of the sensualist; but that he actually does, in some instances, introduce Epicurean cavils, for the purpose of refuting them, cannot in reason be denied. Some passages occur of such a character as no ingenuity of exposition can reconcile with the known sentiments of Solomon; while they are perfectly suitable to men of dissolute habits, and may be regarded as the popular sophistry prevalent in that age among the profane and licentious. Passages again, in their obvious sense expressing the principles of atheistic folly, must be understood to be introduced by the author with a view to their refutation; otherwise they would be inconsistent with many other positions in the same treatise, wherein he exhorts the sons of men to the practice of the moral virtues, to fear God, and to keep his commandments.

Nor is it any impediment to this mode of interpreting such like passages, that they are not expressly proposed as the false reasonings of sensualists. The inspired writers are not accustomed to deliver their doctrines, and to refute opponents, in the logical manner of Grecian philosophers; but, though objections are not formally stated, they may be discovered without difficulty. Sentiments of a sensual and irreligious nature, of which there are some, cannot be attributed to the royal Preacher as he dictates of his own mind; and if, in what immediately follows, they are condemned or rebutted, we may safely consider them as the objections of the profane, which he introduces in order to refute. In the same manner St. Paul raises and combats objections, without any precise and formal statement, leaving them to be discovered by the sagacity of the reader.*

The language of this book has sometimes appeared exceptionable, from taking, in their utmost extent, expressions designed to convey a qualified and limited signification. General propositions are not always to be received in the strictest sense of the words; and particular observations must not be stretched beyond the intention of the

* See Macknight on *Romans*, and *Prelim. Essay*, 3.

writer. Let an author's ideas be ever so accurate and definite, it is next to impossible, at all times, to select words which convey to the minds of others neither more nor less than his real meaning. This results from the inherent imperfection of language; for which reason, his expressions ought to be interpreted with such restrictions as are necessarily required by common sense and the scope of the context. Many of the Proverbs of Solomon, according to the most general signification of the terms, convey sentiments unreasonable and unjust; and hence the commentator is compelled to explain them with the limitation so evidently required by common sense and the nature of things. If several of the passages in the Ecclesiastes which have been condemned as absurd, or immoral and profane, be understood in a qualified sense, a sense clearly suggested by truth and reason, they will be vindicated from so heavy a charge, and will be found in every respect worthy the inspired author from whom they proceed.

Though the general tenor of the language approaches to the plainness and simplicity of prose compositions, it is occasionally highly ornamented and figurative. In the beginning of the twelfth chapter is a specimen of boldness of metaphor, and of combination of imagery, scarcely equalled, certainly not exceeded, in the most

poetical parts of the Old Testament. As the passage alluded to is singular, a more particular examination may not be improper.

Ecclesiastes xii. 1—6, is generally considered, though, in my opinion, erroneously, as an allegory descriptive of old age, and its final close in death.* An allegory is “a representation of *one* thing which is intended to excite the representation of another thing,” according to the definition of Bishop Marsh, who has treated this subject with that depth of thought and acuteness of discrimination which distinguish all his writings.† The object selected to represent some other thing must be consistent in its several parts, and must be kept constantly in view. If a vine is chosen, as by the Psalmist, to depicture the situation of the Jews; or if a ship, tossed by tempests, be selected, as it is by the sweetest of lyric bards, to represent the Roman State agitated with civil broils:‡ these objects must be uniformly adhered to, or the allegory becomes inconsistent and

* Besides the commentators, see Glass, *Phil. Sac.* p. 1297, ed. Dathe; Bauer, *Hermeneut. Sac.* § 54; Lowth, *Praelect.* 10, p. 119; Horne, *Introduction to the Scriptures*, vol. ii. p. 675. Some have explained this passage in reference to the Babylonian and Roman Captivities, and other fanciful expositions have been offered; (see Jerome, *Comment.* in loc. and *Gentleman's Magazine* for July and August, 1752;) but, whatever doubts may exist as to the mode of interpreting it, it has evidently reference to old age and its close.

† *Divinity Lectures*, xvii. Van Mildert, *Bampton. Lect.* vii. p. 239. Horne, *Introduction*, part ii. chap. 5, § 4, ed. 2da.

‡ Psalm lxxx. Horace, *Carm.* lib. i. 14.

obscure. With respect to the passage in question, however, there is no one ruling and predominant object selected for the comparison; the heavenly luminaries, the almond-tree, the grasshopper, a palace, a bird, &c. are mingled together in one vivid description of venerable, but complaining age. It is not, therefore, strictly speaking, an allegory; and cannot, without great caution, be subjected to the rules of allegorical interpretation. It is to be considered only as a highly figurative and poetical representation of old age, in which the various infirmities and imbecilities of that period of life are portrayed by a great variety of images, in themselves unconnected, yet mutually tending to identify the prototype.

The picture, then, consists of an accumulation of images, drawn from various objects, yet contributing, in their combination, to the truth and accuracy of the likeness. Being in themselves unconnected, the only relationship they have consists in their mutually identifying the portrait with the original; and, consequently, while each is to be explained by itself, all must be explained in reference to the symptoms of age. But as, in every metaphorical expression, there is a literal and tropical sense, it becomes a question of great importance how far the figurative sense is to be carried. Is every minute point of resemblance

to be investigated and applied? Are the images intended to depicture the effects of age with philosophical exactness and anatomical precision? Or is it only an outline delineation of life's last stage, sketched, indeed, with a bold and vigorous hand, but designed only to convey a general idea?

Some expositors, fond of refining upon what is plain, and of extracting recondite meanings from what is simple, have endeavoured to ascertain the accuracy of the portrait by a scientific and medical investigation. Among these must be classed the justly-deserving names of Smith and Mead, who have displayed great erudition and talent in the attempt to establish their system; but their learned labours, as may be inferred from several considerations, have only raised a visionary, though elegant structure.*

The nature of figurative diction almost prohibits logical accuracy. It is the language of imagination, not of reason and judgment; and, therefore, it obtains to a greater extent in the early periods of society than in times of civilization and refinement. This airy, but pleasing creation of the fancy, disappears before the sober march of reason and philosophy. In poetry and fiction

* See Dr. Smith's *Solomon's Portraiture of Old Age*, and Dr. Mead's *Medica Sacra*.

it still retains a place, and a much more conspicuous one in Eastern works of imagination than European. “ We are sparing in the use of figurative language; the Asiatics indulge in it with a daring prodigality: we are studious of propriety in metaphors, and that they may arise easily and naturally from the subject; they are delighted with a rapid accumulation of them: we endeavour to render them neat and elegant with simplicity; they, rejecting things common and trite, are captivated with far-fetched images, which they multiply even to satiety: the poets of Europe chiefly design to write with agreeableness and perspicuity; those of Asia with a vast and unrestrained luxuriousness.”* The nature of figurative language, therefore, especially as employed by Oriental bards, renders it probable, that nothing more was intended, in this portrait of old age, than to exhibit a general view of its character and infirmities.†

* “ Nos translationes mitigare solemus, ac lenire; Asiatici vero, temerè et incitatiùs exaggerare: nos studemus ut verecundæ sint, et quodammodò se facilè insinuent metaphoræ; illi, ut violentè irruant; nos, ut sint politæ, nitidæ, venustæ, nec longè ductæ; illi res pervagatas et in medio positas transvolant, et interdum longissimè repetitas captant imagines, quas ad satietatem usque cumulant: Europæi denique poetæ in eo potissimum laborant ut jucundè, ut delucidè scribant; Asiatici, ut vastè, ut luxuriosè, ut dissolutè.”—(Sir Wm. Jones, *Poes. Asiat. Comment.* cap. i.) The terseness of this cannot be translated into the English language, but it is imitated above.

† “ Omnis ævi poesis, præsertim rudioris, tantam imaginum præ se fert copiam, ut exquisitam ubique ne poscamus diligentiam aut ingenii subtilitatem prorsus vetat.”—Copleston, *Prælect. Academ.* xxxv. p. 453.

Besides, medical knowledge, in all probability, had not made sufficient progress in Solomon's era to enable a writer of that age to describe, with anatomical accuracy, the effects of age upon the human constitution.* It is well known, that the ancient Greeks did not practise dissection, which is absolutely necessary in order to obtain a correct knowledge of the internal structure of the human frame; and there is no reason for supposing that the science of anatomy had made greater progress among the Asiatics.† The rapidity with which dead animal bodies are reduced to a state of putrescence, in the hot climates of the East, presents an almost insuperable impediment to its cultivation. Though physicians and the art of medicine are often mentioned in the Sacred Writings, (Gen. i. 2; 2 Chron. xvi. 12; Isaiah i. 6; Jer. viii. 22, xlv. 11; Ezekiel xxx. 21,) we find no allusion to anatomical knowledge. It has been asserted, I am aware, that they contain many testimonies proving the Hebrews to have been acquainted with several of the internal parts of the human body; but, setting aside the passage in question, where is there either mention of, or allusion to,

* Guoguet, *Origin of Laws*, par. i. lib. 3, cap. 1. *Encyclopæd. Britan.* art. Anatomy.

† Daniel Le Clerc supposes they might investigate the anatomy of the body by inspecting wounds, dead animals, &c. without the practice of dissection.—*Histoire de la Médecine*, par. i. lib. 2.

any part of the human organization, which might not be made by a person entirely unacquainted with physical science.* The practice of dissection must have been impossible among the Hebrews, with whom the touch of a dead body occasioned a legal defilement.—(Numb. xix. 11, *et seq.*) Neither could they derive a knowledge of the physiology of man from other nations, all of whom were far behind the Israelites in the arts and sciences, excepting, perhaps, the Egyptians; and even among them the science of medicine was in its rudiments at the time of which we are speaking.† It was, therefore, morally impossible for an ancient Jew to describe, with anatomical correctness, the ravages of disease, or the maladies of age.

If we could even suppose, that the king of Israel, whose knowledge of the works of nature was preeminently great, was acquainted with the anatomical structure of the human body; yet

* That the Hebrews were acquainted with anatomy to a considerable extent has been asserted, among others, by Jahn, *Archæologia Hebræa*, p. 165. Bishop Horsley thought that the circulation of the blood was known by the author of the Ecclesiastes; (Horsley, *Sermons*, vol. iii. p. 190, Lond. 1813;) but it is an opinion without adequate support. In a question as to the mode of interpreting Ecclesiastes xii. 1—6, that passage must be set aside; for any appeal to it is a mere begging of the question.

† Brucker, *Hist. Philosoph.* lib. i. cap. 8. Shuckford, *Connect.* lib. ix. vol. 2, p. 424. Guoguet, *Origin of Laws*, par. i. lib. 3, cap. 1, art. 2. The learned Warburton, who is inclined to exalt the antiquity and arts of Egypt, thinks anatomy was, in very ancient times, known and studied by the Egyptians.—*Div. Legat.* lib. iv. § 3.

why should he communicate this knowledge in metaphor and figure, rather than in the simple diction of philosophy and truth? If he had designed to describe, as a physician, the effects of age, why did he choose the language of poetry, which is so liable to be mistaken? It is true, it has been asserted, that the appellations in Ecclesiastes xii. 1—6 may possibly have been the names current among the learned, by which certain parts of the human body were distinguished. It would require very strong evidence, indeed, to give a colour of credibility to this opinion; but none has been produced, and it remains a mere supposition, altogether destitute of support from any other part of the Sacred Writings. The whole passage is evidently figurative, and it is unreasonable to suppose that Solomon would convey anatomical information in such language.*

Again, for what purpose should he insert a medical disquisition in a moral discourse, adapted to readers of every class, and intended for general edification? An account of the evils attendant upon declining years may be very suitably introduced into a treatise in praise of Wisdom; but it

* “Egregie observatum est ab Michaele, hanc senectutis descriptionem poeticam esse, poesëos autem rationem non ferre, ut res accurate ac secundum veritatem delineentur, sed ut depingantur secundum rationem externi earum habitus, quo sensibus nostris maxime obversantur, &c.”—J. H. van der Pahn, *Annot. in Eccles.* xii. 1.

is surely unnecessary for it to be drawn up with anatomical skill. Scientific details, which would interest but few, even of those who were capable of understanding them, would be misplaced and absurd in a work adapted for popular instruction. In short, it is every way unlikely that the royal sage intended to convey any recondite meaning under the veil of figurative language, and certainly it never was the intent of Inspiration to instruct mankind in the results of natural philosophy.

For these reasons it is right to reject the opinion of those who assert the scientific accuracy of Solomon's portraiture of age. It is more just to consider it as a highly-finished picture of the pains and debilities consequent upon decaying nature, delineated, indeed, by a skilful hand and glowing imagination, but only intended to exhibit such effects of age as naturally suggest themselves to a sagacious and observing mind. It is, therefore, improper to explain, by the aid of medical science, a poetical description which requires a popular illustration, founded on Asiatic customs and the nature of figurative language. It is not consistent with the rules of critical interpretation to seek for hidden meanings in particular words, or for anatomical knowledge under figurative expressions. In a poem, exquisite for the beauty and variety of the images,

it is sufficient if we obtain a more general idea conveyed by the imagery; and upon these principles the subjoined interpretation of Ecclesiastes xii. 1—6 is conducted.

After having ascertained the true exposition, we are naturally led to inquire into the fidelity of the description. Does it accord with truth and nature? Are the dark and sombre colours of the picture agreeable to the reality? And is the closing scene of human existence not only deprived of positive enjoyment, but, moreover, subjected to a burden of actual suffering?

Though the passage, if taken in an isolated view, may seem to imply the affirmative, we may rest assured, that it cannot be the design of the Preacher to characterize old age as itself an evil. Gray hairs, fulness of years, and a good old age are frequently represented, in the Sacred Writings, as peculiar blessings. It was promised to Abraham, for his comfort, that he should be “buried in a good old age;” which accordingly was accomplished.—(Gen. xv. 15, xxv. 8.) It is mentioned as a blessing enjoyed both by Gideon and David, that they died in an advanced period of life.—(Judges viii. 32; 1 Chron. xxix. 28.) It is said by holy Job, of the man whom the Lord correcteth, that he shall “come to his grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in his

season.”—(Job v. 26.) Even Solomon himself declares, that “the hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness,” and that “the beauty of old men is their gray head.”—Prov. xvi. 31, xx. 29.

Old age, as is apparent from daily observation, is not unfrequently a season of serenity and cheerfulness. The diminution of animal vigour is compensated by the improvement of the mind through knowledge and experience. The acuteness of the senses, the elasticity of the imagination, and the ardent relish and pursuit of pleasure, which predominate in youth, are no more; but they are exchanged for other sources of happiness more pure and sedate, more enduring, and more agreeable to a rational and intellectual nature. With all its bodily weaknesses, age is not only venerable, but is often the period of extensive usefulness, of active benevolence, and of mental tranquillity and enjoyment, as is exhibited by Sir Thomas Bernard, in his pleasing work on the Comforts of Old Age, and as is elegantly described by Cicero, in his treatise *De Senectute*, which most scholars have read in their youth, and which no one can peruse without unmixed admiration and delight.

But though age is often thus serene, contented, and composed, and, under any circumstances,

may always be cheered by the hope of immortality, yet it is manifestly often accompanied by such maladies of the body, and such decay of the mental powers, as to render existence a protracted suffering. And this is sufficient to justify the description. Throughout the whole picture the royal philosopher must be understood as delineating, not that which universally happens, but that which is the frequent, perhaps usual, effect of advancing years. Since a painful decrepitude is a common, though not invariable, consequence of old age, he mentions it hypothetically, and exhorts the sons of men to begin a course of piety in their early years, before that season of life arrives in which weakness, pain, and infirmity may naturally be expected.

The description must, likewise, be taken in connexion with the Preacher's argument, which is to exhort mankind to the early cultivation of religious habits. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." If the attainment of wisdom be neglected in early years, the various infirmities of age may arrive, and press so heavy upon decaying nature, as to prevent so necessary an acquisition. Little can be expected from applying to the cultivation of religion at a time when the outward frame is bowed down

with disease, and the understanding is fast relapsing into imbecility and dotage; it is, therefore, the part of prudence to use every exertion to acquire wisdom *before* the period of life when such maladies are not uncommon, and are, consequently, always to be apprehended.

Moreover, according to the reasoning of a pious Jew, who believed the temporal sanctions of the Law, religious habits and dispositions could alone secure the comforts of a green old age. Length of days and earthly happiness being the Mosaic promise to obedience, Solomon's argument may be understood to go to this extent, that, if Wisdom be despised and neglected in youth, the threat of the Law will take effect, and the old age of the scoffer will be a period of suffering and misery. To be religious, a Jew would argue, is the only way to escape the aches, and pains, and tortures with which age is often visited as the punishment of precedent folly; therefore, "remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, *before* the evil days come," for come they will, if thou rejectest Wisdom, "when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."

The devout Christian may be so far a believer in a temporal retribution, as to maintain that piety and virtue can alone secure the repose, and serenity, and enjoyment which are sometimes

the favoured privilege of the aged. It is impossible to conceive, that the last scene of a life spent in vice, and sensuality, and alienation from God can be happy. But to the man of piety, who can look back to years of usefulness and honour, old age presents a peaceful retreat from the bustle and business of the world, where he floats upon the tide of life, pleased with the remembrance of the past, and exulting in the prospect of a haven of eternal blessedness. "To the intelligent and virtuous, old age presents a scene of tranquil enjoyments, of obedient appetite, of well-regulated affections, of maturity in knowledge, and of calm preparation for immortality. In this serene and dignified state, placed, as it were, on the confines of two worlds, the mind of a good man reviews what is past with the complacency of an approving conscience; and looks forward, with humble confidence in the mercy of God, and with devout aspirations, towards his eternal and ever-increasing favour."*

These remarks may suffice for the vindication of Solomon's portrait of old age from the charge of being inconsistent with truth and reality. Let us, therefore, revert to the more immediate subject of this section.

* Dr. Percival, quoted by Dr. Paley, in his *Natural Theology*, chap. xxvi, where are some acute observations on old age.

That the book of Ecclesiastes affords examples of highly figurative language and poetical composition is unquestionable; but whether it was originally written in metrical numbers is a question not so easily determined. The Rabbinical writers are stated to be unanimous in regarding it as a prose composition; while the ancient Fathers of the Christian Church, on the contrary, numbered it among the metrical books.* Biblical scholars, of modern times, are not more unanimous, eminent names being ranged on each side. Desvieux pronounces it a philosophical discourse, written in prose, though in a rhetorical style, and interspersed with verses. Bishop Lowth, Dr. Bernard Hodgson, van der Palm, Bauer, and Jebb accede to this opinion,† which may derive some confirmation from the circumstance, that such a mode of composition seems anciently to have obtained among the Orientals. Some of the Hebrew canonical books contain an intermixture of prose and verse; and we have a similar example in the *Makamet* of Hariri, of which a portion has been published by Reiske and Schultens, and translated by

* See the authorities in Wolf, *Biblioth. Heb.* vol. ii. p. 92, and Carpzov, *Introd. ad Lib. Bib.* par. ii. cap. 1, § 1.

† Desvieux, *Diss.* cap. iii. p. 79, and *Philol. Observat.* p. 341. Lowth, *Prælect.* 24. Hodgson, *Transl. of Eccles.* J. H. van der Palm, *Diss. de Lib. Eccles.* cap. 3. Schulz et Bauer, *Prolegom. in Eccles.* § 5. Jebb, *Sacred Literature*, § 5.

Chapellow.* Nevertheless this notion is opposed both by the style and the circumscribed limits of the Ecclesiastes. Productions of greater extent, as the Prophecies of Jeremiah, for instance, which contain a variety of matters, some historical, and some prophetical, some of such a nature as almost to reject poetry, and others naturally inviting the highest decorations of imagination, may easily be conceived to be written partly in prose and partly in verse; but that this should be the case in a work of twelve short chapters, treating of one subject, which is never lost sight of by the author, and having the same turn of thought and the same character of diction from beginning to end, is an idea destitute of all probability. It is not meant by this to assert a perfect uniformity of style throughout; some diversity necessarily arises from the difference of the topics: a moral precept, and the refutation of a sophistical cavil, cannot be equally poetical with a description of human vanity, or of the maladies of age; there is, however, such a sameness of phraseology and idiom, such a

* At that period when the proud structure of the Roman empire was hastening to decay, and learning was in its wane, Boethius wrote, in mixed verse and prose, his pleasing work, *The Consolation of Philosophy*; but no instance occurs to me of a similar production in the early ages of Greece and Rome. But in the East such a mixture of prose and verse was extremely common.—See Carlyle's *Specimens of Arabian Poetry*, Preface.

general similarity of manner, as prove it to be wholly prosaic, or wholly metrical.

To which class, then, ought the Ecclesiastes to be attributed? Several reasons establish the opinion, that it is written in metre. The qualities of the poetical style, which exist in the acknowledged metrical books, may, in some degree, be discovered in it; a choice of epithets, a combination of images, an inverted order of the words, a frequency of ellipses, an accumulation of rhetorical figures, and, above all, that parallelism which is the great principle of Hebrew verse. These circumstances, occurring throughout the whole book, clearly determine its poetical character. Nor need it surprise us to find a grave and philosophical discourse in measured lines; for some of the didactic pieces in the Sacred Volume are written in the same manner; as, for instance, the argumentative parts of the book of Job and the book of Proverbs. The Orientals have always had a wonderful predilection for metre: they not only employ it on subjects of religion and morality, but introduce it occasionally, where we should least expect it, in an historical record, and a dry treatise on law. The Persian Sadder and the Hindu Vedas exhibit, in their outward dress, a species of versification; and the Koran, the great source of Mohammedan religion and law, is, as

Sir William Jones observes, “composed in sentences not only modulated with art, but often exactly rhymed.”*

The hemistichal division, it is confessed, is not every where equally distinguishable: though, in a majority of instances, it is extremely evident, in others it is exceedingly obscure, perhaps impossible to be made out satisfactorily; but this is only what occurs in most of the metrical parts of the Sacred Volume. Bishop Lowth confesses he had frequent doubts in settling the distribution of the lines or verses, in his admirable translation of Isaiah; and Dr. Blaney acknowledges the same difficulty in his version of Jeremiah. “In the metrical division of the lines,” says he, “I fear I cannot always claim the merit of being exactly right. In some instances the case is clear, and capable of being ascertained with the greatest precision: as in the acrostic, or alphabetical poems, and wherever there is a plain and evident parallelism in the construction of the sentences. But where there is neither acrostic nor parallelism, there may be, and assuredly often is, versification, if we may credit the similarity of diction, and other marks of discrimination.” Archbishop Newcome also observes, that “doubts must always remain, not

* *Works*, vol. viii. p. 164, 8vo ed. See also Sale, *Prelim. Disc.* § iii. p. 81.

only as to the division of particular lines which appear to have a poetical cast, but as to passages of some length whether they resolve themselves into metre or not.”*

The difficulty sometimes of ascertaining the hemistichal division need not be matter of surprise, when it is considered that the true pronunciation of the Hebrew is irrecoverably lost, and the nature of Hebrew metre entirely unknown. It would, indeed, be astonishing if, under these circumstances, we met with no perplexity in tracing the versification of the Hebrew poets; but, however intricate the subject may be, it would be uncritical, on that account, to regard any passage, or any book, as a prose composition. If the metrical division is found to exist clearly and unequivocally in a large proportion of the book, it is rational to infer that the whole is poetical, and that the parallelism is only obscure, in any particular instance, in consequence of our ignorance. Applying these observations to the *Ecclesiastes*, we observe the hemistichal arrangement so evidently to predominate, as to leave no doubt that the whole book is written in poetical numbers.

* Newcome, *Vers. of the Minor Prophets*, Pref. p. 15. Blaney, *Prel. Diss. to Jeremiah*, p. 9. Lowth, *Prel. Diss. to Isaiah*, p. 42. See also *Prælect.* 19. It is observed by Jahn, “*Membra parallela, poësi Hebrææ propria, non raro neglecta sunt.*”—*Introd. ad Lib. Sac.* § 213.

It may be observed, that the result of what has been advanced in this Dissertation is, that the book of Ecclesiastes is the genuine production of Solomon; that it is of canonical authority; that it is an inquiry into the *Summum Bonum*, which is determined to consist in Wisdom, or Religion, which Wisdom, or Religion, therefore, it is designed to recommend and inculcate; and lastly, that it is written in a poetical style and in metre. It may, consequently, be characterized as a Didactic Poem in recommendation of Wisdom.—It is now time to advert to the nature and object of the present publication.

SECTION VI.

THE OBJECT AND DESIGN OF THIS PUBLICATION.

A Paraphrase, strictly speaking, is an exposition of the author's sense in different words; but it is sometimes used to denote that species of explanatory illustration in which the author's expressions are interwoven with a commentary, as in Doddridge's *Family Expositor*. This latter mode of paraphrase is here adopted, as best calculated to explain and illustrate the reasoning of the royal philosopher. It is formed upon the basis of the authorized translation, from which, however, I have sometimes taken the liberty to

depart; but in no instance without what appears to me the most urgent necessity, or without being supported by the soundest principles of criticism. These departures from the standard version are not many; and wherever a different rendering is adopted, it is indicated by the annexation of an asterisk in the margin.

The accompanying *Notes* are intended to establish the scope and design of the work, to point out the chain of argument, and to embody such observations as seem proper to enforce and elucidate the whole. I have also added some *Critical Notes*, designed either to show the correctness of the received version, or to confirm, by critical reasons, some other rendering here adopted, or to discuss briefly some grammatical and philological question. As such remarks are only intelligible to the learned reader, they are placed at the end, as an *Appendix*, with proper references.

The general principles by which I have been guided in this Illustration of Ecclesiastes being precisely the same as in my *Attempt towards an Improved Translation of the Proverbs*, in the Preliminary Dissertation to which they are fully detailed, it is unnecessary to repeat them here; I shall, therefore, conclude these remarks with a

few observations relative to attempts like the one which is now submitted to the public.

Mr. Bellamy's projected translation of the Bible, ushered into the world with the most presumptuous claims, and with a declared contempt for all former translators, has naturally awakened the attention of the learned to the merits of our authorized version. He openly avers, that "the common translations, in all the European languages, were made from the modern Septuagint and the Vulgate;" that "the present authorized version, and all the national versions of Europe, were translated from the Vulgate;" that our translators "confined themselves to the Septuagint and the Vulgate; so that this was only working in the harness of the first translators; no translation having then been made, from the original Hebrew only, for 1400 years."* The gross absurdity of these assertions scarcely requires the refutation, though their pernicious tendency deserves the severe castigation, they have received from Todd, Whittaker, Hyman Hurwitz, and the Quarterly Reviewer; by whom the general excellence of the English Bible has been unanswerably demonstrated.

* Bellamy's *General Preface*, p. 1, 2, and *Introduction*, p. 40. In these assertions he is followed by Sir James Bland Burges, *Reasons in favour of a new Translation*, p. 124.

It remains a question, however, whether the laudable zeal of these writers, in defence of the English version, has not carried them too far. Neither the critical learning of our Translators was, perhaps, so great, nor the execution of their task so perfect as these authors lead us to suppose; and the impression upon my own mind, from a perusal of their performances, is, that they tend to exalt the merits of the English Bible somewhat beyond what any translation can justly claim. I would go a great way, though not the whole length, with these able advocates; and yield to none in sincere respect for the general fidelity and excellence of the standard version. Still I am convinced that it has numerous defects, that it is in some places unintelligible, in many erroneous, and in more might be improved. Even one of the learned antagonists of Mr. Bellamy acknowledges, that “the English translation contains blemishes which call for correction, and they who are most attached to it are the most anxious to see them removed.”*

These faults, it is readily granted, are not of such a nature as to affect essentially any article of faith, or any rule of duty; but they are, nevertheless, faults, and surely it must be owned, that

* Whittaker's *Historical and Critical Inquiry*, &c. p. 40.; see also p. 110.

it would be better, were it possible, to have them rectified. For this reason many sound and eminent divines have recommended a revision by public authority; but, with deference to their judgment, it may well be doubted whether the period has yet arrived for the due execution of an undertaking so momentous.*

Questions of Scriptural criticism remain undecided sufficiently numerous to preclude the hope of giving universal, or even general satisfaction, by a new revision of the public translation. It is yet in dispute what text should be established for the basis of an improved version, whether the received text, as I am inclined to believe, should be followed, or it should be innovated upon by bold and (shall I say?) presumptuous critics. It is not agreed what credit may be due to the kindred dialects, nor how far the ancient versions should prevail. We are still destitute of the critical editions of the Syriac version and the Targums; nor have the stupendous efforts of modern intellect removed all the obscurities in which many passages of the Inspired Writings are involved.

* See *Remarks on the Critical Principles adopted by Writers who have recommended a New Translation of the Bible*, 8vo, Oxford, 1220, and the same anonymous Author's *Reply to Professor Lee*, 8vo, Oxford, 1821, in both of which Pamphlets there are some excellent observations on this subject.

Under these circumstances, an authorized revision of the English Bible, instead of producing any substantial good, is more likely to create division and dissension, to augment the bitterness of controversy, and to animate the fury of contending zeal. Whatever alterations are made, they will be considered, by different sects and parties, as more or less affecting their respective tenets; and there can be no tame spectator of an attempt, in which all will believe their vital interests are concerned. In the present distempered state of the public mind, the most disastrous consequences might be apprehended from an undertaking which would almost inevitably plunge it into the turbulent ocean of polemical theology. While rival scholars would support their several systems with the stubbornness of preconceived opinion, the belief of well-meaning, but illiterate, minds would be liable to be shaken by a change in what they have been accustomed to revere as the standard of their faith. The style and phraseology of the authorized version have become venerable; it has acquired a sacredness of character by being handed down, for two centuries, from father to son, as the Word of God; its very errors are, in a manner, consecrated by the reverential respect of the people; and it is not likely that any superior accuracy would, in the present feverish

state of public opinion, compensate for the dangers of innovation.

Nor would the danger be altogether avoided by commencing the design with a few alterations, such as the generality of Biblical scholars would approve; for, be the alterations greater or less, some would, probably, consider them as levelled against their peculiar opinions, while the ignorant and prejudiced would, most likely, be shocked by any change in what they have been accustomed to revere. It is, in all cases, a hazardous attempt to alarm the religious feelings of the people. With whatever specious pretences reform may be recommended, it is always a measure of peril, unless the necessity be evident, and most of all in the article of religion; a subject so identified with the most exalted hopes, so interwoven with the noblest sentiments and most generous feelings of the soul, that it is neither politic nor wise to tamper with that, around which she throws the veil of her consecration.

Were an improved version substituted, it may reasonably be feared that it would excite, in the minds of many, a desire of further change, to the progress of which it would not be easy to set bounds. At present all sects and parties have one common standard, to which they appeal in

their interminable controversies; but if a revised translation were substituted by public authority, the half-learned would plume themselves by advancing their crude conceptions in opposition to it; the pride and independence of sectarianism, it is reasonable to suppose, would reject it as the mandate of spiritual tyranny; different sects might possibly claim a right of representing *their sense* of the original in a version for their own use; and when it is further considered, that every version, in some degree, receives a tincture from the peculiar bias of the translator; that all men are prone to believe, upon slender evidence, whatever favours their own dogmas; and that, in this age, every means which ingenuity can devise are eagerly pursued to inculcate the prejudices of dissent, we might expect to see Calvinistic and Arminian, Swedenborgian and Socinian Bibles. A manifest tendency to such a state of things appears in the attempts of the Unitarian Society for Promoting the Knowledge of the Scriptures, under whose auspices have been published Dodson's *New Translation of Isaiah*, formed in support of their tenets, and what is called an *Improved Version of the New Testament*, which, for absurdity of exposition, prostitution of criticism, and perversion of the Apostolic meaning, is unequalled in the annals of sacred literature, and, it is to be hoped, will ever remain without a rival.

Considering the temper of the age, the benefit to be expected from a revision of the English translation bears no proportion to the evil. Its general fidelity and truth are attested by all who are competent to form a sound judgment of it; and it would surely be unwise to encounter the real danger of alteration for problematical good. Give to translation all the perfection which is possible to human ability, it is still of less authority than the original; it is only a transfusion of the truth; and the derivative stream can never rival the freshness and limpid purity of the fountain from which it flows. Whatever version be enjoined for public use, it will still remain the duty, of such as have the ability, to investigate Divine truth at its source, in the Hebrew, Chaldee, and Greek originals. To this source the learned ought and will apply for the establishment of their faith; and the unlearned may be abundantly satisfied with the authorized translation, which is doctrinally correct, inimitable for its dignified simplicity, and fully adequate to all the purposes of reproof, of correction, of instruction in righteousness.

It is not intended to assert the absolute perfection of the English version, or the inexpediency of *ever* attempting its improvement; but only, that neither the state of theological learning,

nor the spirit of the times, are such as to render a revision, *at present*, either wise or expedient. To free it from the imperfections which it confessedly has, is a design truly excellent, were it practicable; and the time will, doubtless, come when it may be executed with safety; but, if there is any force in the preceding observations, it has not yet arrived. The most efficacious means of hastening the accomplishment of an object so desirable is, to promote the diffusion of religious knowledge, for the projected improvement must follow, not precede, public opinion. A change in matters relating to religion, except the public are prepared for it, can seldom, if ever, be attempted with success. They must, in some measure, invite it, or they will take the alarm; and no people ever suffered the invasion of what they deem their religious interests, without opposition and without a struggle.

Let those scholars, therefore, whose duty it more especially is to be mighty in the Scriptures, apply, with unabating ardour, to their critical illustration. Let them communicate the result of their inquiries in works intended, like the present performance, for the closet and for the edification of the private reader. In short, let every aspirant at the shrine of theology throw his mite into the treasury of sacred criticism, in

the pleasing hope that the period will arrive, when, through the progress of Biblical learning, and the influence of Christian dispositions, unanimity in articles of faith will more prevail; when the perturbed spirit of party, if it will not entirely vanish, will, at least, be deprived of its virulence; and when the combined labours of theologians may produce a more perfect representation of the sacred original than the world has yet seen.

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A PARAPHRASE

UPON THE

BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES.

Those words which, in the authorized version, are printed in *Italics*, are included within Brackets in the following Paraphrase.

The Asterisk (*) in the margin denotes that some alteration is made in the authorized translation of the verse to which it is annexed.

A PARAPHRASE
UPON THE
BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES.

PART I.

TITLE OF THE BOOK.

CHAPTER I.

1***T**HE words of *Solomon*, the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

SECT. I.—THE VANITY OF ALL EARTHLY THINGS.

2 *With respect to the Chief Good of man, the things of this world are vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher; they are indeed vanity of vanities; yes, all [is] vanity, being incapable of rendering him happy, and of securing his highest interests.*

SECT. II.—THE UNPROFITABLENESS OF HUMAN LABOUR, AND THE TRANSITORINESS OF HUMAN LIFE.

- 3 *In proof of this vanity of all things, what profit hath a man, as far as regards his Chief Good, of all his labour which he taketh under the sun? Human labours cannot produce*
4 *happiness; they are too transitory, for [one] generation passeth away, and [another] generation cometh; but the earth, nevertheless, abideth for ever, as the abode of successive and*
5 *fleeting generations of men.* The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth
6 to his place where he arose. 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. *Thus terrestrial nature performs its stated courses and revolutions perpetually; but when man dies he appears no more on the earth: what solid good, then, can be expected from the labours of*
8**so transitory a being! Besides, all things in which man so anxiously toils are wearisome; man cannot utter [it:] the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled and satiated with hearing. And this must be the case, since*

life is subjected to a continual round of the
9 *same things; for the thing that hath been, it*
[is that] which shall be; and that which is
done, [is] that which shall be done: and
10 *[there is] no new [thing] under the sun. Is*
there [any] thing whereof it may be said, See,
this [is] new? It hath been already of old
time, which was before us. This is certain;
yet we need not be surprised if it should not
appear so to us, considering the defects of all
11 *historical records, since [there is] no perfect*
remembrance of former [things;] neither shall
there be [any] perfect remembrance of [things]
that are to come with [those] that shall come
afterwards.

SECT. III.—THE VANITY OF LABORIOUS
INQUIRIES INTO THE WAYS AND WORKS
OF MAN.

12* I, *Solomon*, the Preacher, am king over
13 Israel, in Jerusalem. And I gave my heart to
seek and search out by wisdom concerning all
human [things] that are done under heaven:
this sore travail hath God given to the sons
of man, to be exercised therewith, *i. e. as a*
trial of their patience, humility, and resignation.
14 I have seen *and diligently investigated* all the
works that are done *by men* under the sun:
and, behold, all *such study and inquiry* [is]
vanity in regard to the Chief Good of man,

and *rather produces* vexation of spirit *than*
 15 *substantial happiness*. [That which is] crooked
 cannot be made straight *by such knowledge*;
 and *it is at best so imperfect, that* that which
 is wanting *and defective in it* cannot be num-
 16 bered. *This conclusion is confirmed by my*
own experience, for I communed with mine
 own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great
 estate, and have gotten more wisdom, *respect-*
ing the pursuits and works of man, than all
 [they] that have been before me in Jerusalem;
 yea, my heart had great experience *of this*
 17 *kind* of wisdom and knowledge. And I gave
 my heart, *laboured diligently* to know *the*
works and pursuits of human wisdom, and also
 to know *the works and pursuits of human*
 madness and folly; *but* I perceived that *the*
ardent thirst after this knowledge also is *pro-*
 18 *ductive of* vexation of spirit. For in much
 wisdom, *of this description*, [is] much grief;
 and he that increaseth knowledge *of the la-*
bour, either of human wisdom or human folly,
 increaseth sorrow, *since he perceives the more*
clearly, and thereby laments the more deeply,
the vanity of all human pursuits.

SECT. IV.—LUXURY AND PLEASURE ARE
 ONLY VANITY AND VEXATION OF SPIRIT.

CHAP. II. 1. *BEING disappointed in my*
expectations of happiness from curious and

philosophical speculations, I said in mine heart,
Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth;
therefore enjoy pleasure, *and try whether luxury
and merriment afford more solid satisfaction*;
and, behold, this also [is] vanity, *as I found*
2 *from experience*. I said of *loud and excessive*
laughter, [it is] mad; *it is a mere phrensy of
the mind*; and of *extravagant* mirth, what
3 doeth [it] *as to rational satisfaction*? I also
made trial of another kind of luxury and plea-
sure, and sought in mine heart to give myself
unto wine, (yet, *at the same time*, acquainting
mine heart with wisdom, *and conducting my-*
self with discretion,) and to lay hold on *other*
pleasures which, in the end, are found to be
folly, till, *by these experiments*, I might see
what [was] that *real* good for the sons of men,
which they should do *and pursue* under the
4 heaven all the days of their life. *In further-*
ance of this object, I made me great *and*
magnificent works; I builded me houses; I
5 planted me vineyards; I made me gardens
and orchards; and I planted trees in them of
6 all [kind of] fruits; I made me pools of
water, to water therewith the wood *or nursery*
7 that bringeth forth trees; I got [me] servants
and maidens, and had servants born in my
house; also I had great possessions of great
and small cattle, *of herds and flocks*, above

- 8*all that were in Jerusalem before me: 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, *in short, I procured* all the delights of human luxury. So I was great, and increased *in wealth and splendour* more than all that were before me in Jerusalem; also *amid these scenes of royal luxury and magnificence* my wisdom, *which was the gift of God*, remained with me *unimpaired*; (ver. 3.)
- 10 *And thus, preserving the empire of reason, I proved my heart with pleasure*, and whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them; I withheld not my heart from any joy *it desired*; and *I enjoyed all the delights this could afford*, for my heart rejoiced *for a season* in all my labour *which I took in the pursuit of pleasure*; and, *after all*, this was my portion, *the only thing that accrued to me*, of all my labour,
- 11*that I looked *and mused* on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do *in expectation of obtaining happiness from luxury and self-indulgence*; and, behold, all [was] vanity *in respect to the Supreme Good*, and produced vexation of spirit, *instead of substantial happiness*: and, *as far as regards the real end of life*, [there was] no profit *in them* under the sun.

SECT. V.—THOUGH THE WISE EXCEL FOOLS,
YET, AS DEATH HAPPENS TO THEM BOTH,
HUMAN LEARNING IS BUT VANITY.

- 12 And I turned myself to behold *and to*
contemplate the wisdom, and madness, and folly
of mankind; (and the result merits attention,
for what more in this research [can] the man
[do,] whoever he may be, that cometh after the
king? *He can only do [even] that which hath*
been already done by me; he can form no other
13 *judgment than I have done.)* Then I saw, *in-*
deed, from such an inquiry, that *human* wisdom
excelleth *human* folly, as far as light, *which*
discloses the beauties of creation, excelleth dark-
ness, *which conceals them in obscurity: because*
14 the wise man's eyes [are] in his head, *in con-*
sequence of which he sees and avoids dangers;
but the fool walketh in darkness, *and stumbles*
into fatal errors: and yet, notwithstanding this
superiority of worldly wisdom, I, myself, per-
ceived also that one event, *death,* happeneth
15 to them all. Then said I in my heart, *This*
is the case that as it happeneth to the fool, so
it happeneth even to me *who excel in wisdom,*
both being subject to misery and death; and
why was I then *solicitous to become more wise*
than others, since I am not thereby exempted
from the stroke of fate? Then I said in my
heart, that this *earthly wisdom* also [is] vanity

- 16 *and inadequate to ensure complete satisfaction. Besides, as the wise and foolish are subject to the same calamities in life, so are they to the same oblivion when dead; for [there is] no perfect remembrance of the wise after death, 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. As far as human wisdom is concerned, there is*
- 17* *no difference. Therefore I was weary of the life I was leading; because the work that is wrought under the sun with a view to procure real happiness [is] found by trial to be grievous unto me: for all of it [is] vanity in regard to man's Sovereign Good, and rather produces vexation of spirit than substantial happiness.*

SECT. VI.—THE VANITY OF HUMAN LABOUR,
IN LEAVING IT THEY KNOW NOT TO WHOM.

- 18* Yea, I was weary of all my labour which I had taken under the sun *in search of permanent satisfaction; because I cannot long enjoy the fruits of it, and must leave it unto the man*
- 19 *that shall be after me. And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise [man,] and use it well, or a fool and abuse it? Yet, whatever may be his character, shall he have rule over all the fruit of my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have showed myself worldly wise under the sun. This [is] labour*

in secular works, also vanity, and disappoints
 20 *expectation. Therefore, being convinced of the*
emptiness of those acquisitions which are both
unsatisfactory in themselves, and may fall into
the hands of fools, I went about to cause my
heart to despair of reaping any substantial
good from all the labour which I took under
 21* *the sun. For, granting that there is a man*
whose labour in the things of this world hath
been conducted with wisdom, and with know-
ledge, and with success; yet to a man that
hath not laboured therein shall he leave it [for]
his portion. This labour also [is] vanity in
regard to man's Chief Good, and a great evil.
 22 *For what real advantage hath man of [from]*
all his labour in worldly pursuits, and of [from]
the vexation of his heart which such labour
creates, and wherein he hath laboured under
 23 *the sun? None that is really satisfactory; for*
all his days passed in such works [are] attended
with sorrows, and his travail in them is pro-
ductive of grief: yea, through anxiety about
them, his heart taketh no rest in the night.
This labour is also vanity in regard to man's
Sovereign Good.

SECT. VII.—THE EMPTINESS OF SENSUAL ENJOYMENTS.

24* *The Chief Good of men consists not in sensual*
enjoyments, for the man enjoys not true

happiness that eats and drinks, *and lives luxuriously*, and indulges himself with the fruit of all his labour. This *ordination* also I perceive is from the hand of God ; *and I have*
 25* *proved the truth of it from experience*, for who can eat, or who can hasten *to luxurious*
 26 ENJOYMENTS more than I ? *Yet I have only reaped from them mortification and disgust. Such indulgences, being criminal, are delusive*, 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 *gratification of sense* also [is] *vanity in regard to the Chief Good*, and *rather produces vexation of spirit than true happiness*.

SECT. VIII.—THOUGH THERE IS A PROPER TIME FOR THE EXECUTION OF ALL HUMAN PURPOSES, YET ARE THEY USELESS AND VAIN ; THE DIVINE COUNSELS, HOWEVER, ARE IMMUTABLE.

CHAP. III. 1. *THOUGH all secular works and pursuits are insufficient to ensure complete satisfaction, it is not intended to pronounce them criminal ; they not only may, but ought to be performed ; for to every [thing there is] a fit and appropriate season, and a proper time to execute every purpose under heaven : there*

2 *is a predeterminate time to be born, and a predeterminate time to die; a proper time to plant, and a time to pluck up [that which is]*
3 *planted; a time to kill judicially, and a time proper for attempting to heal and recover health; a time to break down a building, and*
4 *a time to build up another; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a*
5 *time to dance; a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from em-*
6 *bracing; a time to get, and a time to lose; a*
7 *time to keep, and a time to cast away; a time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep*
8 *silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace. But, though there is a fit season when every purpose of man may be executed without blame, yet, with respect to the*
9 *true end of being, what profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth? None; for he is still as far from happiness as before.*
10 *This is the result of my researches, and I have seen and considered the travail which God hath given to the sons of men, to be exercised by it and in it. And I find that, although*
11**he hath made every thing beautiful in its season, and established the course of nature with transcendent wisdom; YET he hath also put obscurity in the midst of them, his works*

being intricate and mysterious, so that man, from the beginning to the end, cannot find out *and perfectly comprehend* the work that
 12 God doeth. *Yet, notwithstanding this inscrutability of God's works*, I know that [there is] no good in them, but for [a man] to rejoice, *to be content with, and grateful for them*, and to do good in his life, *to himself, by such a becoming enjoyment of terrestrial things, and*
 13 *to others, by a liberal and charitable use*. And also that every man should *be permitted to eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it [is] the gift of God, arising from*
 14 *his benevolent ordination; and I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever, it shall be immutable; nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it; and God doeth [it] for this end and purpose, that [men] should fear before him; all his works being ordered in the manner best calculated to inspire religious reverence and veneration*.

SECT. IX.—THE VANITY OF HUMAN PURSUITS PROVED FROM THE WICKEDNESS PREVAILING IN COURTS OF JUSTICE, CONTRASTED WITH THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT OF GOD.

15* *As before asserted, (ch. i. 9,) that which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath*

already been; *there is a continual round of the same pains, disappointments, trials, afflictions, persecutions, &c.*; and yet God will require (*i. e. will revenge*) the persecuted man.

- 16 And, moreover, *notwithstanding the certainty of this*, I saw under the sun the place of judgment, [that] wickedness [was] there; and the place of righteousness, [that] iniquity [was]
17* there. I said, *however*, in mine heart, *and reflected within myself*, that God will *finally* judge the righteous and the wicked; (for there is a season for every purpose OF GOD *to take effect*;) and he will, *either here or hereafter*, determine concerning every work, *whether it be good or bad*.—Ch. xii. 14.

SECT. X.—THOUGH LIFE, CONSIDERED IN ITSELF, IS VANITY, FOR MEN DIE AS WELL AS BEASTS; YET, IN THE END, IT WILL BE VERY DIFFERENT WITH THE SPIRIT OF MAN AND THAT OF BEASTS.

- 18 I said in mine heart, *I reflected within myself*, concerning the estate of the sons of men, *and I find it is so ordered*, that God might manifest *or prove* them, and that they might see that they themselves are *subject to death like*
19 beasts. For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing, *namely, death*, befalleth them; as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath;

so that, *in this respect*, a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast: for all *animated nature* [is] *vanity, equally frail and mortal.*

20 *The bodies of all, whether men or beasts, go unto one place, the earth; for all their bodies are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. But, with respect to the living, or vital principle*

21 *within them, who knoweth, or can comprehend the immense difference between the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast*

22 *that goeth downward to the earth? Wherefore, though men as well as beasts die, yet, since their spirits return to God who gave them, I perceive that [there is] nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his own works, and be contented; for that necessity of labouring [is] his portion appointed by the Almighty to prove him; (compare ver. 18;) for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him? Who shall lead him to discover what shall happen in this world after his death?*

SECT. XI.—VANITY IS INCREASED UNTO
MEN BY OPPRESSION.

CHAP. IV. 1. So I returned, and considered all the oppressions *of mankind* 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 (*i. e. the*

2 *oppressed*) had no comforter. Wherefore, *if this world and human pursuits are to be regarded as the things of highest value*, I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive, *inasmuch as it would be better to die than to endure the persecutions which are inflicted by tyranny and*
3 *vice*. Yea, *if this life and its pleasures were our all*, better [is he] than both they which hath not yet been, who hath not seen *or experienced* the evil work that is done under the sun.

SECT. XII.—THE VANITY OF PROSPERITY.

4* Again, I considered all travail, and every prosperous work, *and I perceive* that for this a man is envied of his neighbour, *from which arise many evils*. Hence this prosperity, *much as it is sought after by the world*, [is] also vanity, *in respect to man's Chief Good*, and rather produces vexation of spirit *than real happiness*.

SECT. XIII.—THE VANITY OF FOLLY, OR OF PREFERRING THE WORLD TO TRUE WISDOM.

5 Again, *I considered that* the fool, *who hath made this world his all*, foldeth his hands together *in an agony of grief*, *when he finds earthly things to be only vanity*; and eateth his

own flesh, *that is, destroys himself by unavailing sorrow and regret. Such is the worldling's*
6 *portion. It is clear, then, that better [is] an handful [with] quietness, even the bare necessities of life, with the peace and tranquillity which religion bestows, than both the hands full [with] travail and vexation of spirit, that is, than the largest possessions gained with trouble, and accompanied with disgust and anxiety.*

SECT. XIV.—THE VANITY OF COVETOUSNESS.

7 Then again I returned, and I saw a vanity
8 under the sun, *namely, that there is one certain individual who lives single and [alone,] and [there is] not a second, no heir to succeed him; yea, he hath neither child nor brother: yet [is there] no end of all his labour to amass wealth; neither is his eye satisfied with riches; neither [saith he,] For whom do I labour and bereave my soul of good? This penuriousness [is] also vanity, in regard to man's Chief Good; yea, it [is] a sore travail, an irksome and painful occupation.*

SECT. XV.—THOUGH SOCIETY HAS ITS ADVANTAGES, YET DOMINION AND EMPIRE ARE BUT VANITY.

9 Again, two [are] better than one, *or, in other words, it is better to live in society than in*

solitude: because they who live in that social state have a good reward for their labour which they are destined to undergo in life, reaping many advantages from their union; as,
10 *for instance, if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but wo to him [that is] alone when he falleth; for [he hath] not another to help*
11 *him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm [alone?]*
12 *And if, in any contest, one prevail against him that is alone, two shall be able to withstand him: and, in proof of the utility of society, we may apply the old adage, that a threefold cord is not quickly broken. But, without wisdom, small are the advantages of society. Even in*
13 *regard to the highest rank, better and happier [is] a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished:*
14* *for from the company of apostates he (i. e. the foolish king spoken of in ver. 13) comes to reign; although, even born to empire, he is destitute of the habits, the experience, and the prudence requisite for the administration of*
15* *government. And in general, as to the con-*
15* *dition of kings, I considered the sentiments and conduct of all the living which walk under the sun, and I see clearly, that commonly they favour the second child, who is heir to the throne, and who shall stand up in his stead,*

as successor to the reigning monarch. Even if, through the wisdom of the king's government, [there is] *no end of all the people, [even] of all over whom he reigns, so that they increase yearly in prosperity and numbers: nevertheless, they that come after him shall not delight in him; the rising generation will become weary of him, and desire a change. Surely this kingly honour and dignity also [is] vanity with respect to man's Chief Good, and rather produces vexation of spirit than real happiness.*

SECT. XVI.—ERRORS IN THE PERFORMANCE
OF DIVINE WORSHIP, WHICH RENDER IT
VAIN AND UNPROFITABLE.

CHAP. V. 1.* *NAY, without circumspection, the service of the King of kings is rendered vain; therefore keep thy foot (i. e. be guarded) when thou goest to the house of God, for the purpose of worship; for to be ready to obey the Divine will is a better sacrifice than the offering of fools; for they consider not that they do evil, inasmuch as their offering is not accompanied with suitable dispositions. In*
2 *particular, be not rash with thy mouth, when engaged in devotion; and let not thine heart*

be hasty to utter [any] thing before God, *in the solemn assemblies for public worship*; for God [is] in heaven, *omnipotent and omniscient*, and thou *a weak, erring mortal* upon earth:
3* therefore let thy words be few. For AS a dream *of the night* cometh through the multitude of business *in the day*; so, *in the worship of God*, does a fool's voice through a mul-
4 titude of words. *And likewise*, when thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for [he hath] no pleasure in fools *who promise without performing*; therefore pay that which
5 thou hast vowed. Better [is it] that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay, *or perform the conditions of it*. *And when thou hast violated any vow*,
6 suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin, *by alleging frivolous excuses*; neither say thou before the angel, *that is, before the priest, when confessing the breach of a vow*, that it [was] an error, *a mere involuntary slip*; wherefore, *then*, should God be angry at thy voice *in having uttered a vow which thou hast broken*, and destroy the work of thine hands; *punish thee by frustrating thy temporal designs and undertakings for so small an offence?* Avoid
7 *such rash language*, for in the multitude of dreams, and *in many words in extenuation of offences*, [there are] also [diverse] vanities: but

fear thou God, *and incur not his displeasure by precipitate and foolish expressions.*

SECT. XVII.—THE VANITY OF MURMURING AT INJUSTICE ; FOR, THOUGH THE OPPRESSION OF THE POOR AND PERVERSION OF JUDGMENT GREATLY PREVAIL, THEY DO NOT ESCAPE THE NOTICE OF THE ALMIGHTY.

- 8 *And again, 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 angel in heaven and most powerful potentate in the world regardeth ; so that nothing happens without his permission ; and [there be] higher than they ; i. e. there are the High Ones of the Holy Trinity, above the princes of the earth and the hierarchy of heaven. And, as a proof of the absolute supremacy of the Tri-une Being,*
- 9 *moreover, the profit of the earth, its fruits and productions, is ordained by him for the common good of all ; nay, even the king [himself] is served by the field, is dependent upon the land for the support of life, and, therefore, dependent upon, and under the disposal of, the Lord of the universe, who will finally punish the unjust.*

SECT. XVIII.—THE VANITY OF RICHES;
WITH AN ADMONITION AS TO THE MO-
DERATE ENJOYMENT OF THEM.

- 10 *With respect to riches*, he that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance of *wealth* with a continual increase of it. This *desire of wealth* [is] also vanity, *incompetent to produce complete satis-*
11 *faction*. Besides, when goods increase, they are increased that eat them; and what good [is there] to the owners thereof, saving the *empty pleasure of beholding* [of them] with their eyes? *They never cause peace and con-*
12 *tent: these often attach to poverty*. 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, *either through*
13 *satiety, or perpetual anxiety and care*. Moreover, there is a sore evil *accompanying wealth*, [which] I have seen under the sun, [namely,] riches kept for the owners thereof to their
14 hurt. But those riches *which are avariciously hoarded up often* perish by evil travail of some kind or other; and he begetteth a son, to whom he indulged the proud hope of leaving abundance of *wealth*, and yet [there is] nothing in his hand *remaining to bequeath to him*. This
15 *often happens; and, at any rate, 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
16 away in his hand. And, *I again repeat it*, this also [is] a sore evil, [that] in all points as he came *into the world*, so shall he go *from it*; and what profit, *then*, hath he that hath *thus* laboured for the wind? *for that which is fleeting, and cannot be retained! Nor is this the only evil attending the griping acquisition*
17* *of wealth*. All his days, also, he liveth in darkness, *care, and perplexity*: and, *by unceasing eagerness for gain*, his sorrow increaseth, and his infirmity *of body*, and his wrath *and fretful disposition*, *insomuch that life becomes a misery*. *It is not, however, to be supposed that riches are in themselves really bad, or that all enjoyment of them is criminal.*
18* Behold a good *attending them* which I have seen, *and* which is honourable; NAMELY, FOR A MAN 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. *The moderate use of the good things of this world is allowed*, for this is his portion that God hath given him; *this is the use the Almighty hath permitted man to make of his possessions*. And I
19 *again repeat it*, that with respect to every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat

thereof, (*i. e. to enjoy them,*) and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; this [is] the gift of God : *it proceeds from the sovereign bounty and goodness of God, that a man can derive a lawful and virtuous enjoyment from* 20* *his wealth.* Although, *as to real enjoyment,* it be not much, *yet, having made a proper use of riches,* he will remember the days of his life; *looking back to the days that are past with pleasure,* for *he well knows that* God exerciseth him by the joy of his heart, *that is, makes trial of him by pleasure and prosperity.*

SECT. XIX.—THE VANITY OF AVARICE.

CHAP. VI. 1. *AGAIN,* there is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is common among men; *NAMELY,* a man to whom God, *in his good providence,* hath given riches, wealth, and honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth, *having every thing he could wish for his accommodation and pleasure;* yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, (*i. e. to enjoy it,*) but a stranger, *who is often neither friend nor relation,* eateth it, and enjoyeth it. This covetousness [is] vanity in regard to man's Chief Good, and it [is] an evil disease, or the cause 3 of pain and disquietude. If a man of this character beget an hundred [children] and live

many years, so that the days of his years be many, and *yet, at the same time*, his soul be not filled with good, *of which he possesses abundance*, and also *if it be* [that] he have no burial; I say, [that] an untimely birth [is]
4 *in some respects* better than he; for he (*i. e. the abortive*) cometh into *the world* with vanity, *to no purpose*, and departeth in darkness, *without any notice*, and his name shall be covered
5 with darkness, *and utterly forgotten*. Moreover, he hath not seen the sun, nor known [any thing;] *yet this abortive* hath more rest than the other, *i. e. than the miser*; *for it is exempt from the incessant toils and disquietudes*
6 *which agitate the avaricious*. Yea, though he (*i. e. the miser*) live a thousand years twice [told,] yet hath he seen *and enjoyed* no good; *and what at death do his riches profit him?*
Do not all, *rich as well as poor*, go to one
7 place? All the labour of *the covetous man* [is] for his mouth, *for his own interest and gratification*, and yet the appetite for *accumulation* is not filled, *and, amidst abundance,*
8* *is still craving for more*. Therefore, what *advantage* hath the *reputed wise man, the miser*, more than the fool? *and what advantage* hath the *poor man*, that knoweth to walk before the living? *To this question the answer is, that, comparing their respective advantages, the former is tortured with desire,*

9 *and the latter is contented; for better [is] the sight of the eyes, that is, contentment and satisfaction with present things, than the wandering of the desire, than the indulgence of wishes which can never be gratified. This insatiable thirst of gain, therefore, [is] also vanity in regard to man's Chief Good, and rather produces vexation of spirit than substantial happiness.*

PART II.

SECT. XX.—SINCE ALL HUMAN DESIGNS, LABOURS, AND ENJOYMENTS ARE VAIN, IT IS NATURAL TO INQUIRE, WHAT IS GOOD FOR MAN? WHAT IS HIS SUPREME GOOD? THE ANSWER IS CONTAINED IN THE REMAINDER OF THE BOOK.

10 That which hath been is named already, *the various conditions and circumstances of life having now been examined, it appears that they justly deserve the name of "vanities," being utterly insufficient to form the Chief Good; and thus it is known that it [is] man, that vanity is his character, that he is a weak, frail, fallible creature, and that all his secular pursuits are only vanity; neither may he contend*

- with him that is mightier than he. *Though every thing here below is empty and vain, he cannot contend with God, because the creature has no right to call in question the justice and*
- 11 *wisdom of the Creator's dispensations. Seeing there be many things that increase vanity, as we have seen from an examination of them, what [is] man the better? What is he profited by them in regard to the Supreme Good, which is the object of his constant pursuit?*
- 12* *Truly not in the least; and therefore, since these things are so, it is natural to ask, and the inquiry is important, who knoweth what [is] the Chief 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? Who can say what will be the event of man's undertakings?*

SECT. XXI.—THE PRAISE OF CHARACTER AND REPUTATION.

CHAP. VII. 1. *IN answer to the inquiry, "What is good for man in this life?" I observe, in the first place, that a [good] name, or fair reputation, [is] better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth, if we deserve this virtuous character.*

SECT. XXII.—AFFLICTION IMPROVES THE
HEART AND EXALTS THE CHARACTER
OF THE WISE.

- 2 *Again, I observe in reference to True Wis-*
dom, that [it is] better to go to the house of
mourning than to go to the house of feasting;
for that visitation of the afflicted [is] what
ADMONISHES US OF the end of all men; and
the living will lay [it] to his heart, and be deeply
3 *affected by it. Moreover, sorrow is better*
than excessive and unmeaning laughter; for by
the sadness of the countenance, arising from
inward grief, the heart is made better. Hence
4 *it is that the heart (i. e. the mind) of the wise*
[is] in the house of mourning; they often
frequent scenes of wo, and meditate upon them
when absent; but the heart of fools [is] in the
house of mirth; they are wholly devoted to
merriment and pleasure. Again, in reference
5 *to True Wisdom, [it is] better to hear the*
rebuke of the wise, however painful, than for
a man to hear the song and noisy revelry of
fools, since by the one our follies are corrected,
but by the other they are encouraged and con-
6 *firmed. For as the crackling blaze of thorns*
under a pot is of little use, and is soon over,

so [is] the *loud* laughter of the fool, a mere empty, useless, transient burst. This foolish merriment also [is] vanity, nothing better than a bubble or passing vapour. The advantages of affliction are likewise seen in the virtuous 7**who are persecuted*; for surely oppression gives lustre to a wise man; and a gift of fortune's goods destroyeth the heart by corrupting it.

8 Better also [is] the end of a thing by which a man is persecuted and oppressed than might be supposed from the beginning thereof, [and] the reason is, that the patient in spirit, who becomes so through suffering, [is] better than the proud in spirit. If oppression, therefore, have 9 such beneficial effects upon a wise man, be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry when thou art smarting under the rod of tyranny; for anger resteth in the bosom of fools, who give way to it when oppressed, while wise men regard oppression with disdain, or contend against it 10 with undaunted spirit. And say not thou, what is [the cause] that the former days were better than these? Do not repine at the prevalence of persecution, nor look back at former times, fancying them better than the present; for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this; such fond inquiries and useless murmurs not being the part of a wise and virtuous man.

SECT. XXIII.—THE EXCELLENCE OF WISDOM.

- 11* *And now to advert to the true and Sovereign Good of man, Wisdom [is] as good as an inheritance; yea, better to them that see the*
12 *sun, that is, to all mankind. For Wisdom [is] a defence, [and] money [is] a defence; both agree in this that they afford protection; but the excellency of knowledge [is, that] Wisdom giveth life to them that have it. And as*
13 *this is the ordination of Providence, consider the work of God in his righteous government of the world; it is impossible to alter his dispensations; for who can make [that] straight which he hath made crooked? There-*
14 *fore, in the day of prosperity be joyful, and grateful for the blessings of Heaven; but in the day of adversity consider thy circumstances and the duties incumbent upon thee; for God also hath set the one over against the other, hath balanced the days of prosperity and adversity, to the end that man should find nothing after him, nor have cause to blame his wisdom, his justice, or his goodness.*

SECT. XXIV.—AN OBJECTION, WITH THE ANSWER.

- 15 *Notwithstanding the excellency of Wisdom, the worldling objects, “ All these [things] have*

“ I seen in the days of my vanity, *namely, that*
“ there is a just [man] that perisheth in his
“ righteousness, and there is a wicked [man]
“ that longeth [his life] in his wickedness
“ *with perfect impunity. Now, if such be the*
16* “ *case, be not exceedingly righteous; neither*
“ *be exceedingly wise; strive not after great*
“ *attainments in wisdom and virtue; for why*
“ *shouldest thou waste thyself away in the*
“ *pursuit of that which does not profit?*”

THE ANSWER.

17* *Nay, rather be not exceedingly wicked,*
neither be thou foolish; *for why shouldest*
thou die before thy time, *prematurely by public*
18* *justice or the Divine vengeance? Also, [it is]*
good that thou shouldest take hold of *and*
observe this precept in verse 17, “ Be not ex-
“ *ceedingly wicked, neither be thou foolish;*” yea,
also from this *truth* withdraw not thine hand,
but keep it steadily in view, that he that feareth
God shall come forth of them all; *shall escape*
all the evils to which the ungodly are exposed.
19 Wisdom *likewise* strengtheneth the wise,
guards and protects them, more than ten mighty
20* [men] which are in the city; although there is
not a *perfectly wise and just* man upon the
earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.
21 Also, *since men are so imperfect,* take no heed

unto all words that are spoken; lest, *through the rashness, levity, and scandal prevailing in conversation*, thou hear thy servant curse (*revile*) thee, *and so thou give way to unjustifiable*
22 *anger*; for oftentimes, also, thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast cursed (*reviled*) others; *and the consciousness of having sometimes spoken unadvisedly with thy lips should make thee patiently endure, and readily pardon, the same error in servants and*
23 *persons of mean condition.* All this respecting *the value of Wisdom* have I proved by wisdom, *and diligently investigated; and then I said, I will be wise, I determined to acquire Wisdom; but it [was] far from me, so that I could not perfectly attain it; and no wonder,*
24 *for that which is far off, and exceeding deep and profound in itself, who can find it out*
25 *to perfection? Nevertheless, 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, or irreligion, even of foolishness [and] madness, of those pleasures and occupations in which the wild extravagance and giddy madness of men place their hopes of happiness; and the result of this search, with respect to one particular, is, that*
26 *I find more bitter and more painful than death is the woman whose heart [is] snares and nets, inveigling souls to ruin with all the art and*

cunning of fowlers to catch birds, [and] her hands [as] bands, embracing and holding fast those whom she has allured into her snares; whoso pleaseth God shall, through Divine grace, escape from her, and be preserved; but the sinner shall be suffered to be taken by her,
 27**and brought to destruction.* Behold, this *truth concerning the wiles of harlots* have I found in my search of *Wisdom*, saith the Preacher,
 BY COMPARING one thing with another to
 28*form a judgment. What yet *further* my soul seeketh, but *nevertheless* I find not, *is a man or woman thoroughly wise and virtuous; yet I confess, one man, comparatively such, among a thousand have I found, but such a woman*
 29 *among all these have I not found.* Lo, *instead of perfect characters, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright at his first creation; but they have fallen from their state of innocence, and have sought out many inventions and wicked devices. But still, notwithstanding the frailty and imper-*
 VIII. *fection of human nature, who [is] as the wise*
 1 *[man?] and who, like him, knoweth the interpretation of a thing? A man's wisdom maketh his face to shine, and renders it agreeable, and the boldness of his face, his stern, forbidding looks, shall be changed, so as to become serene and amiable. And, as the*
 2 *dictate of Wisdom, I [counsel thee] to keep*

the king's (*Jehovah's*) commandment, and [that] in regard of the oath of God, *by which he confirmed the promises made unto Abraham. And when performing any religious service to*
3 *God, be not hasty to go out of his sight; do not perform it in a hurried manner, as if it were a disagreeable task; and stand not in an evil thing when thou art sensible of thy error; for he (i. e. God) doeth whatsoever pleaseth him, and will certainly punish obstinate persistence*
4 *in evil.* Where the word of a king [is,] *like Jehovah, [there is] power to take vengeance on those who despise it, and who may say unto him, in the exercise of his sovereignty, What*
5 *doest thou? Whoso keepeth the commandment of God shall feel, or experience, no evil thing; and a wise man's heart discerneth both the time, or proper season, and judgment, or the proper manner of performing every duty*
6**to the Almighty.* Because to every purpose of man, *whether civil or religious, there is a proper time and judgment, or a proper manner of carrying it into effect, though the misery of man is great upon him, there being many things to oppose and distress him, and though*
7**he knoweth not that which shall be; for who can tell him when it shall be? that is, there is a proper time for man's purposes, though he knows not the result.*

SECT. XXV.—THE EVIL OF WICKEDNESS
SHOWS THE ADVANTAGE OF TRUE WISDOM.

8 [There is] no man that hath power over the spirit, *or vital spark*, to retain the spirit *within its earthly frame*; neither [hath he] power in the day of death *to prevent its departure*; and [there is] no discharge in [that] war *with death*; neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it, *for all must encounter death, and be vanquished by it. Even wicked governors, with all their power, must submit to*
9 *the stroke, for all this also which follows* have I seen, (and, *as before observed, I have applied my heart unto every work that is done under the sun,*) *that* [there is] a time, *a certain season*, wherein one man ruleth over another to his own hurt, *and to the hurt of him who*
10 *is ruled. And so, notwithstanding their rank and power, I saw the wicked rulers buried, even those who had come and gone from the place of the holy, who had proceeded to and from the place of judicature with great pomp, and they were soon forgotten in the city where they had so done; so transitory is earthly greatness! This power and magnificence of earthly rulers* [is] also vanity, *nothing better than a passing vapour. Vice, indeed, in all*

ranks, will receive merited punishment; yet,
 11 *because sentence against an evil work is not*
executed speedily, therefore the heart of the
sons of men is fully set in them to do evil,
vainly trusting that they may continue to sin
 12 *with impunity; nevertheless, though a sinner*
do evil an hundred times, and his [days] be
prolonged without experiencing the threatened
punishment; yet surely I know, that it shall
be well with them that fear God, which fear
 13* *before him. But, in the end, it shall not be*
well with the wicked, neither shall he, with
impunity, prolong [his] days, WHICH SHALL
BE as a shadow, because he feareth not before
God.

SECT. XXVI.—AN OBJECTION, WITH THE
 ANSWER.

14* *But to this belief of the ultimate reward of*
wisdom and punishment of folly, the worldling
objects, that “ there is a vanity which is done
“ (i. e. takes place) upon the earth, namely, that
“ there be just [men] unto whom it happeneth
“ according to the work of the wicked, being
“ persecuted and depressed; that, again, there be
“ wicked [men] to whom it happeneth accord-
“ ing to the work of the righteous, continuing
“ to flourish in prosperity. I say, that this
“ distinction, then, between wisdom and folly

“ also [is] vanity, *a mere delusive suggestion of*
15*“ *the fancy*. Then I commend mirth *with*
“ *the justest reason*, 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, *and that only can he gain*
“ *by*, his labour *all* the days of his life, which
“ God giveth him under the sun.”

THE ANSWER.

16 *There are, it is true, apparent exceptions to*
retributive justice, but they ought not to perplex
or disquiet us, for 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
17 his eyes *in pursuit of fancied happiness*;) then
I also carried my inquiries farther, and beheld
(considered) all the work of God, and I clearly
saw, that a man cannot find out the work of
God that is done under the sun: *the plan of*
Divine Providence is inscrutable, because,
though a man labour to seek [it] out, yet he shall
not find [it;] yea, further, though a wise [man]
think to know [it,] yet shall he not be able to
ix. find [it.] For all this *unsearchableness of God's*
1**Providence* I considered in my heart, even till
I was enabled to declare all this, *namely*, that
the righteous, and the wise, and their works,

[are] in the hand of God; *entirely in his power, and always under his care.* Love, also, and hatred ARE IN HIS HAND, *and at his free disposal*; BUT man knoweth nothing of the future; *from which we ought to conclude, that, as God is infinitely wise and good, love will finally be shown to the virtuous, and hatred to the vicious, whatever inequalities may at present exist.*

SECT. XXVII.—AN OBJECTION, WITH THE
ANSWER.

- 2* *But the worldling still objects, “ All are*
“ alike, at least in this, that there is one event
“ (i. e. death) to the righteous and to the
“ wicked; to the good and the bad; to the
“ clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacri-
“ ficeth, and to him that sacrificeth not; as
“ [is] the good, so [is] the sinner; [and] he
“ that sweareth rashly, as [he] that feareth
“ an oath, being scrupulous both in taking and
 3 *“ observing one. This [is] an evil, then,*
“ among all [things] that are done (take place)
“ under the sun, that [there is] one event unto
“ all; yea also, in addition to this, the heart
“ of the sons of men is full of evil, and sorrow,
“ and madness (maddening anguish) is in their
“ heart, while they live, and after that [they
 4* *“ go] to the dead. But still to him that is*

“ joined to all the living there is hope, *the*
“ *sweetner of existence*; for a living dog is
5 “ better than a dead lion. For the living
“ know that they shall die, *and therefore*
“ *eagerly grasp at the present enjoyments of*
“ *life*; but the dead know not any thing, *being*
“ *in a state of insensibility*, neither have they
“ any more a reward, *however pious they may*
“ *have been*; for the memory of them is for-
6 “ gotten. Also, their love, and their hatred,
“ and their envy is now perished, *all their*
“ *passions, affections, and powers being an-*
“ *ihilated*; neither have they any more a
“ portion for ever in any [thing] that is done
“ under the sun. *If such be the condition of*
7 “ *man, take this advice*; Go thy way, eat thy
“ bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a
“ merry heart; *catch at all the fruitions of*
“ *sense*; for God now accepteth thy works,
“ *it being manifest that God, as he has sub-*
“ *jected all men alike to death, will not punish*
8 “ *thy sensual indulgences*. Let thy garments
“ be always white, *as becomes one who always*
“ *lives in joy and festivity*; and let thy head
9 “ lack no ointment, *or sweet perfume*. Live joy-
“ fully, *or, in other words, enjoy the pleasures of*
“ *life*, 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 *joyous living* [is] thy

“ portion, *that is, is the only fruit thou canst*
“ *reap* in [this] life, and in thy labour which
10 “ thou takest under the sun. *Therefore, what-*
“ *soever thy hand findeth to do, in the way*
“ *of pleasure, do [it] with thy might, indulge*
“ *in it without restraint; for [there is] no*
“ *work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wis-*
“ *dom in the grave, or Hades, whither thou*
“ *goest. This life being thy all, eat, drink,*
“ *and be merry.*”

THE ANSWER.

11 *To answer this objection, I returned to my*
inquiries, and saw under the sun many ap-
parent inequalities in the distribution of tem-
poral rewards; as, for instance, that the race
[is] not to the swift, who do not always win the
prize; nor the battle (victory) always to the
strong, neither yet bread, or subsistence, always
to the wise, nor yet riches always to men of
understanding, nor yet favour always to men
of skill; but time and chance, the same ap-
parent accidents and casualties, happeneth
to them all. And they likewise happen when
12 *least expected, for man also knoweth not his*
time, that is, cannot foresee the time when any
event shall befall him; but just as the fishes
that are taken in an evil net, a net destructive
to them, and as the birds [that are] caught in

the snare, *are captured without foreseeing it*; so [are] the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them; *that is, they are entangled in calamities at a time they never dreamt of.* But, notwithstanding these things, this Wisdom, so much vilified by the sensual, have I seen also (*contemplated*) under the sun, and it [seemed] great unto me. To give one instance of the value of Wisdom, [there was] a little city, and a few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, 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, *such was the ingratitude of the inhabitants, that no man remembered that same poor man, to make him a suitable recompense.* Then said I, Wisdom [is] better than strength: nevertheless, the poor man's wisdom [is] often despised *by reason of his poverty*, and his words are not heard *with the attention they deserve.* But still the words of wise [men,] uttered with calmness, [are] heard and attended to in quiet and peaceable companies, more than the cry of him that *is a fool, and ruleth among fools.* In short, Wisdom [is] better, both for individuals and states, than weapons of war; but one sinner destroyeth much good, both as to himself and others. In the same manner as 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. *So pernicious is
the folly of sin, and so necessary is circum-*
2 *spection.* A wise man's heart, *however*, [is]
at his right hand, *never off its guard*; but a
fool's heart at his left, *always unprepared and*
3 *ill-directed.* Yea also, when he that is a fool
walketh by the way, *even in the most simple*
actions, his wisdom faileth [him,] and he saith
to every one [that] he is a fool. *Instances of*
this are common, both among subjects and
4 *governors.* *With respect to the former*, if the
spirit, *or anger*, of the ruler rise up against
thee, leave not thy place, *and rebel as fools do,*
but continue to practise the duties of thy station;
5**for yielding pacifieth great offences.* There
is *also* an evil [which] I have seen under the
sun, *and it arises* because of an error [which]
6 *proceedeth from the ruler ; namely, that folly*
is set in great dignity, that is, fools are ad-
vanced to places of honour and authority, and
the rich *and noble* sit in low place, *buried in*
obscurity. *Through the same error of rulers*
7 I have seen *men of low condition, even servants,*
upon horses, and raised to honour, and *men of*
family and worth, even princes, walking as
servants upon the earth, *depressed and de-*
graded. *Such unwise conduct, however, com-*
monly brings its own punishment, according to

8 *the proverbs*, he that diggeth a pit shall fall
into it; and whoso breaketh an hedge a ser-
9 pent shall bite him. Whoso removeth stones
shall be hurt therewith; [and] he that cleaveth
wood shall be endangered thereby. *Wisdom,*
indeed, is as needful to all men as common
10**prudence to the artisan; for if the iron of his*
tools be blunt, and he do not whet the edge,
as common sense directs, then must he put to
more strength, and yet, with all this labour,
his work will not be performed with neatness
and despatch; but Wisdom is excellent to
cause success in all our undertakings. It is
particularly necessary to direct us in the use of
11 *speech; for surely the serpent will bite with-*
out enchantment is used; and a babbler is no
better, since he stings and poisons with his
12 *words. The words of a wise man's mouth*
[are] gracious, useful and pleasing to those who
hear them: but the lips of a fool will swallow
13 *up himself, and often injure others. The be-*
ginning of the words of his mouth [is] foolish-
ness; and the end of his talk [is] mischievous
14 *madness. A fool also is full of words, yet are*
we no wiser; notwithstanding his much speak-
ing, a man cannot tell what shall be here-
after; and what shall be after him (that is,
after the man mentioned just before) who can
tell him? Certainly not the fool, whatever he
15 *may pretend to the contrary. The labour of*

the foolish, *to whatever it is directed*, wearieth every one of them, because, *so ignorant is he of the plainest matters, that he knoweth not even how to go to the city without deviating*
16 *from the right path.* Wo to thee, O land, when thy king [is] a child, *in knowledge and understanding*, and thy princes are *so luxurious*
17 *that they eat in the morning!* Blessed [art] thou, O land, when thy king [is] the son of nobles, *as noble in mind as in rank*, and thy princes eat in due season, *temperately at the stated times*, for strength, and not for drunkenness!

SECT. XXVIII.—THE BANEFULNESS OF SLOTH.

18. By much slothfulness the building decayeth, *for want of necessary repairs*; and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through *with rain*.

SECT. XXIX.—THE POWER OF WEALTH.

19 *While other secular things are of limited use, and only serve a particular purpose, as, for instance, a feast is made for laughter, or occasional gratification, and wine maketh merry, while its exhilaration lasts; but money answereth all [things,] and extends its empire over all.*

SECT. XXX.—AN EXHORTATION AGAINST
SPEAKING 'EVIL OF DIGNITIES.

20 Curse (*revile*) not the king, no, not in thy thought; and curse (*revile*) not the rich in thy bed-chamber; for *informers*, *swift as a bird of the air*, shall carry the voice, and, *with a velocity like that which hath wings*, shall tell the matter.

SECT. XXXI.—EXHORTATION TO CHARITY
AND BENEVOLENCE.

CHAP. XI. 1. *With respect to Charity, that essential branch of True Wisdom*, cast thy bread upon the waters, *that is, communicate to the necessities of others, without expecting an immediate return*; for thou shalt find it after many days. *Though thy liberality may seem, for the present, to be thrown away,*
2 *thou shalt, in the end, be recompensed.* Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; *be liberal and enlarged in thy charities*; for thou knowest not what evil shall be *to thee and*
3 *others* upon the earth. *Like as if the clouds be full of rain, they empty [themselves] upon the earth, and increase the fertility thereof; so when treasures are hoarded up they are useless, but when diffused, in acts of*

charity, they increase the happiness of mankind. And also, like as if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be, an useless cumbrance to the ground, no longer supplying fruit to the hungry, and shade to the weary; so he who does not in life benefit his fellow-creatures has lived in vain, for when he dies he can be of
4 *no service to them. Again, like as he that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap; so he that looketh only for fit objects and seasons of charity will never be actively benevolent.*
5 *As thou knowest not what [is] the way of the spirit coming into the body, [nor] how the bones of a child [do grow] in the womb of her that is with child; even so thou knowest not the ways and works of God who maketh all; which should induce thee to embrace the present opportunity of doing good, without being solicitous about the future; knowing that God will order all things for the best. There-*
6 *fore, like the diligent husbandman, in the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand, but use all methods of spreading thy bounties; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that act of beneficence, or whether they both [shall*
7 *be] alike good. Truly the light of life and prosperity [is] sweet, and a pleasant [thing it is]*

for the eyes to behold the sun, *and to live in*
 8 *the sunshine of delight and abundance.* But
nevertheless, if a man live many years, [and]
 rejoice in them all, *having the fullest enjoy-*
ment of a long life; yet let him remember the
 days of darkness *and affliction*, for they shall
 be many, *even with the most prosperous.* All
 that cometh *from worldly pleasures, therefore,*
 [is] vanity, *with respect to securing substantial*
 9 *happiness.* Go, then, *and* rejoice, O young
 man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer
 thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in
 the ways *and sensual inclinations* of thine
 heart, and in the sight of thine eyes, *enjoying*
whatever thou desirest: but know thou, that
 for all these [things,] *all these criminal in-*
dulgences, God will bring thee into judgment.
 10* Therefore, remove obduracy from thy heart,
 and put away evil from thy flesh, *that is,*
mortify thy carnal desires: for child and youth,
with all their pleasures, [are] vanity, *and as*
transient as a bubble or vapour.

SECT. XXXII.—AN EXHORTATION TO THE
 EARLY CULTIVATION OF RELIGIOUS HABITS.

CHAP. XII. 1.* REMEMBER now thy
 Creator in the days of thy youth, before the
 evil days *of pain and infirmity* come, and the
 years draw nigh, when, *probably*, thou wilt

2* say, I have no pleasure in them; before the sun, and the light, and the moon, and the stars are darkened, *that is, before becoming insensible to pleasure and prosperity*, and the clouds return after the rain, *or, in other words, before there is a constant succession of pains*
3 *and griefs*; in the day when *the hands and arms, which may be justly called the keepers of the house, shall tremble, and the knees and legs, which may be justly called the strong men, shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease and be idle*, because they are few, and those that look out of the windows, *or, in plain terms, the eyes*, be darkened; and *the*
4 *lips, which may be compared to the doors of a house, shall be shut in the streets, shall press close together by reason of the loss of the teeth*, when the sound of the grinding, *or mastication of food*, is low; and he (*i. e. the old man*) shall rise up at the voice of the bird, *in the early morning*; and all the daughters of music, *all the organs employed in the production and enjoyment of music*, shall be brought low, and
5* *rendered powerless to afford amusement*. Also, [when] they (*i. e. the aged*) shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears [shall be] in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, *that is, the head shall become hoary*, and the *old man, who may be compared to a grasshopper*, shall be a burden to himself, and satisfaction

shall be abolished ; because man goeth to *the grave*, his long home, and the mourners
6*go about the streets : before the silver cord,
or spinal marrow, be loosed, *deprived of feeling and motion*, and the golden bowl be broken, *that is, before the head, with its organs, ceases to perform its functions*, and the pitcher, *or heart*, be shattered at the fountain, and the wheels, *or lungs, the organs of respiration*,
7 broken at the cistern. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

SECT. XXXIII.—THE CONCLUSION.

8 *The result of the whole disquisition is briefly as follows: With respect to the Chief Good of man, the things of this world are* vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher ; all [is] vanity, *being incapable of rendering him happy, and of securing his highest interest. This was demonstrated in the first part of this discourse, and it deserves serious attention, because it is the conclusion of one who was endued with*
9 *wisdom from above.* And moreover, because the Preacher, *who came to this conclusion*, was wise, he still taught the people knowledge, *both by speech and writing* ; yea he gave good heed, and sought out, [and] set in order many
10*proverbs. The Preacher, *in these endeavours*

- to instruct his subjects, sought to find out acceptable words, and to write down properly the words of truth. *Such sayings form the*
- 11**mind to virtue, for the words of the wise, men inspired of God, [are] as stimulating and quickening to the mind as goads are to sluggish oxen, and, like nails, are deeply infixed in the heart that receives them: the collectors, who arranged the words of the inspired writers in the sacred canon, have published them as proceeding from the inspiration of one Shepherd,*
- 12 *namely, God.* And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books, *on the subjects of this discourse, [there is] no end: and too much study, of human compositions, [is] a weariness of the flesh, and impairs the health.*
- 13 Let us hear, *also, the conclusion of the whole matter contained in the second part of this discourse; and if, as has been demonstrated, Wisdom is the only substantial good, then fear God, and keep his commandments; for this [is] the whole [duty] of man, and will con-*
- 14 *stitute his Supreme Good.* For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether [it be] good, or whether [it be] evil.

END OF THE PARAPHRASE.

EXPLANATORY NOTES.

CHAPTER I.

VERSE 1. *king in Jerusalem*—The authorized version is “king of Jerusalem;” but, as Dr. Bernard Hodgson observes, “it is as improper to call Solomon, king of Jerusalem, as it would be to call the king of Great Britain, king of London, Jerusalem being only the metropolis of Israel, where Solomon resided.”—(*New Translation of Ecclesiastes*, note in loc.) Though this remark is correct, I cannot agree with Boothroyd in approving the same writer’s rendering “who reigned at Jerusalem,” taking מלך for the Part. Ben. The original literally signifies “king in, or at Jerusalem.”

2. *vanity of vanities*—A well-known Hebrew superlative, *i. e.* the greatest vanity. Some commentators understand it as an exclamation, “O, utter emptiness and vanity of all earthly things!” but the Preacher can scarcely be supposed to commence his disquisition in a manner so abrupt. The verse is to be considered as the proposition which the first part of the discourse is intended to illustrate; and, as it forms the basis of his argument, he not only states it once, in short and emphatic language,

but doubles and repeats it, in order to impress it upon the mind with greater force and energy.—See Prel. Diss. § iv. p. 68, and Critical Note (*.)

3. *what profit, &c.*—Since we are placed in the world by a kind Providence, there is surely a profit in diligently exerting ourselves in the various occupations of life. Labour was enjoined upon man after the fall, (Gen. iii. 17,) and Solomon himself observes, that “in all labour there is profit,” (Prov. xiv. 23;) consequently, since it is both necessary and a duty, it must, in some sense, be profitable. The observation, therefore, must be limited to the unprofitableness of all the worldly labour of man with respect to his Chief Good. It must be understood as asserting, not that the labours of man in the world are, in *every respect*, unprofitable, but only in this *one respect*, that they cannot form his Supreme Good. In this view they are unprofitable, because all the advantage they bring extends not beyond the grave, and because they have no tendency to advance a man in True Wisdom, which is the only substantial good. Propositions, though expressed in general terms, are often to be understood with certain restrictions.—See Prel. Diss. § v. p. 78.

—*under the sun*—An expression often occurring in the Ecclesiastes, and denoting in this life, in this world. Some, refining upon it, without reason, consider it as denoting the state and condition of man on earth, opposed to his future and celestial state.—(Michaelis, *Not. Uber.* in loc.) There is a paranomasia in the

* The ה in הכל is emphatical, denoting the universality of the proposition. It is applied in the same manner in other places of this book, (ch. ii. 11, 17, iii. 19, xii. 8.) הכל means any thing light and empty, “a thing quite insufficient and worthless, that soon vanishes away, like vapour or a bubble,” as Taylor observes in his *Concordance*; and it cannot be better rendered than by the word “vanity.”

original, preserved in the ancient versions, though not expressed in our own.

4. *one generation, &c.*]—The proposition contained in the preceding verse is illustrated, from this to the eleventh verse, by the following reasoning: With respect to his Chief Good, what profit hath a man in all his labour? (verse 3.) None; for what real good can be derived from the labours of so frail a being? While the course and constitution of nature abide the same, man, from the transitoriness of human life, cannot long enjoy the fruit of his anxious cares, (verse 4—7.) His toils, also, produce weariness and disgust; (verse 8;) they have never conferred happiness on man, and no one need expect they ever can, since there is no new thing by which it can be produced, (verses 9, 10,) and they are seldom worthy to be held in remembrance by posterity, (ver. 11.)

5. *and hasteth*]—The Hebrew denotes *to pant*, put metaphorically for *hastening*, the figure being taken from the panting of those who hasten along. Compare Psalm xix. 5, 6. The admirers of Hutchinsonianism may consult Parkhurst on פָּנָה, and Desvieux, p. 298.

6. *The wind goeth, &c.*]—The LXX, Vulgate, Syriac, Arabic, and several moderns join the first part of this verse with the former, and explain it of the sun, which the Hebrew, by an alteration of the pointing, will certainly bear; but the wind, הַרוּחַ, seems rather to be the subject of the whole verse.

7. *All the rivers, &c.*]—Some have appealed to this verse in proof of a philosophical hypothesis, which accounts for the origin of rivers and fountains by absorption from the sea, through means of the subterraneous veins and cavities of the earth; but the whole of this passage seems only intended to express, in a popular manner, the stated revolutions of the visible creation.—See Deylingii *Observationes Sacræ*, par. iii. Obs. 15, and Calmet, *Commentaire Litteral*, in loc.

8. *all things are wearisome*].—This observation, as appears from the context, must be limited to man's worldly labours and pursuits, all of which are fatiguing, without producing any real satisfaction and content. Man can hardly describe how little satisfactory are all the things of this world; "the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing;" something is ever wanting to render our enjoyments full and complete.—See Critical Note (*.)

9. *the thing that hath been, &c.*].—This verse might, with equal propriety, be rendered interrogatively, with the LXX, Vulgate, Dathe, &c. "What is that which hath been? The same that shall be. What is that which hath been done? The same that shall be done." As the last clause, "there is nothing new under the sun," in its most general acceptation, is evidently false, it must necessarily be restricted to the common occurrences of life and the revolutions of human affairs, which are, at all times, much the same, there being nearly the same round of disappointments and advancements, of business and indolence, of war and peace, of pleasure and vexation. Or, it may be limited to the *principles* upon which the natural and moral world are constituted, and to the *laws* by which they are governed. Though many things frequently occur which, in one point of view, may be called new; yet they have been produced by the same causes, and regulated by the same laws, which have existed from the first origin of the world. Or rather, the observation means no more than that there are no new sources of human enjoyment, every plan devised

* "Omnes res defatigarent," Bauer. The verb יגע in Pih. and Hiph. means *to create disgust*; hence *wearisome*, causing fatigue and distaste, Desvieux; (p. 544;) but this learned critic, adopting a different interpretation of הדרים, renders the clause "all these considerations are tiresome;" and, before him, Gousset explained it by "omnes sermones labore constant."—*Commentarii Ling. Heb.* יגע. A.

for the attainment of felicity being equally ineffectual, with all former things, to secure the happiness of man.

10. *it hath been already of old time, &c.*—See Critical Note (*.)

11. *there is no remembrance, &c.*—This must be taken with some limitation, as implying no more than this, that in like manner as the memory or record of former things is imperfect, so existing transactions shall be imperfectly recorded, and little regarded by posterity.

12. *I, the Preacher, &c.*—It does not appear to be the Preacher's design, in this section, to prove the vanity of human wisdom in general; (that is the subject of a subsequent section, ch. ii. 12—17;) but to demonstrate the vanity of that knowledge in particular which results from laborious inquiries into the ways and works, the occupations and pursuits of man. Of this knowledge political science forms a considerable, though not the only part; it includes curious researches into every thing that relates to man; and, by an express reference to his own experience, he concludes that such philosophical speculations cannot confer lasting happiness.

13. *I gave my heart to seek*—The Hebrews attributed the intellectual operations to the heart; (Michaelis, *Supplem. ad Lex.*

* The ancient versions render *היה לעמים אשר היה מלפנינו* "yet it hath been before in the ages that have preceded us;" but, as it is very unusual for verbs singular to concord with nominatives plural, unless they are meant distributively, I would render the clause in the following manner: "It hath been in the ages before; certainly it hath been before us." This, though coinciding with E. T. in sense, is a more literal version.—See Noldius, *Concordantiæ Particul. Heb. in* כבר 2.

Heb. No. 1257;) and hence, where intelligence is implied, לב might be better rendered by “mind” than “heart.”

— *search out by wisdom*—That is, sagaciously and diligently.

— *this sore travail*—See Critical Note (*.)

— *to be exercised therewith*—See Critical Note (†.)

14. *all is vanity and vexation of spirit*—This clause is taken, by many expositors, in its most extensive acceptation, and it is,

* The word ענין, from ענה, which sometimes means to act upon in a bad sense, *to afflict*, is only found in the Ecclesiastes, where it occurs eight times, and uniformly means *occupatio, negotium molestum, quod affligit*.—(Castell, *Lex. Hept.*) To this effect it is rendered in all the ancient versions.—See Le Clerc *in loc.* and the *Lex.* at the end of the Hexapla, ed. Montfaucon.

† The expression לענות בו is variously rendered: “to give evidence of himself,” Desvoeux; “for their humiliation therein,” Hodgson; “that they may weary themselves therein,” Boothroyd; “Deus concedit homines sese ipsos fatigare,” Dathe; “qua eos premeret,” Le Clerc; “ut occuparentur in ea,” Vulgate; so Syriac; του περισπασθαι εν αυτω, LXX. It is obvious that ענה cannot here mean *to afflict, to oppress*, though it sometimes has this meaning; for pain and affliction do not seem to be the end and object of any of God’s gifts and dispensations. Parkhurst, and Tympius in Nold. *Partic. Heb.* יען note *n*, are, probably, right in thinking that the radical meaning of ענה is *to act, or operate* upon some person or thing. Thus, the painful labour of inquiring concerning every work under heaven God has imposed upon mankind, to act or operate upon them by it; that is to say, it is one of the means of exercising them, and of making trial of their patience, humility, and resignation. The English translation, therefore, exhibits the sense correctly.

no doubt, in this view sufficiently apposite to the Preacher's argument; but the context seems to limit it to the study of the actions and works of man. Having stated, just before, the painful labour he had endured in inquiring diligently into "all things that are done under heaven," Solomon now pronounces these inquiries to be "vanity and vexation of spirit." All such studies, pursuits, and speculations are ineffectual to confer happiness; they create much trouble and affliction, and cannot, therefore, be the principal good of man.—See Critical Note (*.)

* The clause הכל הבל ורעות רוח is variously rendered: "all this is a vapour and company for the wind," Desvieux; "all is vanity, and a feeding on the wind," Boothroyd; "omnia vana sunt et voluptatem offerunt cito prætereuntem," Dathe; "*nutrimenta ventosa, studia inania*," Doederlein. My reasons for adopting the standard version are, first, The phrase רעות רוח only occurs in the following texts: Ecclesiastes i. 14, ii. 11, 17, 26, iv. 4, 6, vi. 9, in each of which the authorized version suits the context. Secondly, Whether רעות be derived from רוע *confringere*, or more analogically, as it should seem, from רעה *pascere*, it will equally denote the affliction which breaks down the spirits, the anxiety which preys upon the mind, and wears it away by care and vexation. Van der Palm, though he adopts the rendering "vana esse omnia et vento inaniora," confesses "potest tamen secundum Grammaticam suam formam duci a רעה, quoad *depascendi* notio non incommode transfertur ad *vexationes et discruciones animi*."—(*Diss de Lib. Eccles.* p.69.) Thirdly, It is supported by the ancient versions: "vanitas et afflictio spiritus," Vulgate; תבירות רוחא, the breaking or wounding of the spirit, Targum; חֲבִיטָה לְרוּחַ, the perturbation of the spirit, Syriac; προαιρεσεις πνευματος, LXX. By this expression the Greek translators probably meant to denote distraction of the mind, such as is occasioned when, several objects being presented, it deliberates, doubts, and hesitates which to choose.

15. *That which is crooked, &c.*—The sense is, the knowledge of “the things that are done under heaven,” (verse 13,) cannot constitute the Chief Good, since “that which is crooked cannot be made straight” by it; it can neither prevent the misfortunes and injuries which prevail in the world, nor rectify what is amiss, and it is, moreover, very defective and inefficacious. Those who take the preceding verse in its most general sense, explain this, as connected with it, in the following manner: *namely*, all the works of man are “vanity and vexation of spirit,” (verse 14,) and it is impossible it should be otherwise, since it is the ordination of Providence, which cannot be altered, any more than that which is crooked can be made straight, or that which is wanting or deficient in the labours of man can be supplied.—See Critical Note (*.)

Προαιρεσις γαρ εστι, ενο προκειμενων, το εκλεγεσθαι και αιρεισθαι τουτο προ του ετερου, as Suidas observes. Aquila has νομη ανεμου, and Symmachus βοσκησις ανεμου, both of which were, doubtless, intended to signify vain, unprofitable, wearisome labour, a mere “feeding upon wind,” (ch. v. 16; Hosea xii. 1,) which disappoints desire and expectation.—These observations are, in a great measure, applicable to רעין, found in ch. i. 17, ii. 22, iv. 16, as it is obviously derived from the same root as the former expression. The context, etymology, versions, and the traditionary interpretation conspire in supporting the received rendering “vexation of spirit.”

* The authorized version, as explained in the note, admits a good sense; I am, nevertheless, inclined to render it rather differently:

That which is perverse is with difficulty corrected;

And that which is defective is with difficulty supplied.

In support of this version it may be alleged, that לא יוכל frequently means a great difficulty only, not an absolute impossibility; as, Gen. xix. 19, 22, xxxi. 35, xliv. 22.—מעות, Part. Pyh.

16. *in Jerusalem*—See Critical Note (*.)

17. *to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly*—Metonymically the cause for the effect; that is, the works and labours of human wisdom, madness, and folly.—See Critical Note (†.)

from עוֹת, may be rendered “perverse” as well as “crooked.”—(Simonis, *Lex. Heb.* in voc.) The verb מִנָּה means not only *to reckon, number, or compute*, but also *to assign a share or portion*; and in this sense it may be taken here, that is, the assigning or appointing the full share or portion of that which is defective, which is a matter of great difficulty. In this view the meaning is, that the perverseness of men is, after all our study, corrected with such difficulty, and their manifold defects are so hard to be supplied, that the knowledge above described necessarily creates “vexation of spirit.” This exposition is submitted with deference to the reader’s judgment. The ancient versions are very discordant.

* Some translate על ירושלם “who ruled over Jerusalem,” referring to the kings, priests, and judges who had preceded Solomon; but as על frequently signifies *in*, (Noldius *in voc.* 14,) and only two had preceded the royal sage in the character of king, of whom one did not reign at Jerusalem, I prefer adhering to the received version, “in Jerusalem.”—See Goussett, *Comm. Ling. Heb.* עלה, S. 2.

† The primary meaning of הָלַל undoubtedly is *to shine*; hence, secondly, in Pih. and Hiph., *to shine upon, to illustrate, to praise*; thirdly, in Hith., *to praise oneself, to vaunt, to boast*; fourthly, as self-praise, pride, and boasting produce insolence and extravagance, the root came to signify *to be mad, tumultuous, and extravagant*. Now, according to the primary meaning of the root, the derivative הִלְלוֹת, here made use of by the Preacher, may be rendered “splendid matters;” thus—

18. *For in much wisdom, &c.*—This verse may, no doubt, be so paraphrased as to yield a consistent sense in the most general acceptation; but, in my opinion, the pleasures arising from literary pursuits are among the most delightful and the most permanent which Providence hath benignantly granted for the comfort and solace of human life. Neither can the wisdom here described be the Wisdom eulogized in the third chapter of Proverbs, all “whose ways are ways of pleasantness,” and to which so many commendations are given in the writings of Solomon. It must, therefore, refer to the knowledge mentioned in the foregoing verse, a knowledge of the works as well of what is reputed human wisdom, as of human folly and extravagance, of which the more is known, the more reason appears to lament their emptiness, their imperfection, and their baseness.

I have also applied my mind to the knowledge of wisdom,

Even the knowledge of matters splendid and profound.

So Dathe's version, “*rerum splendidarum*,” and Desvieux's, “whatever is shining;” but I prefer the received translation, “to know madness,” because, first, This sense suits the context. In the preceding verse the Preacher asserted his attainments in wisdom; he here repeats the same, with this addition, that he applied his mind also to know the labours and works produced by the madness and folly of mankind. Secondly, *הוללות* most probably signifies *madness and extravagance* in other places of this book, ch. ii. 12, vii. 25, ix. 3, x. 13, and not *splendid* or *shining*; though I am aware Dathe and Desvieux do sometimes so translate it. Thirdly, If any thing can be collected from the discordancy of the ancient versions, it is in favour of the authorized translation; certainly they do not oppose it. Michaelis (*Supplem.* No. 559) deduces the sense of *madness* from the cognate root in Arabic, which is applied to the appearing of the new moon, and from which come words denoting *luna nova* and *initium mensis*.—(See Golius, *Lex. Arab.* in *ل*). In this he is followed by Simonis in his *Lex. Heb.*, by Schulz, in *Cocceii Lex. Heb.*, and

CHAPTER II.

1. *I said in my heart, &c.*—Matthew Henry very truly, though rather quaintly, observes, “Solomon here, in pursuit of the *Summum Bonum*, the felicity of man, adjourns out of his study, his library, his elaboratory, his council-chamber, where he had in vain sought for it, into the park and the playhouse, his garden and his summer-house; exchangeth the company of philosophers and grave senators for that of the wits and gallants, and the *beaux-esprits* of his court, to try if he could find true satisfaction and happiness among them: here he takes a great step downward, from the noble pleasures of intellect to the brutal ones of sense; yet, if he resolve to make a thorough trial, he must knock at this door, because here a great part of mankind imagine they have found that which he was in quest of.”—The expression “I said in my heart,” denotes I said within myself, I purposed in my mind.—See Critical Note (*.)

by Storr, *Observat. ad Analog. et Syntax. Heb.* p. 40; but surely nothing can be more fanciful.—See Dindorf, *Lex. Heb.* in הלל.

The present Hebrew text is שכלות *prudence*; but as many MSS. have סכלות, and as this latter occurs in six other places of the Ecclesiastes, ch. ii. 3, 12, 13, vii. 26, x. 1, 13, it may be considered as the true reading. Or perhaps they are one and the same word, as *Sin* and *Samech* are one and the same letter.—See Buxtorf, *Anticritica*, p. 772, and Capellus, *Crit. Sac.* p. 880, ed. Charfen.

* Some derive אנסכה from נסך *to pour out*, namely, I will pour out myself in pleasure, I will indulge in it, I will abound in delights; but it seems to come from נסה *to prove*, with the affix and a paragogic ה, as it is understood by the Greek and Syriac translators.—וראה is the infinitive, put either for the imperative, “therefore enjoy pleasure,” as E. T., or for the future, “and thou shalt enjoy pleasure.”

2. *I said of laughter, &c.*]—Mirth is the usual attendant of innocence, and, when seasonably indulged, is a 'sweet refreshment of the spirits, and alleviates the toils and cares of life. By "laughter," therefore, must be understood loud, excessive, wanton laughter, which generally produces a kind of mental delirium, far removed from True Wisdom, and commonly ends in sadness and disappointment. Man's Chief Good cannot arise from revelry and merriment, which are too empty and short-lived to make us either wise or happy. By "laughter," according to some, is meant a state of continued prosperity and enjoyment, as it signifies Job viii. 21, Gen. xxi. 6, Psalm cxxvi. 2.

— *it is mad*]—Excessive laughter is said to be mad, either because it creates a species of momentary distraction, or because it is too unmeaning and ridiculous to be indulged in by any but madmen.

3. *I sought, &c.*]—Of this difficult verse, in rendering which ancient and modern translators differ exceedingly, I have retained the received version; but perhaps it may be better rendered in the following manner: "I proposed in my mind to gratify my appetite with wine, (yet guiding my mind with wisdom,) and to lay hold on folly, till I could find where that good for the sons of men *was*, which they should do under heaven all the days of their life."—See Critical Note (*.)

* Dr. Roberts, in his *Corrections of various Passages in the English Translation*, p. 164, proposes to read מִיִּין for בִּיִּין, and בשכלות for בשכלות, and to render it, "I determined in my heart to withdraw myself from wine, and to lead my heart to wisdom, and to lay hold on knowledge, that I might see," &c.; but this emendation is unwarranted, and, if it were not, this rendering would be inaccurate.—The clause לְבִי נָהַג בַּחֲכָמָה is rendered by van der Palm, "delassato per sapientiæ studium animo," for

— *with wine*—Under this term are comprehended all the delicacies used in banquetings and feastings; (Prov. ix. 2; Cant. viii. 2;) just as, by the same synecdoche, “bread” signifies in Scripture all the necessities of life.

— *lay hold on folly*—By “folly” is meant either that enjoyment of wine which is in reality folly, or generally whatever pleasures the folly of man pursues, and which are, by the event, found to be nothing but folly.

5. *trees of all kind of fruits*—Namely, all kinds of fruit-trees.

6. *pools of water*—In Eastern gardens were artificial ponds, or receptacles of water, which was conveyed from thence by little channels to every part, in order to irrigate the soil.—Nehem. ii. 14; Gen. ii. 10, xiii. 10; Isaiah i. 30, where see Bishop Lowth, and Burder’s *Oriental Customs*, No. 664.

— *the wood that bringeth forth trees*—A more correct rendering is given by Bishop Lowth, on Isaiah i. 30, namely “the grove flourishing with trees.” Hodgson’s version is, “the flourishing plantations.” The Hebrew literally is, “*sylva germinans arboribus*,” as Cocceius translates it.

7. *servants born in my house*—Among the Hebrews a kind of marriage was permitted between slaves, which the Romans termed *contubernia*, and the children produced from these connexions were also slaves. “Such slaves by birth were said to be *born in the house*, (Gen. xiv. 14, xvii. 23,) and termed *sons of the house*, (Gen. xv. 3,) or *sons of the handmaid*, (Exod. xxiii. 12; Psalm lxxxvi. 16, cxvi. 16.) Abraham had three hundred and

which sense of אֶלֶף he appeals to the Arabic and Syriac; but there is no Hebrew authority for it, and, as Bauer observes in his *Scholia* in loc., it is plainly contrary to verse 9.

eighteen of them.”—Michaelis, *Commentaries on the Laws of Moses*, art. 123.

8. *the peculiar treasure of kings*—Either abundant treasures, such as actually belong to kings and whole provinces; or, the most precious articles which kings and the provinces could supply. Some suppose, but I think erroneously, that there is a reference to the presents made to Solomon by princes and provinces.—(1 Kings iv. 21, ix. 11, x. 10; 2 Chron. ix. 9, 10. See Bishop Reynolds *in loc.*) How applicable the whole of this description is to Solomon must be so apparent, from his history in 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles, that I consider it perfectly unnecessary to offer any thing in illustration of it.—See Critical Note (*.)

* Critics have formed a variety of conjectures respecting the meaning of שרה ושרות, found only in this place. Durell, in his *Critical Remarks* *in loc.*, supposes some corruption of the text, of which, however, there appears no sufficient evidence; we must, therefore, endeavour to discover some *probable* interpretation, for probability is all that can be obtained. The Jewish Doctors advocate very different opinions respecting the meaning of the phrase, as may be seen in the *Critici Sacri*, Pfeiffer, (*Dub. Vex. in loc.*) Buxtorf, (*Lex. Talm. Chald. Rab.* p. 1796,) Gill's *Bible*, &c. Most of these opinions have found supporters in different Christian expositors; it may, therefore, be proper to collect and review the sentiments of some of the most eminent. Bochart, (*Hieroz.* par. ii. lib. 6, cap. 13,) Pfeiffer, (*Dub. Vex. in loc.*) Le Clerc, and others, deriving the words from the Arabic شدي *cecinit*, or from the name of a Phœnician poet, expound them of various kinds of symphony and song. Vatablus, Desvieux, and several others derive them from שרר *vastavit*, and take them to refer to women who are the subject of warlike devastation, that is, captive women; but, after attentively perusing Desvieux's laboured defence of this interpretation, it still appears to me altogether erroneous; for, as Bishop Patric

9. *I was great, and increased*—If the first verb in the original is put adverbially, as is often the case with verbs so conjoined, (Robertson, p. 327; Schroeder, *Reg.* 63,) they may be rendered “I increased in magnificence;” *μεγεθει υπερβαλον*, Symmachus.

observes, “there were no wars in Solomon’s time, till the latter end of his reign, and then he was rather worsted than victorious;” how, then, could he speak of acquiring females captured in war? Some derive the words from *שד* *a breast* or *pap*, and, as the breasts constitute a principal part of the beauty of women, they think that *שדה ושדות* denote *damsels of pleasure, pellices*; but this is surely far-fetched and chimerical. Analogous to this, however, is the interpretation of Michaelis, Doederlein, and Bauer, who, from a fanciful Arabic etymology, suppose that the words mean “a numerous haram.” Lud. De Dieu, taking the sense from the Syriac *ܠܝܬܝܐ* *sive propositum*, explains it “*delicias viæ et viarum, sive propositi et propositorum, i. e. omnis generis*,” and this exposition is adopted by Dathe, both in his edition of *Glassii Phil. Sac.* p. 52, and in the note to his Latin translation of *Ecclesiastes*. Calmet’s gloss is, “*des champs cultivez, et non cultives; ou des champs de toutes sortes; a la lettre, un champ, et des champs*. Tout le monde convient de la signification de *sadeh*, et de *sadoth* en ce sens. Et pourquoi, dans le denombrement des plaisirs qu’il s’etoit procurez, n’auroit-il pas dit qu’il avoit acquis une infinité de terres et des champs?” But this does not appear very probable. Jerom says, “non enim homines, viros videlicet et feminas; sed vasculorum species nominavit, *κυλικιον* et *κυλικια* vocans, quod Hebraicè dicitur *Sadda* et *Saddoth*.” Boothroyd, after Piscator, renders the words by “the sweetest instruments of music,” thinking that this sense naturally springs from *שדה* *to pour forth*, and that the feminine nouns may be used to denote those which give the softest sounds, and most like the female voice. Parkhurst, in his *Lexicon*, says, “*שדה* is a noun masculine, and *שדות* a noun

10. *and this was my portion, &c.*—Most commentators connect this with the preceding clause, thus: “my heart rejoiced in all my labour, and THIS was my portion;” that is, this rejoicing was the good that I enjoyed, was the happiness I derived from all my labour. But this is contrary to the scope of the passage, which is to show, that all the Preacher’s luxuries and worldly toils were empty and vain: hence the pronoun “this,” זה, must

plural feminine, *a cupbearer*, who *pours out* wine at feasts. So the LXX, preserving the idea, οἰνοχοὸν καὶ οἰνοχοῦσας, from οἶνος, wine, and χέω, to pour out. It appears, from Gen. xl. 9, 11, that the kings of Egypt, and, from Nehem. i. 11, that the kings of Persia had one chief *male cupbearer*, and so likewise might Sólomon, with a number of females under him.” In this way it is understood by Houbigant and others. My own opinion coincides so far with De Dieu, that the expression was intended to describe delights of all sorts, “*omnis generis*;” for, first, this clause ends the Preacher’s enumeration of particular luxuries, and should, therefore, seem designed to express generally that he enjoyed a variety of delights besides those mentioned before.—(See Gousset, *Comm. Ling. Heb.* שָׂרָה, K.) Secondly, a repetition of the same noun in different genders denotes universality, of which examples may be seen in Glass, *Phil. Sac.* p. 52, ed. Dathe, and in Storr, *Obs. ad Anal. et Syntax. Heb.* p. 189. The same construction obtains in Arabic.—(See Scheidius, *Ad Cantic. Hisk.* p. 135.) It is scarcely necessary to observe, that I take שָׂרָה for a noun masculine; but if it be feminine, the meaning will be the same, as a repetition of a word in the same gender equally denotes universality.—(Glass, p. 14; Schroeder, *Gram. Heb.* Reg. 5; Robertson, *Gram. Heb.* p. 295.) Lastly, the words seem properly derived from שָׂרָה *to shed, to pour out*; hence שָׂרָה וְשָׂרוֹת whatever most universally pours forth, or diffuses pleasure; and therefore the sense is, “all the delights of human luxury,” as expressed in the version.

refer to the following verse, and the sense will be as exhibited in the Paraphrase.

11. *there was no profit*].—Namely, as Diodati remarks, there was no sound nor permanent good after the transitory pleasure derived from such labours.

12. *I turned myself to behold wisdom, &c.*].—This section, including verses 12—17, does not relate to True Wisdom, or Religion, but to mere human, or worldly wisdom, as appears from the manner in which it is joined and compared with madness and folly. This is still more evident from what is said against it in verses 15 and 16, which show that the royal philosopher is speaking of secular wisdom or knowledge, which excels folly, because it renders a man's conduct more circumspect and prudent, (ver. 14;) but if unaccompanied with Religion, the True Wisdom, it profits little, inasmuch as it contributes little to lasting contentment. The wisdom here spoken of is undoubtedly a valuable possession, and the Preacher only means to demonstrate its vanity in this respect, that it cannot ward off calamity and death, nor completely satisfy the heart of man.—See Diodati.

— *for what can the man do, &c.*].—Though the critics and translators are greatly divided about this clause, there are three interpretations chiefly deserving of notice. *First*, that of the authorized version and Dathe, “*what can the man do that cometh after the king?*” which is, indeed, supposing an ellipsis scarcely exemplified; but, included within a parenthesis, yields a sense perfectly in connexion with the context, as may be seen in the Paraphrase; and after this manner it is explained by Reynolds, Holden, Patric, and other commentators. *Secondly*, that of Vatablus and Grotius, “*what man can follow the king in the things which are done?*” that is, in knowing them; who can pretend to equal the king in a knowledge of these matters? An interpretation agreeing well with the former clauses, but not with the following one. *Thirdly*, that of Geier and others, “*who is*

the man that shall come after the king whom they have already made?" which suits verses 18, 19, but bears no relation to the immediate context.—See Critical Note (*.)

14. *The wise man's eyes are in his head*—That is, he sees his way before him, is cautious in his undertakings, and judicious in the execution of them.

15. *Then said I in my heart, &c.*—See Critical Note (†.)

* Van der Palm declares the text in this verse to be manifestly corrupted, but I would say, with Bauer, “Ego nollem cultrum criticum adhibere, eoque omnibus testibus destitutus resecare quæ intricata sunt.” As the expositions, however, mentioned in the explanatory note are not quite satisfactory, I may be permitted to propose another. Now, may not חָסִיד be taken in the vocative case, and thus rendered and paraphrased: “*I turned to contemplate the wisdom, and madness, and folly of mankind; and of these I have a perfect knowledge, for what, O man, shall come after the king? Any thing perfectly new? No: only that which hath been already done, and therefore I am well qualified to form a correct judgment respecting them.*” Several MSS., instead of עָשׂוּהוּ, have עָשָׂהוּ in the singular, and so Syriac and Vulgate; but I see no sufficient reason for departing from the received text, “they have done,” namely, impersonally, “which hath been done.”

† This verse may be literally rendered, “Then said I in my heart, with respect to myself it happeneth according to the event of the fool; to what purpose, therefore, do I excel in wisdom? Then I said in my heart that this also is vanity.” חָסִיד is the nominative absolute; *i. e.* “quod attinet ad me.”—(Glass, *Phil. Sac.* p. 67; Robertson, *Gram.* p. 311; Schroeder, *Reg.* 33; Bishop Horsley, *Pref. to Hosea*, p. 31.) The little word אֲנִי is not without its difficulty. Schmidt renders it “jam pridem,”

16. *For there is no remembrance, &c.*—See Critical Note (*.)

17. *Therefore I was weary of life*—Existence is the greatest of external blessings bestowed upon man by his Maker, and though we ought to resign it willingly at the command of God, and esteem it as nothing in comparison with a future and a better life, it is deeply criminal to despise so great a blessing, or to become weary of it through momentary troubles and afflictions. The expressions in this verse must, therefore, be restricted to that kind of life which Solomon has been describing, a life spent in

“jamolim,” a sense probably without example. Noldius, in his *Concordant.* in voc., considers it redundant; but Tympius, in his note to Noldius, and Geier take it to mean the hour of death; namely, what will human wisdom *then* avail? It may, perhaps, signify *ideo, therefore*, a sense which it undoubtedly sometimes has. Few, I suppose, will agree with Doederlein, who says, “אז videtur nominascere. Sensus; *cur equidem tanto fervore animum applicui ad sapientiam.*”—*Scholia in loc.*

* As the authorized version gives the sense, it is needless to depart from it, but the verse may be more closely rendered: “For there is no memorial of the wise man nor of the fool for ever;” (*i. e.* there is no perpetual memorial; see Bauer, Boothroyd, &c.;) “seeing that now the days will come when all shall be forgotten; and the wise man dies in like manner as the fool.” The meaning, it is clear, must be limited; that is, there is no adequate or perfect remembrance of men after death. The particle כע in this verse certainly means *like as, in like manner as, æque ac.*—(Noldius, in voc. 8.) כשכבר may undoubtedly mean, “seeing that which now is,” as in E. T., or “seeing that now:” it is compounded of כ and ש and כבר, a particle only found in Ecclesiastes, and denoting time past or present.—See Durell, *Critical Remarks* in loc.

the pursuit of pleasure and enjoyment. In the third section he says he determined “to give himself unto wine, and to lay hold on folly;” that is, to indulge in the pleasures of sense, and to seize those things which, however prized by man, are only folly; and, after giving an account of his splendid luxury, and “the vexation of spirit” it occasioned, he proceeds, in this section, to state the vanity of merely human learning; and he concludes with observing, that neither his pursuit of earthly pleasure nor of earthly wisdom could preserve him from being wearied of such a life. The Preacher, then, gives utterance to no unholy disgust of human existence; it is only an assertion of the tædium which invariably attends a life unsanctified by religion, though it be spent in the midst of those circumstances of luxury and splendour most admired by the world.—See Critical Note (*.)

18. *Yea, I was weary of all my labour, &c.*—Solomon, at the conclusion of the preceding section, which treats of secular wisdom, having stated that all secular works are unavailing as to complete contentment, again adverts to the same topic in this section, and adduces another reason for the ennui and weariness experienced from such works, namely, that the fruit of our labour must be left to others. This sentiment, like that in the foregoing verse, has been considered as a selfish and narrow principle, but without reason. The wise monarch, in effect, only says,

* The verb *אָנָה*, used here and in the following verse, means not only *to hate*, in the strict sense of the word, but sometimes *to have little regard for, to be indifferent to*, Gen. xxix. 30, xxxi. 33, &c. (Taylor's *Concordance*;) and the verb *μισέω*, employed by the LXX in this place, has occasionally the same meaning.—(Schleusner, *Lex. in voc.*) It is, therefore, better to render it here, “I was weary of life,” than as E. T. “I hated life;” that is, as Geier observes, “minus dilexi, non curavi, non magnifeci.” Luther's version is, “therefore I repented that I lived,” &c.

“ Besides being disgusted with the luxurious life I was leading, I was likewise weary of all my labours, (enumerated ch. ii. 4—8,) for what does it profit to amass wealth, and to acquire large possessions, since they must be left to thankless heirs?” He therefore expresses no querulous discontent, no base and selfish sentiment, no unbecoming murmurs at life and the dispensations of Providence; but merely asserts that he felt a distaste for all his splendid works, arising from the consideration that he must leave them to those who might make an improper use of them. Whether Solomon glanced at his son Rehoboam, as has been supposed, cannot now be known.

20. *Therefore I went about, &c.*—See Critical Note (*.)

21. *a great evil*—The meaning is not that leaving our possessions to those who have not laboured in acquiring them is in itself an evil, for this, according to the law of nature, must frequently happen; but that the thought of being obliged thus to leave them is afflictive and vexatious, and evinces how little is the

* Parkhurst renders this verse, “ I went about that my heart might renounce (or cause my heart to renounce) all the labour, &c.,” but *נָס* means *to despair, to be destitute of hope* in all other places where it occurs, namely, Job vi. 26; Isaiah lvii. 10; Jer. ii. 25, xviii. 12; 1 Sam. xxvii. 1, and it has the same meaning in Arabic, (Golius et Willmet, *Lex. Arab.* in *ياس*) and in Rabbinical writings, (Buxtorf, *Lex. Chald. Talm. et Rab.* p. 926.) The words *ἀποταξασθαι* of the LXX, and “renunciavit” of the Vulgate, may seem to favour Parkhurst’s interpretation; but these translators *may* have meant to express the same idea as the E. T., *to abandon as desperate, to renounce as hopeless*. In other places the ancient versions give the sense of *despairing*, though not uniformly. For these reasons I give the preference to the received translation.

good to be derived from our anxious toil in their acquisition.—See Critical Note (*.)

24. *The man enjoys not happiness*—Literally, “There is no good in the man who eats and drinks,” &c.; that is, he has no perfect enjoyment.—See Critical Note (†.)

* The primary meaning of כָּשַׁר is, I think, *to prosper, to succeed*. This verb only occurs Esther viii. 5, Eccles. x. 10, xi. 6, in the first of which passages Esther says to the king, according to the standard version, “if I have found favour in his sight, and the thing seem right, כָּשַׁר הָדָבָר, before the king,” &c.: better thus, “*and the thing*, that is, my intercession for the Jews, *succeed before the king*, then *let it be written to reverse the letters*,” &c. Ecclesiastes x. 10 is rendered in E. T. “wisdom is profitable to direct,” but the context proves that the verb signifies *to succeed*; “if the iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge, then must he put to more strength; but wisdom is excellent to cause success,” הַכֶּשֶׁר. The remaining passage, ch. xi. 8, cannot be any way so well rendered as in E. T., “for thou knowest not whether shall prosper.” The ancient versions do not afford much light, but the little they supply is in favour of the above explanation; (see the *Lex. in Montfaucon's Hexapla*;) and in Syriac ܕܟܫܪ means *prosperatus est, fortunavit*. Having ascertained the meaning of כָּשַׁר, it will not be difficult to discover that of the derivate, כִּשְׁרוֹן only occurring ch. ii. 21, v. 10, iv. 4, the last of which proves that it denotes success, or prosperity.—See Note to ch. iv. 4, and Dindorf, *Lex. Heb.* in voc.

† Some suppose an ellipsis of כִּי אֵם, *nisi*, as E. T., Le Clerc, van der Palm, Syriac, Walther, (*Ellips. Heb.* p. 142, ed. Schulz,) and some in Poli *Synop.*, namely, “there is nothing better for a man *than* that he should eat,” &c.; or, “there is nothing good for a man *except* to eat,” &c.; but this produces a sense contrary to

— *This also*—The pronoun “this” refers to the foregoing proposition, namely, with respect to this also, that the man enjoys not happiness who indulges himself in eating, drinking, and luxury, I perceive it is from the hand of God, it is his appointment. According to the ordination of Providence, true happiness is not to be derived from sensual indulgences.

25. *For who can, &c.*—This verse contains a proof, from Solomon’s personal experience, of the assertion in the preceding one; thus, “Man cannot obtain real happiness from sensual pleasures; it is so ordained by Providence; and my opinion on this point is entitled to regard, since I have learnt by experience how vain and unsatisfactory they are, for no one has had a greater share of these enjoyments than myself.”—See Critical Note (*.)

the scope of the whole discourse, and of an immoral and dangerous tendency. The same objections apply to the rendering it interrogatively, with the Vulgate, Hodgson, and others. There is, moreover, no occasion for taking the words either elliptically or interrogatively; their plain and literal meaning is as expressed above, and is sanctioned by Jun. and Tremel., De Dieu, Geier, Houbigant, Desvieux, Boothroyd, Dathe, Gousset in רָקַק, 5. Though in the version I have given it is “indulges himself with the fruit,” &c., the original is literally, “his soul;” but the Hebrew often expressed the reciprocal pronoun by נַפְשׁ *anima*.—Robertson, *Gram. Heb.* p. 317; Cocceii *Lex. Heb.* ed. Sculz, in voc. 12; Michaelis, *Supplem.* No. 1622; but see Dr. Lawrence, *Dissertation on the Logos*, p. 7, *et seq.*

* Though some assign a different meaning to הָרַקַק, (Desvieux, Bauer, *Scholia* in loc., Dindorf, *Lex. Heb.* in voc.) nothing, in my opinion, can be plainer than that it retains, in this place, its usual meaning, *to hasten*; namely, who can partake of these enjoyments with such haste and promptitude as I have done?

26. *For God giveth, &c.*—Solomon concludes his observations on sensual indulgences with a sentiment of piety worthy a religious philosopher. True happiness cannot be found in such enjoyments, because they are criminal, and contentment was never yet the product of vice. God gives to the pure in heart alone that serenity, and cheerfulness, and conscious satisfaction, which are the chief ingredients in human felicity.

— *that he may give to him that is good before God*—Either that God may give, or the possessor may bequeath to some more worthy occupant. Either way the sense is, that wealth, amassed with care and toil, not uncommonly, through Divine Providence, falls into the hands of some one more worthy to possess it.—(Le Clerc *in loc.*) This is to be understood in reference to the Jewish Theocracy; we must not *now* expect the same *immediate* retributive justice.—See Prov. xiii. 22, xxviii. 8, and my note there.

CHAPTER III.

1. *To every thing, &c.*—This section contains another proof of the position which forms the groundwork of the discourse, that

“quis me est in fruendo promptior, et in acquirendo diligentior,” Drusius; “for who hath more cheerfully eaten, and delighted himself more than I?” Luther’s version.—As מְנִי expresses the sense given in the version, חוֹךְ is either redundant, or מְנִי is a singular idiom, denoting *magis quam*.—(Noldius, *in voc.* et *Annot.* 1270.) Instead of the textual reading מְנִי, many MSS., together with the LXX, Syriac, and Arabic exhibit מְנִי. If this reading be adopted, and it is approved by the author of *Choeleth, a Poem*, by Dr. Wall, and Dr. Roberts, the affix ו must refer to God, mentioned verse 24, and the sense will be, “That sensual delights cannot confer permanent felicity is the appointment of God, (verse 24,) for no man can eat, or hasten to indulge in them without him;” that is, without God’s permission.

true contentment cannot be derived from the sources of mere worldly enjoyment. But, though the Preacher affirms that human labours and pursuits, of whatever description, are insufficient to ensure permanent satisfaction, he is so far from condemning them as sinful, that he is careful to impress upon his readers, that there is a determinate season for all the counsels of God, and a proper time for the execution of all human purposes, a time when they may be lawfully and honourably carried into effect, (verse 1—8;) yet are they, as he argues, vain and unprofitable, because all things here below are subject to continual vicissitude, (verse 9, 10.) The best and most perfect of them endure only for a time, and, when it is expired, are succeeded by others equally vain and useless. God, indeed, hath made every thing beautiful in its season, though it is obscurely comprehended by man, (verse 11;) and he allows his rational creatures to partake of present blessings in a moderate and virtuous way, (verses 12, 13;) and what is most consoling, amidst all this emptiness and instability of terrestrial things, is, that the counsels of God are wise and immutable, (verse 14.)

— *every purpose*].—This expression cannot be restrained to the designs, inclinations, and purposes of man, but must include the counsels and designs of God, as is plain from what follows concerning a time to be born and a time to die, which alone belong to the ordination of Providence. The sense, therefore, is, that there is a proper season for the exercise of all human designs and inclinations, and a predeterminate and appointed time for all the purposes of God to take effect. It comes to the same thing if the word “purpose” be taken, by a metonymy, for the thing purposed, that is, the object of desire and inclination; (Simonis, *Lex. Heb.* and Gousset, *Comm. Ling. Heb.* in פּרָח;) but Desvoeux argues against this sense, p. 539.

2. *a time to plant, &c.*].—Several commentators understand this hemistich metaphorically of God’s raising up or destroying families and nations.—Jer. xviii. 6, *et seq.*

3. *A time to kill*].—If this be understood of human actions, common sense requires us to restrict it to a time of putting to death judicially, in the ordinary course of distributive justice. It may however mean, that the deaths of men are not fortuitous, but happen according to God's providence and appointment, by whom alone the time is determined to heal, that is, to enjoy health or to suffer pain.

5. *A time to cast away stones, &c.*].—This, I am of opinion, should be taken in a general sense, signifying that there is a proper time for gathering stones, and a proper time to cast them away, for any purpose whatsoever. But some think it refers to the rearing of memorials for the purpose of perpetuating the memory of remarkable transactions and events, as the pillar set up by Jacob, (Gen. xxxi. 44, *et seq.*;) and the twelve stones erected by Joshua, (Josh. iv. 1, *et seq.*;) and more especially to the erection of trophies over vanquished enemies; as, Josh. viii. 29; 2 Sam. xviii. 17, 18; Zech. ix. 16. Others explain it of the proper time to neglect and despise the collection of gems and precious stones, and of the proper time to collect them with diligence: but the Hebrew אבן, in the sense of *precious stone*, is generally accompanied with some explanatory word.—(See Simonis, *Lex.* in voc. ed. Eichhorn.) Another, though still less probable, interpretation is given by Harmer, *Observations on various Passages of Scripture*, vol. iv. p. 402, ed. Clarke.

— *a time to embrace*].—Compare 1 Cor. vii. 3—5; Joel ii. 16.

6. *A time to get, &c.*].—It is best to understand this generally, that is, there is a time proper for endeavouring to get knowledge, wealth, honour, preferment, &c., and a proper time when we should be content to lose them. There is even a proper time “to cast away” our possessions, when we do it in obedience to the demands of charity and benevolence, or rather than renounce ones duty to God and man. But some explain it in reference to the event. “Favourable opportunities there are for improving

people's fortunes, and unsuccessful times when they are the greatest sufferers: seasons when men are provident, and solicitous to secure the goods of fortune for many years, and future service; and when they dissipate with the utmost profusion of an unthinking extravagance."—Laurence Holden's *Paraphrase*.

7. *A time to rend, &c.*—Some, after Jerom, apply this to the rent or schism which Solomon foresaw was near at hand, both in church and state; (see *Choeleth, a Poem*;) others to the rending of garments on any individual or national calamity.—See Hewlett's *Bible* in loc.

8. *a time to hate*—Hatred and anger, being implanted in the human heart by our Creator, may, under proper restrictions, be lawfully indulged. And as there are just causes both for love and hatred, so there are for war and peace.

11. *He hath also put obscurity*—See Critical Note (*)

* Some are of opinion, that העלם must, in this place, signify *the world*, a sense which it has among Rabbinical writers, and which is supported by the Vulgate; but, probably, unexampled in any other passage of the O. T. I say probably, because I am aware some critics ascribe this signification to the term in Micah v. ii.—(See Oxlee, *Christian Doctrine of the Trinity and Incarnation*, vol. ii. p. 282 and 309.) Besides, the preceding את הכל in this verse denotes the universe, or, at least, all things in the world, as is observed in the *Notæ Uberiores* of Michaelis in loc.; and גם את העלם נתן, “he hath also set העלם,” must certainly denote something else: the very form of the expression shows that הכל and העלם mean two different things. I have, therefore, in the main adopted Parkhurst's explanation, as most easy and beautiful, in which עלם is taken for *a secret, hidden thing*, as Psalm xc. 8. Compare Job/xi. 6, xxviii. 11; Psalm xliv. 22. This appears to me far preferable to any explanation

12. *no good in them*].—Several expositors, referring the pronoun “in them” to men, understand it thus: There is no good in men, or for them, except to enjoy God’s blessings with contented moderation, and to do what is good to themselves and others; a valuable sense, it is true, but it seems more natural to refer it to the *works* of God, mentioned in the former verse.

13. *And also that every man, &c.*].—Though the received version gives the sense, this verse may be more clearly rendered,

I have seen, some of which I will quote. “He hath given, or placed, an hidden duration in the midst of them,” *Note to Choeleth, a Poem*; “he lets their hearts be tormented (or anxious) how it shall go in the world,” Luther; “he hath even set that eternity in their hearts, without which,” &c. Desvoeux; “he hath set their yoke on their heart, so that,” &c. Durell; “God hath also set futurity in their heart, inasmuch as,” &c. Hales, *New Analysis*, vol. ii. p. 403; “I viewed the darkness which he spreadeth over men’s hearts,” Hodgson; “hath put it in their hearts *to survey* the world,” Boothroyd; “*animis hominum impressit sigillum*,” van der Palm; “*efficit ut homines quoque tempus futurum præcognoscere cupiant*,” Bauer; “*universitatem quoque menti eorum proponit*,” Doederlein; “*quin et mundi hujus pulchritudinem homines mentibus suis intueri possunt*,” Dathe. Le Clerc also, and some in *Poli Synop.* take העלם to denote *the world, mundus*. So does Dr. Wells, who explains the clause “he has set the world in their heart,” to mean, that “God has given man ability to discern or judge of events in part, and to conclude that there is a like beauty in all events, though never so opposite.”—I have followed Parkhurst in rendering בלבם by “in the midst of them;” and as the clause “from the beginning to the end” may refer either to man or God, I have endeavoured to preserve the ambiguity.—For the meaning of the *απαξ λεγόμενον*, מבלי אשר לא, see Noldius, *Concord. in voc. et Annot.*

“ And also with respect to every man who eats, and drinks, and enjoys the good of all his labour; this is the gift of God.”

14. *shall be for ever*].—Namely, it is immutable; his purposes cannot be changed.

15. *That which hath been, &c.*].—This reflection naturally springs from the observation in the former verse, that what God doeth is for ever, is immutable. Hence, whatever seeming changes there may be, the course of nature remains unaltered, and the succession of events is regulated by fixed and undeviating laws. The royal Preacher, in the present section, exemplifies the truth of this remark in the wickedness prevailing in the courts of justice contrasted with the righteous judgment of God. If the base passions operate even in the seats of justice, what but vanity can be expected from human pursuits!

— *the persecuted man*].—The Hebrew word, here rendered “ the persecuted man,” is the Part. Niph. נִרְדָּף, and may admit two meanings: first, *that which is past*; that is, God will require that which is past, will cause it again to be exhibited, for the course of nature remains unaltered. This coheres well with the preceding part of the verse, and is supported by the Vulgate, Cocceius, Geier, Dathe, Reynolds, Patric, van der Palm, Bauer, Boothroyd, Parkhurst, and others in Poli Synop. Secondly, it may mean *him who is pursued*, that is, *persecuted*; and, if connected with the next verse, will yield a good sense, as given in the Paraphrase. This explanation appears to me to agree with the scope of the context better than the other; and the LXX, whose version of Ecclesiastes is extremely literal, and, perhaps, our best guide, understood it this way; and with them agree the Syriac, Targum, and Symmachus, with Grotius, Schmidt, Simonis, &c.

16. *And moreover I saw, &c.*].—Reference is here made to the places where justice and equity should be administered by the judges and rulers of the people; “ the place of righteousness”

corresponding, as Geier and Schmidt observe, to “the place of judgment.” Such repetitions are frequent with the sacred writers, and are very emphatical.

17. *God will judge, &c.*—Though the poor and innocent are for a while persecuted and oppressed by lawless power, yet, in the end, this seeming disorder will be rectified, and God will pass a righteous sentence upon those who are guilty of tyrannical cruelty. What comfort ought it to administer to the oppressed, to reflect that there is a fixed time, beyond which God will not suffer innocency to be injured, nor tyranny to prevail!—See Critical Note (*.)

18. *I said in mine heart, &c.*—The Preacher, after reflecting that God will judge mankind, and determine concerning every work, (verse 17,) turns his thoughts to the condition of men, and

* The word **וַיִּשְׁפֹּט**, in the latter part of this verse, has given the commentators considerable difficulty. Most of them take it for an adverb, *there, ibi*; yet they are not agreed as to what it ought to be referred. Others translate it by *then, tunc*. Hodgson, Doederlein, Bauer, Boothroyd, van der Palm, and Dathe, reading the word with a Sin, take it for a verb, *decernit, disponit*, as in Exod. xv. 15; 2 Sam. xiii. 32, which, in my judgment, is by much the most easy and natural interpretation. If **וַיִּשְׁפֹּט** is not a verb, some verb must be supplied, as **וַיַּעַשׂ**, *which is done*, that is, God will judge concerning every work which is done *there*, namely, in the place of judgment; but it is surely uncritical to suppose an ellipsis without necessity. Besides, if this clause had been intended to be construed with the former **וַיִּשְׁפֹּט**, the preposition **עַל** would, probably, not have been inserted. Neither does it depend upon the preceding clause **כִּי עַתָּה לִכְלֹל הַכָּל**, for if it had, instead of **וַיַּעַשׂ כָּל הַמַּעֲשֵׂה שֶׁנַּעַשׂ**, it would have been simply **לִכְלֹל**, or **וַעַתָּה לִכְלֹל**. Upon the whole, it appears every way preferable to take **וַיִּשְׁפֹּט** for a verb, and to render it, “he will determine concerning every work.”

infers that it is so ordered, or their condition is particularly adapted for this purpose, that God may prove them, and that they themselves may see how little, with respect to earthly things, they differ from the beasts.

— *they themselves are beasts*].—That is, like beasts; not in all respects, but only so far as is declared in the following verse, namely, in being subject to death, (Psalm xlix. 12, 20.)—See Critical Note (*.)

19. *For that which befalleth, &c.*].—This is commonly explained of man's being subject to various chances and accidents, like beasts; but the clause, “as one dieth, so dieth the other,” clearly determines that the author is speaking of death alone, which is the “one thing” common to them both. Though the sense of the original is exhibited in the English version, it may be more literally and more perspicuously expressed as follows: “For as to the event of the sons of men, and the event of beasts, even one event happens to them both: as the one dies, so dies the other; yea, the like breath have they both; and, *in this respect*, what preeminence hath man above the beasts?”

* The author of *Choeleth, a Poem*, translates the latter part of this verse as a wish, “Oh! that God would enlighten them, and make them see, that even they themselves are *like* beasts,” which cannot be admitted; for the verb לברר cannot, I think, be properly derived from any other root than ברר, *to discern, to explore*; (see ch. ix. 1, and Gousset, *Comm. Ling. Heb.* ברא, P. 2;) but Houbigant, (*in loc.*) Roberts, (*Corrections, &c.* p. 166,) and Hales, (*New Analysis*, vol. ii. p. 404,) adopt the reading בראם after the Syriac; that is, “in which God created them.”—In the construction of the latter part of the verse, להם is redundant, as is often the case with pronouns having ל prefixed.—See Robertson, *Gram. Heb.* p. 314; Schroeder, *Gram. Heb.* Reg. 37.

— *they have all one breath*—Namely, they are alike with respect to breath or life. That “breath,” רוּחַ, here denotes *life*, or *vitality*, is perfectly evident, both from the context and the nature of the thing, since in no other sense have they the same רוּחַ, *ruach*. But in verse 21 the same word, *ruach*, means the *spirit*, or *living principle*.

— *hath no preeminence*—This expression must be limited, as in the Paraphrase; for in verse 17 Solomon observes, that there is this preeminence of man above the beast, that he is amenable to the righteous judgment of God, and, of course, is a rational, responsible agent; and in verse 21 he remarks the superiority of human nature in the different events which await “the spirit of man” and “the spirit of the beast.” Both, however, are equally liable to death, and in this respect man has no preeminence. This exposition is confirmed by the following verse.

— *all is vanity*—These expressions may undoubtedly be taken in an enlarged sense, as in several other places of this book, to denote the emptiness and insufficiency of all earthly things to effect permanent felicity: but the context seems here to limit them to the circumstance of men and beasts being alike subject to mortality. In the next verse “all” is, in like manner, restricted to the corporeal frames of men and beasts.

20. *all go unto one place*—As in the next verse the spirit of man and of the beast are affirmed to go to different places, this must be restricted to their bodies. The animal part of both returns to its kindred earth: an evident allusion to Gen. iii. 19. Compare Ecclesiastes xii. 7.

21. *who knoweth, &c.*—The Polyglott versions, and some modern critics, interpret this as a question expressive of doubt, namely, “Who knoweth the spirit of man, whether it goeth upward; and the spirit of the beast, whether it goeth downward

to the earth?" But this would be a contradiction to chap. xii. 17, where Solomon expressly declares, that the human spirit returns to God who gave it; and the drift of the reasoning is, not that it may be doubted whether the spirit of man goeth upwards, and the spirit of the beast downwards, but that, although one event, death, awaits both man and beasts, and the animal part of each returns to dust again, yet different events await "the spirit of man" and "the spirit of the beast:" while the former ascends into the heavens "unto God who gave it," the latter descends to the earth, and perishes for ever. The ה, therefore, prefixed to העלה and הורדת is not interrogative, but is the prepos. article.

— *the spirit of man—the spirit of the beast*—It is plain, that רוח, *ruach*, must here mean *the living principle, that which wills and acts*; but which is different in man and in beasts, forasmuch as that of the former goeth upwards, lives for ever, and that of the latter goeth downwards, perishes for ever.—See Le Clerc, *in loc.* and Oxlee, *On the Trinity and Incarnation*, vol. i. p. 47.

22. *should rejoice in his works*—Though Solomon pronounces decidedly, that secular labours and enjoyments cannot confer lasting happiness, he by no means absolutely condemns them. He had before stated, that there were proper times when they might be executed with propriety, (sect. 8,) and he here further argues, that we should enter into the occupations of life with cheerfulness and contentment, since they are imposed upon us by Divine Providence, as our "portion."

Some commentators consider verses 18—22 to be spoken in the character of an Epicurean, and the words, at first sight, may seem to favour this opinion. But, according to this view, the passage has no bearing upon the subject of the first part of the book, which is to prove the vanity of all earthly things, and, among the rest, the vanity of Epicurean enjoyments, as is done ch. ii. 1—11, and ii. 24—26; and it would, therefore, contravene the design of the discourse, to state an Epicurean opinion concerning the value of worldly gratifications without refuting it, as

would be the case, if the notion of these commentators be admitted. Throughout the first part, Solomon never proposes an objection for the purpose of overthrowing it, as he does in the second; but he proceeds to prove his main position by reviewing the various concerns of this world, without ever losing sight of his object. The expressions, also, in verse 19, "for all is vanity," are so clearly in character, and so expressive of the lesson which this part was designed to inculcate, that it seems unreasonable to consider this passage in any other light than as a statement of the wise monarch's real sentiments. The scope of the whole section is to point out the vanity, even of life itself, if regarded independently of religion, insomuch that man, in respect to life and death, has no superiority over the brutes; and it is only when we connect his existence with the religious doctrine of a future state, when we view him in relation to another life, that he appears to possess any preeminence. When, however, we look beyond the grave there is a wide distinction, since the spirit of the one goeth upwards, and the spirit of the other downwards to the earth.

CHAPTER IV.

1. *So I returned, and considered*—That is, I considered again, I took another view of the subject, the first verb being, as usual, used adverbially: or, the meaning may be, I returned from the contemplation of this subject, namely, the subject of the preceding section, and considered, &c.—See Critical Note (*.)

* Instead of the received version, "on the side of their oppressors," Dr. Durell renders this part of the verse, "they had no comforter, nor strength against the hand (or, power) of their oppressors, for they had no comforter:" (see Noldius, *Concord.* in מִיד:) but it may well be doubted whether this sense of the particle מִיד can be established by any satisfactory example. Some think מִיד is put for ב; while others understand it according to its common

2. *I praised the dead*, &c.]—If this and the following verse be considered by themselves, they convey, it must be admitted, a sentiment of murmuring discontent, and of profane complaining at the dispensations of Heaven, which a religious mind would shudder to avow; but if they be understood, as they ought, in reference to the royal Preacher's design, they will be found perfectly accordant with the most refined and contented piety. The subject of this part of the discourse is the vanity of every thing merely human and terrestrial, in proof of which the argument in this section is, that vanity is increased unto man by oppression. And when the Preacher, in reference to the present life, considered the many and cruel oppressions of mankind, the helplessness of the afflicted, and the power of the persecutors, he thought it would be better to die, and still more so not to have been born, than to be subject to the oppressions which are inflicted by tyranny and vice. But if Religion, the True Wisdom, be taken into consideration, it will present a very different view of the subject, teaching that all the dispensations of God are wise and good, and that it is our duty to be content with whatever Providence may order. The present section, then, strictly conduces to the author's design; and amounts to this, that, if human and worldly things were our Chief Good, non-existence, considering the various oppressions here below, would be preferable to life.—See Critical Note (*.)

signification, “*a manu*, i. e. a parte, h. e. penes opprimentes, est rolur,” *Poli Synop.* In all these varieties the sense of the verse is not materially altered; for which reason it is a matter of little moment to determine on what side the evidence preponderates; and, in truth, this would be most difficult, since מ has several meanings applicable to the place before us, and יר, as is well known, is often put pleonastically after prepositions.

* “Who are yet;” עדינה and, by apocope, ערן in verse 3, put for ער הנה.—See Altingii *Fundam. Punct. Ling. Sanct.* p. 206.

3. *Yea, better is he, &c.*—If we look no farther than to the things of this world, “he which hath not yet been” would be preferable either to the dead or the living. “To see,” in this verse, denotes to suffer, or to experience.

4. *Again I considered, &c.*—Prosperity is often regarded by mankind as the great and supreme good of life; but it exposes a man to the envy and jealousy of his neighbours, whence proceed many evils, anxieties, and troubles, by reason of which prosperity is rather the source of uneasiness than of contentment. The Hebrew should be rendered “every prosperous work,” and not, as in the standard version, “every right work,” because it is added, “that for this a man is envied of his neighbour;” and prosperous works, not those which are right and equitable, are the cause of envy.—See Critical Note to ch. ii. 21.

5. *the fool, &c.*—As some place the Sovereign Good in a gay, and idle, and dissolute course of life, which, in Scripture, is called folly, the Preacher, in this section, reviews their opinion, and pronounces such a life to be “full of travail and vexation of spirit.”

—*foldeth his hands*—That is, in an agony of grief, when he perceives the lamentable consequences of his folly.—See Critical Note (*.)

Durell, however, thinks it may, in verse 3, be a noun, signifying *delight*, or *pleasure*, that is, “with whom pleasure hath not been.”

* All the ancient versions support the received rendering of כְּסִיל, “the fool;” but Dathe renders it by “ignavus,” and Durell by “the inactive,” which is certainly not opposed by the context, and is, in some degree, favoured by Prov. vi. 10, xxiv. 33. עָצֵל, however, is the proper word for a *sluggard*, a *slothful person*; and כְּסִיל properly denotes a *stupid person*, one *insensible*

6. *better is an handful, &c.*]—Those who interpret the preceding verse of the slothful man, consider these words as spoken by the sluggard; but as the former verse seems to describe the foolish or irreligious man, they are more justly taken as the words of Solomon, the meaning of which is expressed in the Paraphrase.

8. *there is not a second*]—Either no wife, or no friend, or, as seems more probable, no son to inherit, as heir, the fruit of all his labours.

— *For whom do I labour*]—The author, according to some, by a bold prosopopeia, puts these words into the mouth of the miser. “Solomon suddenly changes the turn of his phrase,” says Desvoeux, p. 350, “from the third to the first person, and goes on with an argument, which is apparently the result of the inward thoughts of a man circumstanced as him of whom he was speaking; of a man who is not able to account to himself for his own conduct.” I think, on the contrary, that the words contain Solomon’s own reflection, and that they are correctly rendered in the received translation, the particle *Vau* being properly rendered “neither” after a negative: so Vulgate.

9. *two are better, &c.*]—It is matter of no small difficulty to discover the scope and connexion of the passage from this verse to the end of the chapter. Many consider it, particularly verses 9—12, as a continuation of the description of the bad effects and folly with which avarice is chargeable. An attentive perusal, however, must convince the reader that it was not meant, in this place, to delineate the disadvantages of covetousness, but the

in mind or understanding, and cannot, perhaps, be better rendered than by “fool;” namely, a person destitute of wisdom or religion. For an explanation of לֵבִי, see the note to my *Translation of Proverbs*, ch. iii. 26.

advantages of society; these verses, then, cannot belong to the subject treated in the eighth verse. A new topic is commenced at the ninth verse, and, as it should seem, is continued to the end of the chapter. From contemplating, in the preceding section, the folly of the miser, who has neither child nor brother, nor heir apparent for his riches, the Preacher is naturally led to contrast the comforts and advantages of society with such solitary selfishness. The general sentiment may apply to any union founded on generous principles, as that of marriage, of friendship, of religious communion; but the subsequent verses clearly limit it to the union of civil polity. The royal sage, in strict accordance with his main position, observes that, granting society to have its blessings and advantages, yet dominion and empire are only vanity as far as regards the Supreme Good of man. Immense benefits undoubtedly arise from the social union, to the existence of which some species of government is necessary; yet the power of royal domination and the splendour of imperial magnificence do not satisfy the vast desires of the soul; and kings, in the plenitude of their authority, must confess, as well as the humblest of their subjects, that all is vanity and vexation of spirit.

— *a good reward*].—Dr. Durell renders this clause, “because they have a greater advantage in their labour,” and observes, that “this sense is more consistent with truth, as well as the context: and it is well known that the Hebrews are unacquainted with the comparative degree, which the *exigentia loci* alone can determine.”—(*Crit. Rem.* in loc.) What the learned critic means by this observation is hard to say. The Hebrews certainly do not form the degrees of comparison by a terminal variation, but they contrive to express them by other means. The version of Desvieux likewise is, “because they have a better reward for their common labour;” so Boothroyd. No good reason, however, is alleged for deserting the plain and natural construction, which is, “because they have (or there is to them) a good reward

in or for their labour." Dr. Wells supposes an allusion in this verse to Gen. ii. 18, where it is declared not to be good for Adam to be alone.

10. *For if they fall*].—That is, if one fall, or if either fall; the plural being used distributively. This surely is not to be limited to the literal sense; it includes much more; and implies, that if a man in society fall into errors of conduct, or into misfortune and distress, his friend, by good advice, will rectify the former, and by kind assistance remedy the latter.

11. *If two lie together, &c.*].—This is sometimes explained in reference to a man and his wife. Mr. Harmer (*Observations*, vol. i. p. 269) conceives that it may refer to sleeping together for medicinal purposes; and this is favoured by the circumstance, that the heat of the climate rendering it inconvenient for two to sleep in one bed during the summer months, it is seldom practised; and that a person was ordered to sleep with David, with a view to recall the vital heat, which was almost extinguished in the aged monarch.—(1 Kings i. 1, 2.) Others think it refers to sleeping together in winter; and this is most probable, since, though the summers in the Holy Land are overpoweringly hot, the winters are cold and severe.—(See Harmer, *Observations*, vol. i. p. 39, *et seq.*; Paxton, *Illustrations of Scripture*, vol. ii. p. 255.) But to whatever the verse may immediately refer, it would be very unimportant if restricted to the literal sense. It was doubtless intended to portray, under the image of two persons sleeping together, the warm, affectionate, and cheering delights enjoyed in society, as contradistinguished from the cold and stoic uniformity of solitary existence.

12. *And if one prevail, &c.*].—Here the advantages of society are described in regard to this particular, that it affords the means of mutual aid and assistance, both against spiritual temptations and external assaults. The last clause "for a threefold cord is not quickly broken," is probably a proverbial expression, denoting

the benefits resulting from the union in civil society.—See Critical Note (*.)

13. *Better is, &c.*—This is intimately connected with the subject of the foregoing verse. From considering the comforts and utility of society, the Preacher now turns his attention to civil government, which is necessary to the existence of the social state; and concludes that honours, power, and dominion, though sought with so much eagerness and contention, confer no lasting and genuine felicity. This is so evidently the scope and connexion of verses 13—16, that it is surprising the commentators should look for any other.—See Michaelis, *Not. Uber.* in loc.

— *child*—That is to say, a young man; for the Hebrews did not limit the term to childhood.—See Critical Note (†.)

* The affix *Vau*, in וְיִתְקַן, for הוּ or נוּ, is elsewhere, though not frequently, so used; as, Exod. xxii. 30; Jer. xxiii. 6; Hos. viii. 3; Psalm xxxv. 8. It is referred by Geier and Dathe to the solitary person spoken of in verse 11, who cannot be warm; but it may be put distributively for any person.

† Desvieux renders מִסְכֵּן by “the experienced and wise son,” and Hodgson, by “a feeble but wise youth;” yet the traditionary sense of *poor* is to be preferred; because, first, it suits the context in all the places where it occurs, namely, ch. iv. 13, ix. 15, 16; and the root has this signification likewise in Deut. viii. 9; Isaiah xl. 20. Secondly, all the ancient versions support this sense. Thirdly, in all the sister dialects the root סִכַּן, or its derivatives, denote *poverty, to be poor*, as may be seen in Castell, *Lex Hept.* The received sense, therefore, is supported by all the evidence the case admits, and cannot be deserted consistently with the laws of sound criticism. The root, it is true, has other senses apparently incompatible with this; but such contrariety of senses is not unexampled, even in the sacred languages. Words, by

14. *apostates*—I have no hesitation in adopting Parkhurst's derivation of הסור from סור *to turn aside, to apostatize*, though I have explained it in my Paraphrase somewhat differently.—(See Parkhurst in סר, and Gousset in סור, M.) If the received translation, “out of prison,” be retained, it may be understood figuratively for “from a mean condition,” “from a low origin.”—(See van der Palm and Bauer *in loc.*) Some, however, take it literally out of prison, where he had been put for some supposed offence; and Dr. Wells thinks it not unlikely that Solomon had respect to the case of Joseph in Egypt.

15. *the second child*—If this refer to the “poor and wise child” mentioned in verse 13, it must be understood of one chosen by the providence of God to the kingly dignity, as David was, from a low and humble station; but it seems rather to refer to him who is the second in the kingdom, the son and successor of the reigning monarch, “who shall stand up in his stead.”—See Critical Note (*.)

length of time, change of modes and customs, and various unknown causes, acquire new, and sometimes discordant meanings; and the critic is not justified in rejecting a signification established by scriptural usage, versions, and dialects, though he cannot discover its connexion with other acknowledged senses of the same root.

* The authorized translation, “all the living which walk under the sun, with the second child that shall stand up in his stead,” is inadmissible. Either the verb substantive must be understood before אִם הֵלֵךְ; thus, “all the living which walk under the sun ARE with, *i. e.* favour and support, the second child:” or this clause must be construed with הַמְהֹלְכִים, *who walk*, in the former hemistich; thus, “all the living under the sun who walk with, *i. e.* favour the second child.” The sense is much the

— *who shall stand up in his stead*—In whose stead? The pronoun relative may refer to “the foolish king,” mentioned in verse 13; but I am of opinion it is put distributively, namely, in any king’s stead; and therefore the verse refers to the state and condition of kings in general. Men are extremely ready to worship the rising sun; and it is the unhappiness of princes, if they live long, to find the honour which is due to them transferred, through the self-interested views of mankind, to the heir apparent of the throne. The Preacher further illustrates this in the next verse, by declaring that even a wise administration, evinced by increasing numbers and prosperity of the people, cannot ensure the attachment of subjects, who are apt to become weary both of the aged monarch himself and of his government.

16. *There is no end of all the people*—According to De Dieu, Patric, Wells, Holden, Henry, and others, the meaning is, there is no end to the fickleness of the people, no bounds to their inconstancy; every nation being alike subject to levity and mutability: but it seems clear, from the scope of the passage, that the writer designed to express the idea of multitude, of a numerous and increasing population, especially as the phrase “there is no end” is often used to denote a great or indefinite number.—See verse 8 and xii. 12; Isaiah ii. 7; Nahum iii. 2. See Bishop Reynolds and Poli *Synop.*

— *over whom he reigned*—Literally, “of all in whose presence he is, or, before whom he is,” which evidently means those over whom he reigns: “quibus se ducem præbet,” Dathe. In verses 13—16 there appears to be no reference to contemporary

same, but the Masoretic punctuation opposes the latter.—If “the second child” refer to the “poor and wise child” in verse 13, הילד השני would be better rendered “the other child.”—See Taylor’s *Concordance*.

history, as some imagine; nor are there any grounds for considering it prophetic of Solomon's successor, as Dr. Bernard Hodgson supposes. The discourse turns upon sovereign power in general and in the abstract.—The affix in **לפניהם** refers to the preceding collective noun **עם** *the people*.

CHAPTER V.

1. *Keep thy foot, &c.*—Having remarked that full satisfaction cannot be extracted from honours, dignity, and rank, no, not from thrones and sceptres, the Preacher now adverts to the service which is rendered to the King of kings, and notices a vanity even in this; not, indeed, in its own nature, but in the manner in which it is performed by the foolish and irreverent. In ch. xii. 1 and other texts, the author highly commends piety and the worship of God; “but whilst he admits the truth of this proposition, that the worship of God constitutes a most important part of the present happiness of mankind, he reminds these persons, that they may put vanity into this very worship, and render it unprofitable to their welfare, by their thoughtless and carnal performance of sacred duties: yea, that there may be divers vanities therein, (verse 7;) for the discovery and avoiding of which he presents a solemn caution to those who, being convinced of vanity in the creatures, apply to God in his instituted worship, to benefit themselves.”—(Bishop Reynolds *in loc.*) This caution he exemplifies, *first*, in our general conduct in devotional exercises, (verse 1;) *secondly*, in prayer, (verses 2, 3;) *thirdly*, in vows, (verses 4, 5, 6;) and, *lastly*, proposes the remedy of these vanities in a principle of deep-rooted piety and reverence for God; “but fear thou God,” (verse 6.)

The meaning of the expression “keep thy foot” is, conduct thyself prudently, and observe due decorum, when thou goest to the house of God to join in the sacred rites of religion. There is an allusion to the ancient custom of discalceation when entering upon the performance of religious ordinances. It was usual with

Pagans, Jews, Mohammedans, and some Christians to put off their shoes or sandals on entering a temple for the purpose of worship.—(See Mede, *Works*, p. 347; Bynæus, *de Calceis Hebræorum*, lib. ii. cap. 2 and 3; Parkhurst, *Lex.* in נעל; Rosenmüller, *Scholia* in Exod. iii. 5.) When the Almighty appeared in the bush, he commanded Moses to loose his shoes from off his feet, (Exod. iii. 5;) and “the captain of the Lord’s host,” an appellation of the appearing-angel, the Angel-Jehovah, who was our blessed Lord, “said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy,” (Joshua v. 15.) Discalceation, as an act of reverence, might originate from these commands, though Le Clerc, in his note on Exod. iii. 5, thinks that it obtained much earlier, and that God enjoined Moses to perform this rite in compliance with a custom already received. Be this as it may, by keeping or observing the foot is undoubtedly meant the care, circumspection, and reverence required in the exercise of Divine worship; for, to use the words of the learned Mede, “not as if Solomon or the Holy Ghost in this admonition intended the outward ceremony only, (that were ridiculous to imagine;) but the whole act of sacred reverence, commenced in the heart and affection, whereof this was the accustomed and leading gesture.”—*Works*, p. 349. See Critical Note (*.)

* The clause וקרוב לשמע מלת הכסלים זבח is rendered by our translators and others, “be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools;” that is, be more intent upon receiving instruction, and paying moral obedience, than upon offering the mere formal sacrifices of the foolish: an excellent sense truly; but as the order of the words does not well admit this translation, others, supplying ב or עם, render it, “be more ready to hear than to offer with fools a sacrifice;” to which it may be objected, that it refers זבח to מלת, whereas no instance of זבח being construed with נתן has been produced. It seems, therefore, preferable to render it, “to be ready to obey is a better sacrifice than the offering of fools;” and my reasons for adopting this version,

2. *Be not rash with thy mouth, &c.*—That is, be not rash and precipitate in thy speech; utter nothing unadvisedly, when engaged in the worship of God. Compare Matt. vi. 7.

— *for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth*—That is, as Diodati observes, seeing thou, a weak, earthly creature, speakest to the Creator in his heavenly glory, do it with reverence and trembling.

3. *For as a dream, &c.*—This, I apprehend, is a comparison, though the particle of comparison is omitted, as is often the case, (Glass, *Phil. Sac.* p. 441,) and is designed to illustrate the foregoing precept, “let thy words be few” when performing the offices of piety and prayer. The sense therefore is, as a dream, with all its incoherent images, often proceeds from a multitude of

which nearly coincides with that of Desvieux, are, first, it suits the context, the scope of which is to prove, that even religious offices may be rendered vain by folly, and thence to recommend reverence and devotion in the public service of God, as being more acceptable to him than all the offerings of the wicked. Secondly, this is taking the words in their natural and obvious construction, as will be evident upon an examination. Thirdly, the verb *שמע* often means *to obey*, especially 1 Sam. xv. 22, “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,” &c. to which Solomon seems here to allude. Fourthly, this rendering is sanctioned by the ancient versions: “*appropinqua ut audias; multo enim melior est obedientia quam stultorum victimæ,*” Vulgate; the Syriac is, “draw near to hear, (or, be ready to obey,) *which* is better than the oblations that fools offer;” *και εγγυς του ακουειν, υπερ δομα του αφρονων θυσια σου*, LXX; the sense of which seems to be, that “being ready to hear (or, to obey) is an oblation for thee above the gift of fools.” The Targum is paraphrastical. For these reasons I have not scrupled to adopt the rendering given in the Paraphrase.

business in which our thoughts have been deeply engaged; so, in the worship of God, does a fool's voice, *i. e.* idle, foolish speech, arise from using a multitude of words. In devotional exercises "much speaking" as naturally gives rise to folly and inconsistency, as much business does to dreams and visions of the night.—See Doederlein, *Scholia* in loc.

4. *When thou vowest*].—"A vow is a solemn promise, or promissory oath, made to God, by which a person voluntarily binds himself to something which was in his own power. Solomon does not here direct us to make such a vow; but, having brought ourselves under its obligation, to be cautious of violating our engagement with God, who never fails in any one of his promises to us, (Joshua xxi. 45,) nor delays its performance beyond the exact time, Exod. xii. 41, 51; Hab. ii. 3; 2 Pet. iii. 9."—Bishop Reynolds *in loc.*

6. *before the angel*].—Solomon in this verse continues the consideration of vows, and, consequently, by "the angel" is meant the priest. It appears, from Lev. v. 4, *et seq.*, that a breach of any vow was to be confessed before the priest, whose duty it was to make an atonement for it. The sense therefore is, when thou goest before the priest to acknowledge the breach of a vow, do not endeavour to excuse or extenuate the offence, by alleging frivolous excuses. Sin is still criminal, and it is an aggravation of it to encourage the vain expectation, that it is of such a nature that God will not deem fit to chastise. Priests are called "angels" Job xxxiii. 23; Mal. ii. 7; Rev. i. 20. Some, following Mede, (*Works*, p. 438,) take "angel" here collectively for more than one, and, considering the verse as a caution against rash vows, explain it thus: "do not hastily engage thyself in such vows as the weakness of human nature and thy fleshy reluctance will not suffer thee to perform; much less think of being absolved from the obligations thou layest on thyself, in the presence of God and of his holy angels, by such foolish excuses as these: It was a mistake; I did not mind what I said," &c.—(Patric,

Paraphrase in loc.) Some again suppose, that by “angel” is meant God; others, Christ, the Angel of the Covenant; others, one of the ministering angels, employed to inspect and guard the pious; but I have no doubt the true interpretation is given above in the *Paraphrase*. The expression “thy flesh,” in the first clause of the verse, is equivalent to “thyself.” In the same way “flesh” is used, by a synecdoche, for the whole man, ch. ii. 3; Gen. vi. 12; Isaiah xl. 5; Rom. iii. 20.

7. *For in the multitude, &c.*]—The obscurity of this verse arises from the difficulty of discovering its connexion, and the commentators are, as usual, very various. I take it to contain a reason for the admonition given immediately before, namely, Endeavour not to excuse the breach of thy vows by alleging many things in extenuation of the offence; for as in the multitude of dreams there are multifarious vanities, so likewise are there in a multitude of words, spoken with a view to excuse any transgression. It is as useless to expect to conceal the hideous depravity of sin by palliatives, as to expect method and coherence in the dreams of the night; therefore, “fear thou, *i. e.* reverence God.”—The Preacher has not stopt to specify the inference from what he has advanced in this section; but it is evidently this: Except thou takest care to avoid the errors which are too frequent in public worship, thy religious services will be vain and unprofitable. That which is the bounden duty and the highest interest of man, will, by an improper performance, become vanity, and, instead of conferring comfort and satisfaction, will tend to the increase of sorrow and affliction.

8. *If thou seest, &c.*]—It appears to be the scope of this difficult section to declare, that there is a vanity in murmuring at oppression and injustice, since, as the Almighty regards whatever is done in the earth, we must conclude that he permits the lawless despotism of the cruel for wise and righteous purposes. This subject, though not necessary to be introduced into this part of the discourse, arises naturally from the foregoing argument touching

the services due from man to the Supreme Being. From reflecting upon the errors by which religious offices are perverted, the Preacher adverts to another closely-allied error, that of repining at the prevalence of secular power cruelly and tyrannically exercised; and such complaints, he asserts, should be silenced by a belief in the sovereignty and providence of God, who will finally adjust all inequalities, and repair all evil. Such appears to be the design of this passage, which must be considered in the light of a digression from his principal argument.—See Critical Note (*.)

* If the word *חפץ* be here taken in the sense of *will, purpose, inclination*, it may refer either to men or to God.—(See ch. iii. 1, note.) In the former case the meaning will be, “marvel not at the *wicked purpose of oppressors*, for he that is,” &c. Each of these is supported by respectable names; but I am inclined to abide by the received translation, “marvel not at the matter,” which is confirmed by the LXX, Vulgate, and Syriac.—The phrase “he that is higher than the highest,” (*גבה מעל גבה*), literally, “he that is high above the high,” is probably an Hebraical expression for the High and Lofty One who inhabiteth eternity. It may, however, be rendered, “for he that is High (or the High One) from above regardeth the high,” that is, regardeth the great and powerful oppressors.—(See Noldius, *מעל*, 11.) The last clause, “there be higher than they,” is difficult by reason of the ambiguity of the terms *גבהים עליהם*. The former of these words may denote the high princes and governors of the world, or the High Ones, the sacred Persons of the Holy Trinity; and in this sense it has been understood by several Jewish and Christian expositors.—(See *Poli Synop.*; *Michaelis, Not. Uber.* in loc.; *Jones, Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity*, ch. iii. § 8.) The word *עליהם* also may be rendered not only “above them,” but likewise “against them;” and if referred to *רש* the poor, a noun of multitude occurring in the first hemistich, the meaning may be, “For he that is high (or the High One) regardeth the high

9. *Moreover the profit, &c.*—This obscure verse has been variously explained by ancient and modern commentators, most of whose opinions may be found in *Poli Synop.* and *Bauer, Scholia* in loc.; nor is it easy to discover its scope and connexion. Perhaps the best way is to connect it with the foregoing verse, as in the Paraphrase.

10. *He that loveth silver, &c.*—Here begins a new subject, namely, the vanity of riches, which is continued to the end of the chapter; and the Preacher asserts, that money, however it may be increased, or however desirable it may be in some respects, can never satisfy the desires of the soul.—See Critical Note (*.)

princes, *and the high ones*, whether governors or princes, who are *against them*; *i. e.* who are against the poor, and oppress them." Or, if גבהים be referred to God, the meaning may be, "*For he that is high (or the High One) regardeth the high princes and oppressors, and the High Ones of the sacred Trinity are against them* who oppress the poor." Still there is not sufficient reason for departing from the authorized version, and I have given, in the Paraphrase, what appears to me to be the sense of the passage.

* The second hemistich, which, according to E. T., is, "nor he that loveth abundance with increase," is rendered by Desvieux, "and who loveth numerous company? no income *shall be sufficient for him*:" and Gousset (*Comm. Ling. Heb.* חקה, C; see also *Poli Synop.* in loc.) understands המון to mean a multitude of men and servants; but the word is sometimes used to denote an *abundance of treasure, rerum copia*, 1 Chron. xxix. 16; Psalm xxxvii. 16.—(See Cocceii *Lex. Heb.* ed. Schulz.) Bishop Patric, following De Dieu, says, "The latter end of this verse runs thus in the Hebrew text: *whoso loveth (i. e. silver) reaps no fruit of his abundance; i. e. doth not employ it*, as St. Hierom expounds it; which is very often the miserable condition of worldly-minded

11. *what good is there, &c.*—The meaning may be, that the rich derive no other satisfaction from their wealth than the empty and delusive pleasure of gazing upon their hoards and possessions; but, as “the sight of the eyes” means the enjoyment of present things, ch. vi. 9, (see the note there,) I rather think the sense is, “what advantage have the owners of great riches,” saving “the beholding of them with their eyes,” that is, unless they enjoy them with contentment and moderation? But I have not ventured to express this in the Paraphrase.—When it is said before “when goods increase, they are increased that eat them,” the meaning clearly is, that the consumers of them are multiplied. In proportion as a man’s possessions increase, the number of his servants, labourers, and dependants becomes greater; in consequence of which there are greater demands upon his revenue.

12. *but the abundance*—The original word may likewise be rendered, “the fulness,” or, “the satiety;” and, in any sense in which it can be taken, the truth of the observation is apparent.

men.” If the clause be considered, with Schmidt and Dathe, as elliptical, it may be supplied in the following manner: “He that loveth silver shall never be satisfied with silver, nor whosoever loveth abundance *which has no profit*.” (or, taking מִי interrogatively, “and who loveth abundance *which has no profit*?) This also is vanity.” The general sense is clear; He shall never be satisfied who delights in useless abundance, and the English version appears sufficiently accurate. It may indeed be objected, that אֶהְבֵּה is *perhaps* never construed with ב, most assuredly never in the writings of Solomon; but ב in בְּהִמּוֹן may be superfluous, as similar redundancies of ב after verbs governing the accusative are very frequent; (see Noldius, *Concord. Partic.* in ב, 36;) and if no similar example after אֶהְבֵּה can be found, it is not contrary to the idiom of the Hebrew tongue. It must always be remembered, that many forms of expression only appear anomalous from the paucity of writings in that language.

13. *There is a sore evil, &c.*—Riches often prove injurious to the owners, by exposing them to the external dangers of robbery and oppression, and by occasioning still greater dangers from within, as being temptations to avarice, violence, sensuality, pride, &c.

14. *by evil travail*—That is, either by improvidence and vice; or by the constant, though ineffectual, trouble to preserve them; or by the fraud and treachery of others; or by misfortune, which may be regarded as the punishment inflicted by the Supreme Being upon avarice. It is rendered by Hodgson “through misfortune;” so Dathe and Boothroyd.—See Critical Note to ch. i. 13.

—*there is nothing in his hand*—That is, through various casualties, there is nothing of all his wealth to leave to his posterity.

16. *laboured for the wind*—“He hath got no benefit at all, embracing a shadow, grasping the air, catching at the wind, wearying himself for that which hath no substance of true felicity in it.”—Pemble, *in loc.* Compare Jer. v. 13; Ezek. v. 2; Hos. xii. 1; Ps. i. 4; Job. vi. 26; 1 Cor. ix. 26, xiv. 9.

17. *he liveth*—Literally, “he eateth;” but as this hemistich is figurative, the “eating” being intended to intimate the whole course of life, and the “darkness” a state of care and perplexity, it is better to render it as in the Paraphrase; or, according to Durell, “he consumeth also all his days in darkness.”—See ch. vi. 2. See Critical Note (*.)

* I have rendered ובעם הרבה “and sorrow increaseth,” which is the literal version, taking הרבה for the Præt. Hiph.; or, taking it as a noun adjective, the same sense results, that is, “sorrow is much, or great, and his infirmity, and wrath.”—Houbigant, van der Palm, and Durell propose to omit the *Vau* in חליו, as is done

18. *Behold a good, &c.*—Having painted in strong colours the vanity of riches, the royal sage here obviates an inference which some might be apt to draw from his observations, namely, that riches are in themselves pernicious. All enjoyment of them is not forbidden, neither are they bad in their nature; it is the abuse alone which is to be condemned; and, therefore, he now proceeds to give some admonitions respecting the proper use of them, corresponding to what he had previously observed, ch. iii. 12, 13. Compare ch. ii. 24.—See Critical Note (*.)

20. *he will remember, &c.*—Never having abused his good fortune, the recollection of the past will bring no anxiety, no alarm; and his heart will be tranquillized by the pious sentiment, that, whatever share in the good things of this world he has enjoyed, he is indebted for it to the mercy and benevolence of the Almighty. With this laudable and becoming use of wealth, the Preacher, in the next section, contrasts the vanity and mischief of avarice, whose character it is to abuse prosperity and wealth.—See Critical Note (†.)

in one MS. Ken. and by all the ancient versions, but, as it seems, without any necessity.

* The word אשר יפה, in אשר יפה, translated in the Paraphrase “which is honourable,” is here rendered by the copulative “et,” by E. T., Syriac, Munst., Piscat., Vatab., Drus., Deod., Schindl., Castel., Nold., Glass, Dathe, van der Palm; but I much doubt whether it ever signifies *et*, *and*. I have followed the best authority, that of the LXX, *ἔδου οἱ ἔδον ἐγὼ ἀγαθόν, οἱ εἰσιν καλόν*.

† I take הרבה to refer to מתת in the preceding verse; that is, although the enjoyment of wealth, which is the gift of God, be not much, *yet* he will remember the days of his life.—The last hemistich כי האלהים מענה בשמחת לבו is variously rendered; but I consider מענה here to have the sense of *exercising*, as in ch. i. 13, where see the Notes.

CHAPTER VI.

1. *There is an evil, &c.*—The Preacher, in this section, shows the vanity of heaping up treasures, which a man of a covetous disposition cannot enjoy. Avarice, however common in the world, is a great and heinous sin; it never yet produced contentment; for which reason a man's Chief Good cannot consist in the abundance of his treasures. Intimately as this topic is connected with that of the preceding section, they are not precisely the same. The former relates to the vanity of riches and their acquirement in general; and the latter to the vanity of that insatiable desire of amassing treasures which is denominated avarice: the former refers to wealth in the abstract, the latter more particularly to its abuse; and Solomon is led to this subject, by an easy transition, from the reflection which he had made immediately before upon the proper use and enjoyment of riches.

2. *so that he wanteth for nothing*—The meaning is, that Providence has been so liberal to him as to deny him nothing which he can reasonably desire for his comfort and accommodation. The phrase, however, "for his soul," (Heb. לנפשו,) is in this application ambiguous, as it may mean "to himself," "to his appetite and desire," or "for his use and enjoyment."—(See Michaelis, *Not. Uber.* in loc.) The Polyglott, versions, E. T., &c. adopt the literal rendering "to or for his soul," which seems preferable to any other.

— *God giveth him not power to eat*—As there can be no criminality in not using wealth aright, if God denies the power, some commentators explain this clause of God's withholding the power by way of punishment for an unjust acquirement or an abuse of riches. But as God is, in Scripture, said to do what he permits, the sense most probably is, that although the person spoken of have every thing he can desire, yet he has been suffered by Divine Providence to cherish a covetous disposition to

such a degree as to be unable to enjoy his treasures. "To eat," in Scripture language, is often put for "to enjoy," ch. ii. 24, 25, iii. 13, v. 18, viii. 15.—See Glass, *Phil. Sac.* p. 1185.

— *an evil disease*—It is not implied in this expression that covetousness is a constitutional disease: it means that the possession of riches, without the power of enjoying them, is a very grievous trouble; (compare ch. ii. 21, v. 16;) or is the cause of disease, by creating incessant cares and anxious fears, and by leading a man to deny himself the real comforts, and sometimes the necessities, of life.

3. *If a man beget, &c.*—This verse does not form the commencement of a new topic, as many commentators suppose, but is immediately connected with the preceding; by "man," *אִישׁ*, therefore, is not denoted *any man*, but *the man* spoken of in the second verse, or such a man as is there described. It is scarcely necessary to observe, that the expression "an hundred children," means *very many*: a certain number for an uncertain.—See Critical Note (*.)

* Durell contends that *אִישׁ* is to be construed with *מֵאָה*, and accordingly he renders this hemistich, "though he beget an hundred males." His reasons are, that "*אִישׁ* of the preceding verse is certainly the nominative, which would, therefore, be unnecessarily repeated here; neither would it, in that case, be placed after the verb; and this shows that it is governed by it in an oblique case, as it cannot be used absolutely, on which account our version adds the word children." It is true, that *אִישׁ* *the man*, in verse 2, is the subject to which the observations in this verse relate; but *אִישׁ* is not unnecessarily repeated, as either it, or a pronoun, expressed or understood, must be used for a nominative to the verb, and it is usual for the Hebrews to repeat the noun, instead of substituting a pronoun, for which see Robertson, *Gram.* p. 317; Glass, *Phil. Sac.* p. 150. His second reason is

— *have no burial*].—The meaning may be, that such a man is too covetous and narrow-minded to provide a decent sepulchre for his remains; but it refers, more probably, to the way in which his dead body will be treated by his heirs. Though the miser, who has abused his wealth, should have a multitude of children, and should live to a good old age, yet he would derive no satisfaction from his good things, and his children would neither lament his death, nor consign his remains to the earth with funereal honours. By “no burial” is not to be understood, that he shall be cast out without interment, but that at death he shall be without those rites and honours which are always paid at the sepulture of the virtuous and illustrious. It is well known that the ancient Jews, like most of the Asiatics, conducted the funerals of their friends and relatives with great pomp and magnificence, and were extremely anxious not to omit this last tribute of respect to the departed. To be without burial, therefore, was considered as the last stage of human misery.—See Harmer, *Observations*, vol. iii. chap. 7; Lamy, *Apparat. Bibl.* lib. i. cap. 14; Ikenius,

wholly undeserving of notice, as nothing is more common than for a nominative to be placed after a verb. It might be matter of surprise that Dr. Durell could be led to make such a remark, did we not reflect that the most learned writers, in moments of inadvertence, have fallen into errors, into which minds of lesser attainments have seldom been betrayed.—The next clause, שְׁנֵי וָרֶב שִׁיחֵי יָמֵי, is rendered by Desvieux, “Nay, *though he should be a senator on account of the days of his years;*” and it might be adopted, to avoid the tautology, could sufficient proof be given of רֶב being used for a *senator*, or a man wise and experienced through age; but the learned writer’s examples are not satisfactory. The rendering of the authorized version, which I have adopted, is natural and unforced; it is supported by the ancient versions; and such tautologies are not unfrequent in the Sacred Writings.

Antiq. Heb. P. iii. cap. 14; Jahn, *Archæol. Bibl.* sect. 203 *et seq.*

— *an untimely birth is better than he*—“Better is the fruit that drops from the tree before it is ripe, than that which is left to hang on till it is rotten. Job, in his passion, thinks the condition of an untimely birth better than his, when he was in adversity, (Job iii. 16;) but Solomon here pronounceth it better than the condition of a worldling in his greatest prosperity, when the world smiles upon him.”—Matthew Henry *in loc.*

4. *For he cometh in, &c.*—This verse may, undoubtedly, be explained of the miser; but it seems properly to relate to “the untimely birth” just before mentioned, because it is closely connected with the following verse, which certainly refers to the abortive spoken of in verse 3, and of which it is said, that “he hath not seen the sun, nor known any thing.” Bishop Patrick refers the verse under consideration both to the miser and the untimely birth, but, in my judgment, improperly.

6. *Yea, though he live, &c.*—If it be objected that the miser is better than an untimely birth, inasmuch as he has lived long, and life is a blessing, Solomon replies, that a long life, without enjoying good, is only protracted misery; and that the miser, however long he may live, derives no solid comfort from his riches, which cannot exempt him, more than others, from the stroke of death; for “do not all go to one place?”

7. *All the labour, &c.*—This verse refers to the “man” before mentioned, namely, the miser; for it cannot be said, as a general position, that “all the labour of man is for his mouth,” or on his own account; but it is true of the miser, whose selfishness predominates over every other consideration, and who, in every scheme and action, keeps his own interest steadily in view. And yet, however rich he may be, his appetite for possessing more is

not satisfied, and he continues toiling to increase his hoards.—
See Critical Note (*.)

8. *Therefore what hath, &c.*—If this verse is not thrust in without any relation to the context, it must refer to the avaricious man, who is the subject of the preceding observations; hence “the wise man,” חכם, is put ironically for this reputed, or this pretended wise man, the miser. This throws light upon a passage generally deemed so obscure, that Dr. Wall thought “the text seems mangled by scribes;” and Bishop Patrick says, “There is so great a difficulty in this verse, that I did not know how to connect it with the foregoing.” This difficulty arises from our translators having disturbed the connexion with the conjunction “for” with which the sentence commences, as the verse forms no reason for that which immediately precedes. Had they rendered the particle כי by an illative “then,” “therefore,” as it signifies in several other places, the connexion would have been plain; and this, with the next verse, would have appeared to be, what they really are, the conclusion to the Preacher’s discussion upon avarice.

— *that knoweth to walk before the living*—This is commonly explained of living suitably to his circumstances and character, of living discreetly among men; but it may only be a periphrastical expression denoting the continuance of life. Compare ch. iv. 15; Psalm lvi. 13, cxvi. 9; Isaiah xlii. 5.

* Though לפיהו may, with the generality of translators, be rendered “for his mouth,” I prefer taking לפי for a particle denoting *secundum, pro ratione*; that is, all the labours of the miser is with respect to, or for himself, on his own account. If the received rendering be retained, it must be understood figuratively, namely, for his gratification.

9. *Better is, &c.*—The Preacher has not returned the answer to the inquiry in the foregoing verse, as to what are the respective advantages of the poor man, and the worldling who is wise in his generation; and has left it to be supplied by the reader, as is plain from what is stated in this verse, which contains a reason for some preceding reflection or inference; but as nothing of this kind has been expressed, it must be supplied, and that given in the Paraphrase seems most agreeable to the scope of the context and to the observation here made.

— *the sight of the eyes*—As “to see good” denotes “to enjoy,” the phrase, “the sight of the eyes,” probably means contentment and satisfaction with present things, a moderate enjoyment of them: “*præsentium fruitio*,” as Geier expresses it; “*Melius est eo frui quod video, quam animæ desideriis agitari*,” Dathe’s version; so Vatabl., Merc., Grot., Wells, van der Palm, Boothroyd, &c.—Here ends the first part of the discourse.

10. *That which hath been*—This section contains the result of the foregoing investigation, and is introductory to the second part of the treatise. The Preacher having stated, at the commencement, that “all is vanity,” and having demonstrated the truth of the proposition by a review of secular wisdom, folly, pleasures, honours, power, and riches, he, by way of conclusion, here observes, that, as the various circumstances, conditions, and pursuits of life have been examined, and have been found to be only vanity,² what is man profited by them with respect to solid and permanent happiness? If, as has been shown, they cannot render him happy, the inquiry still remains, “What is *really* good for man in this life?” And as it is a most interesting inquiry, the Preacher now begins his discussion of man’s SOVEREIGN GOOD, and the result constitutes the remainder of the book, not always, indeed, logically stated and methodically arranged, but the attentive reader will perceive that the whole tends to the same point, the recommendation of Wisdom, or Religion.

— *it is known that it is man*—That is, that vanity is man, or, in other words, that his mere worldly occupations, pursuits, and enjoyments are vain.—See Critical Note (*.)

— *neither may he contend*—That is, man cannot reasonably sit in judgment or contend with God who is so infinitely above him; he cannot pretend to call his Maker to an account; and therefore ought not to presume to call in question the Divine dispensations and decrees. The Hebrew word denotes *to sit in judgment, to take cognisance of a cause*.—See Taylor's *Concordance* in דן.

CHAPTER VII.

1. *A good name, &c.*—In answer to the inquiry, “Who knoweth what is good for man in this life?” the Preacher begins by showing the advantages of reputation and affliction, which easily introduces the principal subject of the second part of the book, namely, the recommendation of practical Wisdom, or Religion, commencing at the eleventh verse. By “name” is meant character and reputation; and the scope of the discourse makes it probable, that the author intended to limit it to the reputation of True Wisdom. As a general proposition, however, it is true, that a good character is better than precious ointments,

* The sense of וְנוֹרָע אֲשֶׁר הוּא אָדָם would, perhaps, be clearer were it rendered, as the Hebrew well may, “it is known that man is itself,” *i. e.* is that vanity which we have seen; or, “it is known what man is,” taking אֲשֶׁר for *what, illud quod*, “subintellecto scil. ad quod refertur, subjecto,” as Tympius remarks on Noldius, *Concord.* in voc., and understanding הוּא for the verb substantive. Thus the sense is brought out, “it is known what man is,” that is, how vain and empty are all his pursuits, &c.; so the LXX, καὶ ἐγνώσθη ὁ ἐσθλὸς ἀνθρώπος.

which the Orientals used so lavishly, and which, in the sultry regions of the East, are most grateful and refreshing. The paranomasia in this verse, and in verses 5 and 6, is very striking, and gives great elegance to the original.

— *and the day, &c.*]—That “the day of death is better than the day of one’s birth,” as a general proposition, is, in spite of all the labour and ingenuity of the expositors, a censure upon God for creating man. As such a sentiment could never proceed from the pious king of Israel, it must be understood in connexion with the former hemistich, and the observation must be referred to those persons alone who have “a good name,” or character, in consequence of a virtuous and honourable conduct. Of such it is true, that the day of THEIR death is better than the day of THEIR birth, inasmuch as they escape from a world of toil and vanity; leave a name honoured by their children, respected by all; and enter upon the inheritance of a better life.—It will come to the same thing if we suppose an ellipsis of “for a man” (לְאִישׁ) in the first part of the verse, and refer to it the pronomial affix in the second; that is, “A good name is better *for a man* than precious ointment, and the day of *his* death than the day of his birth.”

2. *It is better to go, &c.*]—This section, though it may not at first sight appear so, conduces to the Preacher’s design of eulogizing Wisdom; since affliction, by ameliorating the heart and disposition, tends to produce true, practical Wisdom in all, and, in regard to the wise in particular, it exalts their character by rendering their virtues more conspicuous. Common sense requires us to understand this observation in a limited sense, either that it is better for those who have not acquired Wisdom to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting, because they will perceive the real value of it by so doing; or, generally, it is better, in regard to the real good of man, to be conversant with the sorrowing and afflicted than to mingle continually with the gay and luxurious, because the house of mourning teaches

the most salutary lessons of Wisdom. In this, or some similar way it must be taken, as the Preacher has inculcated a cheerful contentment, and an innocent enjoyment of the bounties of Providence, ch. iii. 12, 13, v. 18—20.

— *for that is the end of all men*].—Something must be supplied in order to complete the sense, as the expressions, “for that is the end of all men,” convey no determinate meaning. Some verb of teaching, admonishing, &c. agrees best with the context; thus, the going to the house of mourning admonishes us of the end which inevitably awaits all men. “In illa enim finis cunctorum admonetur hominum,” Vulgate; “in illa finem conspiciamus omnium hominum,” Dathe; so Bauer, in his *Scholia*.

3. *Sorrow is better, &c.*].—“That sorrow which arises from the meditation of death, a sad, sober, composed temper of mind, by which a man is rendered capable of instruction, and sensible of serious concerns, is better, and more salutary in its effects than laughter, and all the intemperate conviviality of sumptuous feasts.”—(Bishop Reynolds *in loc.*) “Laughter” here signifies the same as in ch. ii. 2, where see the note.—See Critical Note (*.)

6. *For as the crackling, &c.*].—As by “the song of fools,” in the former verse, is meant the music and clamours prevailing in their computations; so, by “the laughter of fools” in this, is meant their noisy merriment and revellings, which, like the sudden, crackling flame of thorns, though ardent for a time, are soon over, without leaving any thing solid or profitable behind. Cow

* All the ancient versions render כעס by “anger;” but the latter hemistich shows that in this application it means *sorrow*, as in ch. i. 18. The Targum is to this effect: “Better is the anger of the Lord of the universe against the righteous in this world, than his derision at the wicked.”

dung dried was the fuel commonly used in Palestine, and Mr. Harmer thinks "its extreme slowness in burning must make the quickness of the fire of thorns very observable, and give a liveliness to this passage."—*Observations*, vol. i. p. 458. See also Burder, *Oriental Customs*, No. 633.

7. *Surely oppression, &c.*—The Preacher still continues the argument on the advantage of affliction, and asserts in this verse that oppression, of all things the most galling to a generous mind, serves only to render a wise man more illustrious, by the magnanimity with which he bears it, or the prudent resolution with which he resists it.—See Critical Note (*.)

— *and a gift*—Though it is certain that gifts destroy, that is, corrupt the hearts of those in power, (Exod. xxiii. 8; Deut. xvi. 19,) yet the antithesis shows that "gift" here means the gifts of fortune, namely, prosperity and worldly advantages. While oppressions serve only to render a wise man illustrious, by displaying the energies of his mind, prosperity, which is the gift of fortune, tends to corrupt the heart. I here use the word fortune in a popular sense, without intending to exclude the providence of a Supreme Being.

* The standard translation is, "Surely oppression maketh a wise man mad," which, though partly supported by the ancient versions, cannot be right; for it is neither in character, nor consistent with the scope of the discourse, for Solomon to say, that a wise man is, by any adventitious circumstance, made mad. It is, therefore, best to understand יהוּלֵּל by "gives lustre," "adds splendour;" a sense it very well admits, as is shown in the Critical Note to ch. i. 17, and which is adopted by Desvieux, van der Palm, Doederlein, and Dathe. Boothroyd, to the same sense, renders it, "Oppression maketh a wise man to be praised." See also Greenaway, *New Transl.* P. ii. p. 23.

8. *Better is the end of a thing*—Not generally of any thing, but of the thing spoken of in the preceding verse, namely, oppression. So far is oppression from being injurious, that, whatever distress it may at first occasion, it is in the end beneficial; for patience of spirit, which is the effect of affliction, is preferable to pride of spirit, which too commonly results from prosperity. In the former verse oppression is described as it affects a wise man in the opinion of others, in this as it affects himself; in the first case it is said to render him illustrious in the eyes of men, in the other to produce the virtues of fortitude and patience in his own heart.—See Critical Note (*.)

9. *Be not hasty, &c.*—This and the following verse contain an admonition naturally resulting from the foregoing observations. To praise the past, and to be murmuring at the present times, is the common humour of mankind, many instances of which are enumerated by Bulkley, (*Notes on the Bible*, in loc.) and, as such complaints are often groundless, they are justly censured by the Preacher.

* Though the word דבר is without the article, it certainly refers to “oppression,” spoken of in verse 7: “Better is the end of THE THING,” *i.e.* of oppression. The ancient versions, however, excepting perhaps the Syriac and Targum, take דבר in the sense of *word*, and render it, agreeably to the Vulgate, “Melior est finis orationis quam principium;” so Le Clerc, Grotius, and Gousset, who explain it of strife and contention. Others, taking it in the sense of *res, negotium*, render it, with E. T., “Better is the end of a thing than the beginning,” and endeavour to defend it as a general truth, but, as appears to me, very unsuccessfully. Though it might be better, perhaps, to render דבר definitely “the thing,” than indefinitely “a thing,” it is not necessary to depart from the received translation, which, according to the explication given in the Paraphrase and note, yields an excellent sense, and perfectly agreeable to the subject of this section.

11. — *to them that see the sun*—This cannot, as some suppose, denote those who are in prosperity; for it would be absurd to say, “Wisdom is as good as an inheritance to the prosperous.” But, as the former hemistich is an universal truth, this must denote all mankind indiscriminately.—See Critical Note (*.)

12. *a defence*—Literally, “in shadow;” and because under this image shortness of duration is conveyed, (ch vi. 12, viii. 13,) van der Palm thinks the meaning is, that although wisdom, like money, is fleeting as a shadow, yet the excellency of knowledge is that it gives eternal life to them that have it; (*Diss. de Lib. Eccles.* p. 71;) but the exposition in the Paraphrase is preferable, as “shadow,” in Scripture language, often means a defence, Gen. xix. 8; Numb. xiv. 9; Psalm xvii. 8, lvii. 2, lxi. 3, xci. 1; Isaiah xvi. 12, xxx. 2, 3, xlix. 2.

— *giveth life*—As this expression, in the sense of preserving from danger, protecting from harm, would be a mere tautology

* The received version is, “Wisdom is good with an inheritance,” which, being sanctioned by the LXX, Vulgate, and Targum, may perhaps be admissible, since the observation it contains is true; but I have adopted the marginal translation of E. T., which also agrees with Geier, Schmidt, Durell, Noldius in םע and *Not.* 1880. Dathe and Bauer, after Doederlein, translate it “Bona est sapientia in rebus afflictis;” and, for their authority in thus rendering םע נחלה, refer to Isaiah xvii. 11; Jer. x. 19, xiv. 17. According to Bishop Lowth, Isaiah does not support Dathe; but see Rosenmuller, *Scholia* in loc.: and in Jeremiah נחלה is clearly a verb in Niph., from חלה; nor can I find any passage where נחלה, as a noun, can be the derivative of חלה *agrotavit*. It occurs frequently, and always, as the context shows, in the sense of *inheritance*, or *possession*, and so it is rendered in the ancient versions. Dathe’s translation, therefore, cannot be admitted.

with the former hemistich, it is probably intended to denote the producing a state of serene cheerfulness and calm satisfaction, which may emphatically be called “giving life,” and which Wisdom, or Religion, can alone effect.

13. *Consider, &c.*—The meaning of this verse is sufficiently plain, but it is difficult to discover its connexion. It may be a pious reflection upon the immutable decrees of God, thrown in parenthetically, though I am inclined to take it in connexion with what goes before and follows, and to understand it as in the Paraphrase.

14. *that man should find nothing after him*—The original may be rendered either “that man might find nothing AGAINST HIM, *i. e.* God;” or, “that man might find nothing AFTER HIM,” *i. e.* not, as it is sometimes explained, that man may not foresee what may befall him in future, but that man might not find any thing to blame, after considering God’s work, (verse 13,) or any cause to impeach the justice and goodness of the Divine proceedings towards mankind.—See Critical Note (*.)

* There is certainly an ambiguity in אחריו, which may be rendered “against him” as well as “after him.”—(See Durell *in loc.*; Noldius in אחר, 5; Poli *Synop.* *in loc.*; and an admirable *Sermon*, by Bishop Bull, in his *English Works*.) The rendering of the Vulgate is, “ut non inveniant contra eum justas quærimonias;” and of Symmachus, του μη ευρειν ανθρωπον κατ’ αυτου μεμψιν. In the Syriac there is the same ambiguity as the Hebrew, for אחר may mean either “after him” or “against him.” The LXX also is not free from ambiguity, but probably agrees with the version of Symmachus. Though I have not ventured to alter the authorized version, I am justified in the explanation given in the Paraphrase and note.

15. *All things, &c.*]—Of this and a few following verses I have met with no satisfactory explanation, nor dare I flatter myself that the one here submitted to the reader will be generally approved; but, in my judgment, it will elucidate them, if Solomon be considered as stating an objection in verses 15, 16, to which he afterwards returns an answer. Notwithstanding the high encomium on Wisdom, (verses 11—14,) the fool scoffingly objects, that the righteous, who are reputed wise, often perish in their righteousness, while the wicked as often live long in their wickedness; the inference from which is, Strive not to become exceedingly virtuous and wise; for why should a man waste himself away in pursuit of wisdom and virtue, which seem to be attended with no advantage over vice and folly? This interpretation accords with the usual signification of the words, and agrees with the context and the scope of the whole discourse.—See Critical Note (*.)

* The words הרבה and יותר denote *exceedingly, multum abundè*.—(See Simonis, *Lex. Heb.* ed. Eichhorn.) The reader will find a learned note on these verses in Hackspan, *Notæ Philol.* vol. ii. p. 472, who refers the former to a particular branch of righteousness, namely, judicial; but, though others are of the same opinion, as Pfeiffer, (*Dubia Vexata*, in loc.,) there is nothing in the context to limit it in this way. Schultens, (*De Defect. Ling. Heb.* § 226,) taking the sense of צדק from the Arabic, renders it “be not too rigid or inflexible;” a rendering approved by Gerard (*Institutes of Bibl. Crit.* § 214) and others; but this sense is unsupported by Biblical usage. Dr. Paley, in one of his *Sermons*, thinks it denotes an external affectation of righteousness, not prompted by internal principle; in like manner as the caution, “be not over-wise,” respects the ostentation of wisdom, and not the attainment itself. But these, and all other interpretations I have met with, appear to me strained and far-fetched, whereas that which I have adopted in the Paraphrase is natural and unforced.

17. *Be not exceedingly wicked, &c.*—Here the answer to the objection begins by showing the value of Wisdom. Instead of the objector's inference, the Preacher replies, it should rather be said, "Be not exceedingly wicked, neither be thou foolish; *for* why shouldest thou die before thy time?" That is, accelerate not thy death by calling down, through thy criminal conduct, the punishment of the violated laws, and the vengeance of offended Heaven. He then subjoins a variety of arguments to show the excellence of Wisdom, which extend as far as ch. viii. 7.

18. *of this—from this*—It is ambiguous to what these relatives refer, and, of course, the commentators are divided. It seems most probable, that the first refers to the precept in verse 17, and the second to the maxim in the latter part of this verse; consequently the particle כִּי, in the last clause, is better translated "that" than "for."

—*come forth of them all*—This may refer to the evils of casting himself away, and dying before his time, mentioned in verses 16 and 17; but the sense appears to me to be as given in the Paraphrase. If it be thought an objection to this interpretation, that only two evils are mentioned, which can hardly be called "them all," the answer is easy, that the same word "all," כֻּלָּם, is applied to no more than two chap. ii. 14. The exposition in the Paraphrase, therefore, is to be preferred.

19. *Wisdom strengtheneth, &c.*—Either wisdom gives a man more honour and influence than falls to the share of ten governors, or rather, is a better protection to him than ten governors watching for his safety.

20. *Although there is not, &c.*—This may be connected with the following verse, viz. "Because there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not, *therefore it is* also the part of wisdom to take no heed unto all words," &c. But as the

word “also,” **וְ**, in verse 21, seems to oppose this connexion, and verses 21 and 22 form in themselves a distinct sentiment, I prefer connecting verses 19 and 20 together; and the general sense, when so united, is, that although Wisdom can only be imperfectly attained in this world, yet it gives more real power than rank and station. Here is a direct confession that man is in a fallen state.

21. *Also take no heed, &c.*—An admonition naturally resulting from the preceding remark concerning the universal frailty and imperfection of man.

23. *All this, &c.*—From this verse to the end of the chapter the Preacher speaks of himself and his own wisdom. He begins with asserting the truth of what he had said concerning the excellency of Wisdom, in consequence of which he determined to become wise, (verse 23;) at the same time he acknowledges the imperfection of his attainments, and the impossibility of acquiring Wisdom in perfection, (ver. 24;) yet he applied his mind diligently in the search of it, (verse 25,) and mentions, as the result of his inquiries, that the allurements of an abandoned woman are fatally destructive, (verse 26;) that none are perfectly wise and virtuous, (verses 27, 28;) and that man has fallen from his primæval state of innocence, (verse 29.) Thus it appears to be the Preacher’s design, in this passage, to show the value of True Wisdom even when, through the weakness of the human mind, it is only imperfectly attained.

— *it was far from me*—Not wholly so; for this would not be compatible with the account of Solomon’s wisdom 1 Kings iii. 5—14, iv. 29; but the meaning is, that he could not attain wisdom in perfection. “It is the nature of spiritual wisdom to discover spiritual wants, and the more the soul knows of God, the greater does it discern and bewail its distance from him.” —Bishop Reynolds *in loc.*

25. *of foolishness and madness*].—That is, by a metonymy of the cause for the effect, all that the folly and madness of men so eagerly pursue.—See Critical Note (*.)

26. *And I find more bitter, &c.*].—I can by no means agree with those who suppose that sin, or folly, or concupiscence, are here represented under the image of a female.—(See St. Jerom *in loc.*; Dathe; and Michaelis, *Not. Uber, in loc.*) It should

* The word חשבון occurs three times, in this place, in verse 27, and in ch. ix. 10, and is rendered in E. T. by three different words. The root חשב is of frequent occurrence, and denotes almost any operation of the reasoning faculty; of course the derivatives denote something connected with these operations, as judgment, deliberation, computation, account, device, thought. It seems to mean, in this verse, a decision, or conclusion made after deliberation; that is, the Preacher endeavoured to seek out Wisdom, and what decision or judgment should be made concerning things. This explanation is supported by the ancient versions. The Vulgate renders it by “ratio;” the LXX by ψηφος and λογισμος; Aquila and Symmachus by λογισμος; and the Syriac by derivatives from ܠܚܫܒܐ. Van der Palm, from the Arabic sense of the word, takes it to denote “rectam æstimationem rerum,” which comes nearly to the same thing as the explanation here adopted.—(See Houbigant, and Schulz et Bauer, *Scholia in loc.*) The word חוללות, according to the explanation of the root in the Critical Note to ch. i. 17, may denote *things splendid*, as it is understood here by Desvieux and Dathe. There appears, however, no reason for departing from the received signification, which yields an apposite sense, is analogically deduced, and, if not clearly supported by the ancient versions, is certainly not opposed by them. Yet, retaining the traditionary sense, the last clause may be more literally rendered, “to know the wickedness of folly, and the foolishness of madness.”

rather seem, that the royal sage delivers, in this verse, the result of his inquiries into the wickedness of folly, and the foolishness of madness, in the instance of harlot beauty; and, in bold metaphorical language, describes the vileness of the wanton who, by all the arts of captivation, allures the unsuspecting into her snares. Solomon has frequently painted the wiles, and cautioned youth against the dangers, of meretricious charms.—(Prov. ii. 16, v. 2, vi. 24, vii. 25, xxii. 14.) Burder quotes a passage from Thevenot, which he thinks gives a very lively comment upon this verse. “The most cunning robbers in the world are in this country. They use a certain slip with a running noose, which they cast with so much sleight about a man’s neck, when they are within reach of him, that they never fail, so that they strangle him in a trice. They have another curious trick also to catch travellers. They send out a handsome woman upon the road, who, with her hair dishevelled, seems to be all in tears; sighing, and complaining of some misfortune which she pretends has befallen her. Now, as she takes the same way as the traveller goes, he easily falls into conversation with her, and finding her beautiful, offers her his assistance, which she accepts; but he hath no sooner taken her up on horseback behind him, but she throws the snare about his neck and strangles him, or at least stuns him, until the robbers, who lie hid, come running in to her assistance, and complete what she hath begun.”—(*Oriental Customs*, No. 634.) I cannot think that Solomon alluded to this custom, of the existence of which, in his age, there is no proof; and the expressions aptly portray the artful inveiglements of a wanton and dissolute woman.—See Critical Note (*.)

* The pronoun **היא**, in **אשר היא מצור**, is, as Durell remarks, emphatical. This clause is rendered by Desvieux, “who herself is a company of hunters,” which is altogether unwarrantable, as the received signification of **מצור**, *a snare*, yields a good sense, perfectly well adapted to the context, and supported by the ancient versions; nor is there any reason to suppose that it ever

27. *Behold, this have I found*—Namely, this destructive nature of the wanton's artifices above.—See Critical Note (*.)

28. *What yet my soul seeketh*—The Vulgate, LXX, E. T., &c. connect this with the preceding verse, which produces the contradiction of saying, that the Preacher had not found what before he asserted to have found. It is, therefore, better to consider אֲשֶׁר, with which the verse commences, as a pronoun relative referring to that which follows, namely, “one man among a thousand have I found, but a woman among all these have I not found.” Here the terms “man” and “woman” seem to be used, in an emphatical sense, for those who, by their wisdom and virtue, are alone worthy of this appellation. The meaning, therefore, is: A truly virtuous character, which he sought for, he could not find; though he had indeed found one man among a thousand, who was comparatively wise and virtuous, worthy of the name of man; but a truly virtuous woman he had still seldomer found: not that a female of such a character did not exist, but that it is scarcely possible to find one in a thousand. It is supposed by

denotes any thing else than the *net* or *snare* of the hunter, and a *military engine*.—(See ch. ix. 14, and notes there.) Our translation gives the general sense, but the original may be more literally rendered, “I find more bitter than death is the woman, who herself is snares, whose heart is nets, and whose hands are bands,” &c.

* I understand חֶשְׁבֹן to mean a *judgment*, or *conclusion* formed after deliberation, as in verse 25; and the elliptical expression אֶחָד לְאֶחָד, literally, “one by one,” or “one thing to one thing,” is properly supplied as in the version, namely, “by comparing one thing with another.” The version of van der Palm, approved by Bauer, “alias mulieres aliis addendo,” appears perfectly unwarrantable.

some, that as Solomon had three hundred wives and seven hundred concubines, he here alludes to them, and asserts that he had not found, among all this thousand, one really good and virtuous woman. This is very probable; at any rate the expressions must be understood in a qualified sense; for it cannot be thought that it was the intention of Solomon to condemn the whole sex, upon the better part of whom he has lavished the highest encomiums.—(Prov. xii. 4, xix. 14, xxxi. 10.) We are not to interpret literally phrases tinged with Oriental hyperbole. It is observable, that Mohammed used to say, that among men there were many perfect, but among women only four, Asiah, the wife of Pharaoh; Mary, the mother of Christ; Cadijah, his wife, and Fatima, his daughter.—Pocock, *Specimen Hist. Arab.* p. 188, ed. White, Oxon. 1806; Prideaux, *Life of Mahomet*, p. 61.

29. *Lo, this only have I found*—These expressions must be limited, as in the Paraphrase, or they will make the author contradict himself; for he asserts, in verse 17, that he had found a certain other matter, and in verse 28 that he had found a comparatively wise man among a thousand.—See Critical Note (*.)

* The contradiction of saying “this only have I found,” when he asserts that he had found some other things, in verse 27 and 28, is avoided in the versions of Le Clerc and Desvoeux in the following manner: “Hoc tantum considera,” “This only observe, I have found,” &c.; but it is improbable that the Preacher would exhort his readers to observe only this one thing. May not לבר, however, be here an illative, *furthermore, also*, &c. though I acknowledge it may be doubted whether another example of this sense can be found? The LXX have πλεον ἰδε τοῦτο εὐρον.—The parallelism leads us to the sense of חשבנות, only occurring here and 2 Chron. xxvi. 15, where it denotes some *warlike machine*; for being opposed to ישר, *upright*, it must

CHAPTER VIII.

1. *the interpretation of a thing*—The sense is, Who like the wise man can explain difficult and abstruse matters? The praise of Wisdom is still continued.

— *a man's wisdom maketh his face to shine*—That is, makes it pleasant and agreeable. It is certainly true, that Wisdom and moral goodness give to the countenance those traits of intelligence, that modest and amiable look, that nameless but prepossessing grace, the indication of a virtuous soul, which command the esteem of every beholder.—See Critical Note (*.)

evidently mean the contrary, *that which is not upright, crooked, perverse*. Men have given into many perverse inventions, purposes, and devices, quite contrary to the original righteousness in which they were created. Here is undoubtedly an allusion to the fall of Adam and Eve.

* Though פֶּשֶׁר occurs nowhere else in Hebrew, it is properly rendered in E. T. by “interpretation,” as this signification agrees with the context, is supported by the ancient versions, and by the corresponding words in Chaldee, Syriac, and Arabic.—(See the *Lex.* of Cocceius and Castell.) The phrase עוֹ פָּנָי properly means *impudence of face*, as appears from comparing Prov. vii. 13, xxi. 29; Deut. xxviii. 50; Dan. viii. 23; but in this verse it evidently denotes harsh, austere, and forbidding looks. The clause is rendered by Desvieux, “a sullen look would make him an object of hatred;” by Hodgson, “austerity in the looks is hateful;” and to this effect Doederlein, van der Palm, and some in Poli *Synop.* Others render it “gives boldness to his face.”—(Geier, Dathe, Boothroyd.) Instead of the textual reading יִשְׁנֶה, the Keri and some other MSS. have יִשְׁנֶה, *shall be changed*; but the LXX and Syriac favour the former.

2. *I counsel thee*—The ellipsis in the original is best supplied as in the authorized version here adopted. Though by “the king” may be understood the temporal king, the context, and particularly verses 3 and 4, seem to prove that Jehovah is meant, who was peculiarly the King of the Israelites. St. Jerom and the Chaldee paraphrast understood it of God.

— *the oath of God*—If the former part of the verse be explained of obedience to princes and magistrates, this may mean the oath of fidelity which was taken towards them. But if “the king,” in the former hemistich, mean “the King Jehovah,” as I am persuaded it does, the oath must refer to the covenant which God made with Abraham, and which was confirmed by an oath. Hence the meaning is, I counsel thee to keep the commandments of Jehovah “in regard to the oath of God,” that is, on account of the obligation imposed upon thee by God’s covenant with Abraham to make the Jews his peculiar people.

3. *Be not hasty, &c.*—Those who explain the former verse of obedience to princes, consider this as an admonition against disobeying their authority; so that hasting out of the king’s presence implies the rejecting of obedience, or, in other words, the breaking out into rebellion. I prefer interpreting it in reference to God, according to the view exhibited in the Paraphrase.

4. *Where the word, &c.*—This verse also I refer to the King Jehovah; and the sense is, No man’s sin will escape the vengeance of God, for no one can control his power. This exposition is confirmed by the latter part of the verse, “who may say unto him, What doest thou?” which cannot be strictly affirmed of princes, but which may well be attributed to God, who doeth whatsoever he pleaseth, both in heaven and in earth.

5. *Whoso keepeth, &c.*—This and the two following verses are referred by many commentators to man’s duty towards his sovereign; but as they clearly form a part of the foregoing

argument, they are better explained in reference to man's duty to God. Our translators have destroyed the connexion by rendering the particle כִּי, *ki*, by "therefore" and "for" in the sixth and seventh verses, as it is there used in an adversative, not casual sense. The interpretation in the Paraphrase is easy, unforced, and accordant with the Preacher's argument; yet these three verses may be referred to God, and understood in reference to the Mosaic dispensation, which was built upon temporal sanctions. Thus, "*Whoso keepeth the commandment of God shall feel no evil thing under the equitable government of the Theocracy; and a wise man's heart discerneth both the time and judgment, that is, the time or season of God's righteous judgment in the distribution of temporal rewards and punishments; because to every purpose of God there is a fixed time and judgment, or manner for their taking effect; and though the misery of man is great upon him at present; and though he knoweth not that which shall be; for who can tell him when it shall be? yet is he firmly persuaded that the righteous will, in the end, be rewarded, and the wicked punished.*"

8. *There is no man that, &c.*—In this section the Preacher adverts to another argument in recommendation of Wisdom, derived from the bad effects of sin. Wickedness, says he, cannot protect any man from the shafts of death, (verse 8;) not even the power of the most despotic can either shield themselves from the stroke of fate, or their memories from oblivion, (verses 9, 10;) and, in short, vice, in all ranks and degrees, is so far from contributing to any real good, that it will ultimately be punished; while it will be well with those who reverence God, (verses 11—13.) If, then, the folly and misery of wickedness be great, it clearly follows, that virtue, on the contrary, must be attended with inestimable benefits; a consideration which sufficiently recommends Wisdom, or Religion, to the attention of mankind.

— *there is no discharge*—That is, there are no means whereby we can prevail in our war with death; there is no

exoneration from the stroke of this king of terrors.—See Critical Note (*.)

9. *All this, &c.*—Having observed just before, that wickedness cannot exempt its perpetrators from the sting of death, Solomon here instances it in the case of unjust and tyrannical governors. The clause “and I applied my heart unto every work that is done under the sun” is evidently parenthetical.

— *ruleth*—By “ruling” here cannot be meant a just and legitimate government, for that is neither to the hurt of the ruler nor of the ruled; it must, therefore, denote, to rule despotically, to exercise arbitrary power.—See Critical Note (†.)

* It would, perhaps, be better to follow Castalio, Desvieux, van der Palm, Boothroyd, Wemyss, Doederlein, and Dathe, in translating רוּחַ by “wind,” rather than “spirit;” because there seems to be a comparison, that as a man has no power over the wind, so has he none in the day of death.—The word מְשַׁלַּח only occurs here and Psalm lxxviii. 49, where it means *a sending*; and in the place before us it seems to have a signification allied to this, *i. e. a sending away, a discharge*. This sense, naturally resulting from the acknowledged meaning of שָׁלַח, is suitable to the context, and is supported by the LXX, Vulgate, and Syriac; it is, therefore, unnecessary to depart from the received translation of the term, though it may admit other significations derivable from its root.

† The words לֹרַע לוֹ may either refer to הָאִרֹם, *the man ruling*, or to בָּאִרֹם, *the man ruled over*; but though I have included both in the Paraphrase, I have little hesitation in preferring the latter, for Solomon’s design is not to say that there is a time wherein one man tyrannizes over others “to his own hurt,” but “to their hurt” who are subjected to his tyranny. So LXX,

10. *And so I saw, &c.*—To enumerate the various explanations of this intricate verse would exceed the limits of a note; but, amidst all the discordancy of commentators, one thing appears certain from the scope of the passage, that it ought to be taken in connexion with the foregoing verse. Hence “the wicked” does not mean the unrighteous in general, but the unjust rulers spoken of in verse 9. If it be objected, that in verse 9 one person only is mentioned, and in this the wicked in the plural, it may be replied, that the “one man who ruleth,” *הַאֶדָם שֶׁלֹּט*, is most likely put for the whole race of those who rule oppressively, from the highest to the lowest order of magistrates; and their power to hurt is only for a time, for Solomon declares that he had seen such wicked buried and completely forgotten.

— *the place of the holy*—The palace, according to some, the residence of kings and exalted personages; but by this expression may rather be meant the tribunal of judgment, the places of judicature; and by “coming and going from them,” the pomp and ceremony used in the administration of the duties belonging to them. If the original may be rendered “the holy place,” (by which is sometimes meant Heaven, sometimes the Temple, and sometimes Jerusalem.—See Cruden’s *Concordance* in voc.) the Paraphrase must be differently modified, but the result will be the same, namely, that Solomon had seen the wicked rulers buried, speedily come to an end, and forgotten. Doederlein and van der Palm, without any adequate grounds, suppose “the holy place” denotes the grave or sepulchre.

11. *Because sentence, &c.*—A reason, as some think, is here assigned why wicked rulers persevere in their tyranny and

του κακωσαι αυτον; and the Syriac, as properly translated in the Polyglott, is “ut noceret ei,” *i.e.* the man who is ruled; but Symmachus has *εις κακον αυτου*, and Vulgate, “in malum suum.”

oppression; but, if I am not mistaken, the Preacher now glances to the evil of sin in general, in all ranks of life; and the substance of verses 11—13 is, that the evil effects of wickedness are certain, though not always immediate; and because punishment does not always instantly follow an evil work, men are oft, by this circumstance, encouraged to sin the more; nevertheless the sinner, whatever temporary delay there may be, will certainly in the end be punished, while it will ultimately be well with those who reverence God, and stand in awe of offending him. The inference, though not stated, is most evident, that wisdom, which is the opposite of wickedness, must be of the highest use and advantage to man.

13. — *which shall be as a shadow*—The meaning according to some is, “neither shall he prolong his days as a shadow,” which lengthens as the sun declines: an admissible sense, undoubtedly; but as life, by reason of its shortness and instability, is compared to a shadow, chap. vi. 12; 1 Chron. xxix. 15; Job viii. 9; Ps. cii. 11, cix. 23, cxliv. 4; and as the argument is, that the sinner’s days, though they may appear to be prolonged, shall not in reality be so, I think the sense is, that the sinner’s days shall be short and fleeting as a shadow. The standard translation, “*which are as a shadow*,” is clearly erroneous, as the Preacher is not describing what the wicked man’s days *are*, but what they *shall be*.

14. *There is a vanity, &c.*—Solomon cannot be delivering his own sentiments in verses 14 and 15, for they contradict what he had just before, and in other places, asserted concerning the ultimate distinction that will be made between the good and the bad. He does, indeed, acknowledge that one event, death, happens equally to the righteous and the wicked, chap. ii. 14, iii. 20, ix. 2, from which may be inferred the vanity of all worldly things; but he as decisively declares, that, in the end they will meet with a very different reward, chap. iii. 17—21, v. 8, vii. 18, viii. 11, 12, 13. This passage must, therefore, be considered as

containing an objection, which the royal Preacher puts into the mouth of a foolish and wicked man, who thus cavils, “Notwithstanding the argument produced against wickedness, that it incurs the vengeance of retributive justice, several circumstances indicate that God is either indifferent to it, or will not punish it; else, how comes it to pass that it often happens to the just according to the work of the wicked, and to the wicked according to the work of the righteous? Does not this imply that God makes no distinction between virtue and vice? And if such be the case, it is best to indulge every passion, and to grasp every passing pleasure, since this is the greatest good a man can obtain from his labours all the days of his life.” This objection nearly resembles that in chap. vii. 15, only this is levelled more immediately against wisdom and virtue, and the former against a superintending Providence. Cavils like these would, no doubt, be often raised by the sceptical and dissolute among the Israelites, who, according to the principles of the Mosaic covenant, were taught to expect a temporal retribution; for we find even some of the most eminently pious Jews occasionally perplexed with the seeming inequalities in the distribution of rewards and punishments.—(See *Prel. Dis. to Prov.* p. 46, et seq.) It would have been seen immediately that this is an objection put into the mouth of a worldling, had our translators rendered the last clause in verse 14, and the first in verse 15, in the present time, “I say that this also is vanity,” “Then I commend mirth,” instead of “I said,” “I commended.”

— *I say that this also is vanity*—As Solomon had condemned all the worldling’s pursuits as vanity, there is a peculiar force and propriety in representing him in return as so denominating the distinction between virtue and vice.

15. — *that shall abide with him*—See Critical Note (*.)

* The word ילונּו, from לונּה, *adhæsit*, is literally “shall adhere to him,” or “shall be joined to him,” *i. e.* that only can he gain.

16. *When I applied, &c.*—To the above objection Solomon here commences his reply, in which he affirms, that, when he applied his mind to observe the toils of man after the Sovereign Good, he did not terminate his inquiries there, but also contemplated the works of God, and he found them inscrutable; (Rom. xi. 33;) and therefore, if there are some seeming inequalities in the Divine distribution of retributive justice, they should rather be ascribed to our ignorance of God's dealings with mankind, than employed as arguments against wisdom and virtue. Whatever apparent inconsistencies in the providential government of the world may perplex us, we ought to acquiesce in the sovereignty of Him whose judgments are past finding out, in the full confidence that strict justice, tempered with mercy, will ultimately be observed; for "the righteous, the wise, and their works are in the hand of God;" and, as all things are in the power, and under the direction, of Infinite Wisdom, love will be distributed to the virtuous, and hatred to the wicked, in the best way, though perhaps inscrutable to man's feeble intellect.

CHAPTER IX.

1. *For all this*—Namely, the matters spoken of in the last verse of the eighth chapter, concerning the inscrutable nature of God's works. The original is, literally, "all this I gave to my heart;" that is, I laid it up, or treasured it there.

— *to declare all this*—Namely, all that follows in this verse. The Preacher kept in mind his observations upon the inscrutable nature of God's works, till by meditating upon them he was

The Vulgate is, "hoc solum secum auferret;" so LXX, Syriac, Symmachus, and several among the moderns.—See Schultens, *Opera Minora*, p. 360.

enabled to declare, that God will distribute both rewards and punishments according to his just and sovereign will.—See Critical Note (*.)

— *but man knoweth nothing, &c.*—Dr. Wells' Paraphrase of the received version is, “no man knows, *or can know*, either the love or hatred of God to them, by all that is before them, *i. e. by what befalls them visibly*,” which agrees with the sense of the passage given in the Paraphrase; but the original is, literally, “there is no man that knoweth all that is before them,” *i. e.* man knoweth nothing of the future; “*nihil omnino rerum futurarum homo novit*,” Dathe; so van der Palm, Bauer, &c. I suppose an ellipsis after “hatred,” שונאה, to be supplied as in the version; and I begin the last clause with אין. So Drusius, Dathe, and the Syriac may be so pointed and understood. The absurd trifling of the Romanists and Calvinists upon this verse is completely upset by the explanation adopted in this work.—See Pfeiffer, *Dubia Vexata*, in loc.

* Though Taylor and Parkhurst give to ברר the sense of *declaring, making plain, clear, or manifest*, it may be doubted whether it is ever applied in this signification. Its primary meaning undoubtedly is to be, in a physical sense, *pure, clear, bright*, (Isaiah xlix. 2; Jer. iv. 11, li. 11;) hence, secondly, in a moral sense, *to be pure or clean, to purify*, (2 Sam. xxii. 27; Psalm xviii. 26, &c. ;) as nothing can be pronounced clean or pure without examination, it came to signify, thirdly, *to explore, to discern, to prove*, (Eccles. iii. 18;) and as that which is discerned to be pure is the object of preference, it is used, fourthly, for *to choose, to select*, (Cant. vi. 9; 1 Sam. xvii. 8; 1 Chron. vii. 40, ix. 22, xvi. 41; Nehem. v. 18.) Such is the genealogy of the senses attached to the root ברר, as I am inclined to believe; but still, as it *may* have the sense of *declaring*, attributed to it by some lexicographers, I have not ventured to alter the authorized version into “even to discern all this.”

2. *All are alike*, &c.]—From this to the tenth verse the royal Preacher appears not to deliver his own sentiments, but to state an objection against the cultivation of Wisdom, which, it is probable, he may have heard from the sensualists of his own time. He had himself acknowledged that death happens alike to all, chap. ii. 14, iii. 20, at which the objector may be supposed to catch, and to found upon it an argument “ad hominem” to this effect: “According to your own acknowledgment, death happens to all alike; why, therefore, should we be anxious to attain Wisdom, which cannot exempt men from that event? Is it not better to enjoy whatever pleasures the present moment may supply, agreeably to the saying, ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die?’” That this passage is an objection put into the mouth of a foolish worldling, may be collected from verse 4, “to him that is joined to all the living there is hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion,” which can scarcely be spoken in the same character with chap. iv. 2, “I praised the dead which are already dead, more than the living which are yet alive.” The same inference results from verses 5 and 6, “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;” and from verse 10, “there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.” These cannot be the real sentiments of Solomon, for they contradict the immortality of the soul, intimated in other places of the discourse, chap. viii. 12, 13, xi. 9, xii. 6, 14; and as verses 2—10, inclusive, relate to one subject, they must be considered as an objection advanced by an Epicurean man of the world.

— *all are alike*]—The literal meaning is, “all as all,” or “all like all;” the sense of which seems to be, that all are alike in the circumstance of death, the one event common to all. The received translation, “all things come alike to all,” cannot be right; for neither the man of piety nor the man of pleasure would make such an assertion. After the words “to the good,” the LXX, Syriac, and Vulgate read “and to the bad,” ולרע; and the

parallelism either requires its insertion, though not authorized by MSS., or the omission of “to the good,” לטוב, upon the authority of two MSS. Ken. The latter is approved by Dr. Roberts *in loc.*

— *he that sweareth*]—The antithesis shows, as the commentators observe, that by “swearing” here is meant rash and unadvised swearing.

3. *Yea also, the heart, &c.*]—According to most commentators the sense is, Because all, whether good or bad, are alike in respect of death, “the heart of the sons of men is full of evil,” addicted to all kinds of wickedness, “and madness is in their hearts while they live,” namely, they pursue throughout life the works and labours which proceed from human madness and folly. In this sense it may undoubtedly be said, that “the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live;” but such an observation is unsuitable to the character of a sensual worldling by whom the words are spoken. I therefore agree with Schmidt, who explains “evil” to mean the evil of calamity and grief, and “madness,” the cares and perturbations of the mind; according to which the meaning is, that all are not only equally subject to death, but are also equally liable to suffer calamities, anxiety, and grief. The word translated “madness,” it is true, in other places of the book, is used, by a metonymy of the cause for the effect, to denote the works and occupations of madness; (see Critical Note to chapter i. 17;) but it here means that perturbation of mind, that maddening anguish, which is occasioned by the cares and misfortunes of the world;

4. *But to him that is joined*]—The textual reading is, “who, or what shall be chosen?” *i. e.* is the condition of the living or the dead to be preferred? and this connects well with the former verse; but the authorized version and several others follow the Keri, “to him that is joined,” &c.; and as it is supported by some MSS. and all the ancient versions, it probably ought to be

adopted.—(See Parkhurst in בחר.) Whichever of these readings be adopted, our translators are wrong in rendering the particle כִּי, *ki*, by “for.” If the Keri be adopted, it should be rendered in an adversative sense, “but,” “nevertheless;” for this clause is not a reason for any thing preceding, but forms a proposition of which the reason is given in the second hemistich. It may be proper to mention, though I can by no means approve, the translation which the learned Peters gives of this verse. “For who is there that hopes he shall be associated to all the living? (that is, after death,) nay but a living dog (say they) is better than a dead lion.”—*Critical Diss. on Job*, Pref. p. 32.

— *for a living dog, &c.*—A proverbial expression, denoting the advantage of life above death. A lion is the noblest of beasts, Prov. xxx. 30, and a dog is metaphorically used in Scripture for the vilest of persons, 1 Sam. xxiv. 14; 2 Sam. ix. 8; 2 Kings viii. 13; Matt. xv. 26; Phil. iii. 2; Rev. xxii. 15.

6. *Also their love, &c.*—This may certainly be put metonymically for the objects of their love, and hatred, and envy; but the connexion seems to require us to understand it of the annihilation of the affections and faculties of the soul. When it is further added, “neither have they any more a portion for ever,” the meaning may be, either that they have no share in and no fruition of secular things; or rather, that they have no recompense, no advantage from any thing which they have done while they remained in this life.

7. *Go thy way, &c.*—It cannot be denied that verses 7—10 *may* be so explained as to be perfectly consistent with the Preacher’s avowed sentiments concerning Wisdom; but when it is considered that they apparently contain the inference from the preceding observations, which are undoubtedly spoken in the character of an Epicurean objector, they are properly understood as uttered in the same character, and therefore as recommending sensual gratifications.

8. *Let thy garments be always white*—White garments are most agreeable in hot climates, but are at the same time the most expensive, as they are soon soiled, which prevents their being long worn. For these reasons they formed the distinguishing dress of the opulent and great. Our Saviour alludes to the splendour of Solomon's apparel Matt. vi. 29; and Josephus informs us that this monarch was usually clothed in white, which, in all probability, was the royal colour.—(*Antiq.* lib. viii. cap. 7, § 3.) Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white; (*Esther* viii. 15;) and white raiment is mentioned as an honorary distinction in the Apocalypse, (ch. iii. 4, 5, iv. 4, vi. 11, vii. 9, 13.) White was the predominating colour in the priests' vestments, (Jennings, *Jewish Antiq.* vol. i. p. 212, *et seq.*; Jahn, *Archæologia Biblica*, § 368, 370,) and in those of the Levites, as appears from 2 Chron. v. 12. As black was the customary indication of mourning, so white garments were used in seasons of joy and festivity.—(Jahn, *ut supra*, § 119 and 148.) Hence we see the propriety of the expression in Judges v. 10, "Ye that ride on white asses," *i. e.* "which appear to be white from the garments which have been spread over them for the accommodation of the riders; none but white garments being worn by the Hebrews during their public festivals and days of rejoicing. When Alexander the Great came to Jerusalem, we are informed by Josephus, that he was met by the people in white raiment, the priests going before them. Philo, also, in his book *περι αρετων*, describing the public rejoicings in Europe and Asia, speaks of sacrifices, men dressed in white and garlands, solemn assemblies, and nightly feasts, with pipe and harp. It was customary to throw the white garments thus worn over animals that carried persons of distinction."—(Burder, *Oriental Customs*, No. 242.) White was a favourite colour among the Greeks and Romans.—Potter, *Antiquities of Greece*, lib. iv. cap. 20; Adams, *Roman Antiquities*, p. 411, *et seq.*; also Fleury's *Manners of the Israelites*, p. 76.

— *let thy head lack no ointment*—It is well known that perfumes were articles of great request in Oriental luxury.—

(See my note to Proverbs vii. 17.) The original word in this place properly signifies “oil,” which, in Scripture, is often used for ointments or perfume.—See Paxton’s *Illustrations*, vol. ii. p. 295.

9. *Live joyfully with thy wife, &c.*—This may perhaps, at first, be thought inconsistent with the assumed character of an irreligious man, or Epicurean, especially as Solomon has elsewhere commended the marriage state; (Proverbs v. 15, xviii. 22, xix. 14;) but, upon a nearer inspection, it will be found to correspond with the other sentiments uttered in this passage by the objector. It is not said, Pursue lawful rather than illicit pleasures, and prefer the chaste enjoyments of matrimonial love to the embraces of the wanton, but live joyfully, or, as it is in the English margin, enjoy life with the wife whom thou lovest; that is, indulge in all the pleasures that life affords together with thy wife, as mutual love will heighten every other enjoyment. Dr. Durell is of opinion that “the sensualist, in order to pass over no incentive to stimulate the passions, seems here to recommend *polygamy*; for by recommending *a favourite wife*, he insinuates that the person he spoke to had *other wives*, or *concubines*; a practice but too much countenanced by Solomon himself, and all the opulent in every part of the East.”—(*Critical Rem.* in loc.) Whatever probability there may be in these observations, the passage in question is, in my judgment, an exhortation to pass a life of pleasure and voluptuous ease, perfectly harmonizing with the counsel given immediately before, “Eat thy bread with joy,” &c.—The Hebrew, here rendered “live joyfully,” is literally, “see life,” *i. e.* enjoy it, as ch. iii. 13, v. 17, vi. 6; Ps. xxxiv. 12. See 1 Pet. iii. 10.

— *which he hath given thee*—Many commentators refer this to “the wife;” but “days” is the natural antecedent, and this construction seems to agree better with the context; nevertheless the former, “live joyfully with the wife—whom he hath given thee,” is admissible; for “whoso findeth a wife, findeth a good thing,” and “a prudent wife is from the Lord.”—(Prov. xviii. 22, xix. 14.) The

clause “all the days of thy vanity” is omitted in several MSS. both of Kennicott and De Rossi, and by all the ancient versions, except the Vulgate; I have, therefore, included it in brackets.

10. *Whatsoever thy hand, &c.*—There can be no doubt that this hemistich may, in itself, refer to any good thing; but the scope of the whole passage shows its meaning to be this: “whatever means of voluptuousness and pleasure thou canst discover, have recourse to them, and give free indulgence to thy inclinations.” This interpretation is confirmed by the remainder of the verse, which forms no reason for doing strenuously whatever good thing a man has it in his power to do, but is quite agreeable to the false reasoning of the sensualist.

— *in the grave*—The original is *Sheol*, or Hades, which denotes the regions of departed spirits, whether good or bad; (see my note to Prov. xv. 11;) yet, as Solomon puts it into the mouth of a sensualist, it may admit of a doubt whether it is here used in its proper acceptation, or simply for the grave.

11. *I returned, &c.*—The Preacher here begins his reply to the foregoing objection, by conceding that there are seeming inequalities in the distribution of temporal rewards; that merit is not always crowned with success; (verse 11;) that many of the events of this life seem fortuitous, and that man knoweth not the time when they shall happen; (verse 12;) nevertheless, upon contemplating Wisdom, he finds it to be the most valuable of all possessions, (verse 13 *et seq.*)

— *but time and chance happeneth to them all*—After observing that various circumstances occur contrary to what might be expected; that virtue does not always meet with a reward, nor wisdom with success, the Preacher adds, “but time and chance happeneth to them all,” which, in this connexion, certainly implies that all are liable to the same apparent accidents and casualties. By “time,” therefore, I understand the seasons of prosperous

and adverse fortune; and by “chance,” events seemingly casual. This by no means excludes a Divine power and agency in human affairs, as the drift of the argument is merely, that many circumstances *seem* to happen by chance. There may, nevertheless, be an over-ruling Providence in the disposal of all events, which, though they may seem casual and fortuitous, are in reality ordered according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. It is evident that the several clauses of this verse must be taken with some restrictions, as in the Paraphrase.

12. *man knoweth not his time*—Some limit this to the time of evil and calamity; but it seems rather to denote the time when the various events of this life shall take place, and which no man can foresee: “*periodum suum, fortunam ejusque vicissitudines.*” —Doederlein, *Scholia* in loc.

13. *This Wisdom*—The Wisdom here spoken of is not political wisdom, or human prudence, as Patrick and others maintain; for though the example which follows may be supposed to go no farther than to show the utility of mere human skill and prudence, yet that True Wisdom is meant in this passage may be inferred from the drift of the whole second part of this treatise, and from the opposition in the eighteenth verse. “Wisdom is better than weapons of war; but one sinner destroyeth much good;” where, as Bishop Reynolds remarks, “by the opposition between a sinner and a wise man, it is evident that the wise man here described is also a godly man.”—*Comment.* in loc. See Critical Note (*.)

* The argument would be clearer, if גַּם וְהָ at the beginning of the verse might be rendered “notwithstanding this,” and Dathe has “attamen;” it must, however, be acknowledged, that גַּם וְהָ occurs in eight other places of this book, seven times followed by הַבָּל, *vanity*, and once by רָעָה, *evil*; and always signifying “this also.” It has the same meaning in the only other place where it

14. *great bulwarks*—See Critical Note (*.)

15. *poor*—For the meaning of the original word מסכן, see chap. iv. 13, and notes.

16. *Nevertheless the poor man's wisdom, &c.*—This, it is true, may be a general proposition; though it is more probable that it refers to the person mentioned in the former verse. Now the poor man who delivered the city by his wisdom could not have been altogether despised, and his words must have been heard; the expressions in this verse are, therefore, to be taken in a limited sense, that poverty often throws wisdom into the shade, and hinders the respect and attention which a wise man deserves. If the words are considered as a general proposition, they must be limited the same way. The preceding clause, “no man remembered that same poor man,” is to be understood with a similar restriction, namely, he was not esteemed proportionably to his merits.

17. *The words of wise men*—There is an apparent contradiction between this and the sixteenth verse, which translators and commentators endeavour to avoid by different means. Some suppose the two verses relate to different times and persons, there being times when the words of the wise are not heard, and other

is found, Gen. xxxv. 17. If, therefore, we are not warranted in giving it any other sense here, the verse may be explained, as in the Paraphrase, nearly to the same effect.

* That מצורִים must here mean some kind of military works used in sieges (“machinæ obsidionales,” Cocceius) is most certain. It is derived from צור, *to hunt, to catch beasts, birds, or fishes*; and hence מצור and מצודה denote *a net*, and also *a besieging work, a bulwark*, as here and Isaiah xxix. 7; but see Michaelis, *Supplem. ad Lex.* No. 2126.

times when they are attended to. Others explain the meaning thus: "The words of the wise ought to be heard," Durell; "The meek words of the wise better merit attention," Hodgson. Some, again, understand it in the following manner: "The words of the wise uttered with calmness are more obeyed than," &c.; so Dathe, van der Palm, Boothroyd, and others. This derives considerable support from the appearance of opposition between "the words of the wise," and "the cry of a ruler among fools." Others take the original word rendered "in quiet" (בְּנוֹחַת, *quietness, calmness*) to be the abstract for the concrete, "quiet," *i. e.* men of a calm and placid disposition, and interpret it thus: "The words of the wise are more minded among men of a quiet disposition than," &c.; so Desvieux, Le Clerc. In favour of this it may be alleged, that there appears an opposition between the original words rendered "in quiet" and "among fools;" (בְּנוֹחַת and בְּכַסְיִלִּים;) and, as there can be no question as to the meaning of the latter, the former should seem to mean, "among men of a contrary disposition, men of a virtuous and tranquil temper of mind." It is difficult to say which of these expositions deserve the preference; but though I have retained the authorized version, as is my rule in doubtful cases, I am inclined to think that either of the following is a more correct translation: "The words of the wise are more attended to among the peaceful than the clamour of a ruler *is* among fools;" or, "The words of the wise, uttered with calmness, are more attended to than the clamour of a ruler among fools." Following the example of Bishop Patrick, I have expressed both in the Paraphrase.—See Critical Note (*.)

* As ב prefixed to nouns in Hebrew sometimes turns them into adjectives, מוֹשֵׁל בְּכַסְיִלִּים *may* mean *a foolish ruler*, as rendered by the Syriac translator; so Geier, Noldius, Patrick, &c. The LXX is *ὑπερ κραυγὴν ἐξουσιαζόντων ἐν ἀφροσυναις*, those who rule with folly, foolish rulers.—See Glass, *Phil. Sac.* p. 30; Poli *Synop.*; and Michaelis, *Not. Uber.* in loc.

18. *but one sinner*—See Critical Note (*.)

CHAPTER X.

1. *Dead flies, &c.*—Translators, ancient as well as modern, differ exceedingly; yet if we take into consideration the nature of the argument, which is a defence of Wisdom, we shall be convinced that this verse ought to be explained agreeably to the author's design of setting forth the praise of Wisdom and the censure of folly. The observation it contains, therefore, is, that a little folly is as detrimental to a man of honour and reputation as dead flies are to precious ointment. The comparison is not, indeed, expressed in the original, but the particles of comparison are often omitted. Neither is it any objection to this interpretation, that it is difficult to distinguish the particulars in which the similitude consists; for the Asiatics were not solicitous about that justness and propriety in comparisons, which are considered indispensable in European productions.—(See Sir Wm. Jones, *Comm. de Poeseos Asiat.* p. 141, ed. Eichhorn.) It is not necessary, therefore, to vindicate the propriety of the similitude in every particular, nor to endeavour, like Scheuchzer, to ascertain its correctness on chymical principles. It may be remarked, that the verbs are singular and the nominative plural; but such an enallage is common when they are meant distributively, as in this instance, namely, any one of the dead flies causes the ointment, &c.

* The primary meaning of חטא is *αμαρτανειν*, *aberrare a scopo*; (see my note to Prov. viii. 36;) hence חוטא is one who errs from the rules of wisdom as well as from those of virtue. In the writings of Solomon, virtue and wisdom, sin and folly, are frequently synonymous; for which reason it is immaterial here whether חוטא be rendered “a sinner” or “a fool;” it is clearly one “qui a verâ sapientiâ *aberrat*, ejusque gubernaculo destitutus omnia perverse et stulte agit.”—Michaelis, *Not. Uber.* in loc.

2. *A wise man's heart, &c.*]—True is the observation of Desvieux, (p. 411,) that “a literal translation of a proverbial metaphor must fall short of the original, whenever the same image or the same notion has not given rise to the like proverb in both languages.” Yet there can be no difficulty here in understanding the meaning, as this proverbial expression was evidently designed to intimate the ready prudence and constant circumspection of the wise man, as opposed to the rashness, carelessness, and want of thought in the fool.—Compare ch. ii. 14.

3. *he saith to every one that he is a fool*]—Namely, either in the height of his folly he considers every one he meets as a fool, or he betrays his own folly to all he meets. The former is supported by the Vulgate, and the latter, in some degree, by the Septuagint and Syriac, which are to this effect, “that all his thoughts are folly.”

4. *If the spirit of the ruler, &c.*]—The Preacher here shows the great use of Wisdom in regulating our conduct towards superiors, teaching us to restrain all disloyal and unlawful attempts, and to behave towards them in a patient and peaceable manner, when their anger is excited against us. This interpretation is confirmed by the latter part of the verse. Those, therefore, are mistaken, who understand it as a counsel to governors thus: “If the spirit of a governor come upon thee,” that is, if thou hast a desire to be in authority, or art made a ruler, behave thyself suitably to thy station.—(See Bishop Patrick *in loc.*) “Spirit,” רוּחַ, is sometimes put for anger, as may be seen in the *Lex*.

— *leave not thy place*]—Namely, leave not thy office, omit not thy duty and submission: or perhaps thus, “leave not thy place,” that is, in order to resist, but submit patiently; for such a conduct will prove מרפא, יאמא, “a healing medicine, a salve,” as Parkhurst expresses it, that will appease or atone for great offences. The comment of Bishop Reynolds is excellent. “*Leave not thy place.* Continue within the bounds of thine own

calling and condition; do not, either through fear or despair, withdraw thyself from thy duty, or, through insolence and impatience, rise up in disloyalty against him whose spirit is risen up against thee; keep still in the rank of a subject, and behave with suitable lowliness and submission. He speaks not of a prudent withdrawing from a storm, as Jacob fled from Esau, David from Saul, Elijah from Jezebel, and Christ from Herod, but against disloyal disaffection, going out of the ruler's sight, as Israel departed to their tents," &c.

5. *because of an error which proceedeth from the ruler*—The standard version is, "as an error which proceedeth from the ruler;" but, though it is supported by the LXX, the Hexaplarian versions, Desvieux, Diodati, and many others, it cannot be correct; for the Preacher's meaning is, not that the evil spoken of was *like* to an error proceeding from rulers, but that it was *itself* an error committed by them. The particle *Caph*, therefore, cannot be used as a particle of similitude, but must either mean *truly*, *certainly*, or *because of*, *on account of*.—(Noldius in *voc.* 8. 22. So $\omega\varsigma$ is sometimes used: see Schleusner.) The evil occasioned by the prince's error is mentioned in the two following verses. Such evils might exist under Solomon's administration, since the wisest are liable to errors, or he might allude to what he observed in other states.

6. *and the rich*—See Critical Note (*.)

* The noun עשירים, being opposed to הסכל, *the foolish*, the concrete for the abstract, cannot mean simply *the rich*; but either those who are eminent and noble, who are usually rich; or, the rich in wisdom, the wise. Hodgson renders it "men of talents;" Dathe, "nobiles præstantes." Some join רבים with the second hemistich, and render it, "while the noble and rich sit in low place."—Bauer, van der Palm, Boothroyd.

7. *servants upon horses*].—Riding on horses is often mentioned in Scripture as an indication of eminence and dignity.—(Esther vi. 8, 9; Jer. xvii. 25; Ezek. xxiii. 23.) So it is at the present day, as is shown by Harmer, *Observations*, &c. vol. ii. p. 412, and Burder, *Oriental Customs*, No. 636.

— *walking as servants*].—Since this is a part of the evil which the Preacher says arises from the error of rulers, the meaning cannot be, that noble persons sometimes conduct themselves like the meanest subjects, but that persons of rank and family are sometimes, through the mistake of supreme governors, deprived of the honours and dignity which they merit.

8. *He that diggeth, &c.*].—Taking into consideration the scope of the context, and the design of this second part, there can be no doubt that this and the next verse, consisting of short and pithy aphorisms, such as most prevail in periods before learning has advanced to any high degree of cultivation, are intended to illustrate the advantages of Wisdom. The general sense, then, appears to be, that the violation of the maxims of Wisdom is followed by punishment, agreeably to the old adages, “He that diggeth a pit,” &c. These adages, as here applied, should doubtless be received in the largest acceptation they will admit. Now, in the first place, they show, that conduct in contradiction to the obligations of Religion is followed by pernicious consequences, just as “he that diggeth a pit” to entrap others, or he that “breaketh an hedge” of an enemy, or “removeth the stones” of his neighbour’s landmark, or “cleaveth (and cutteth down his) wood,” shall, by a just retribution, meet with deserved punishment. The person who contrives wicked schemes against another shall himself be the sufferer; a doctrine founded upon the temporal retribution under the Mosaic covenant, and elsewhere inculcated by Solomon.—(Prov. xxvi. 27, xxviii. 10.) In the next place, they set forth the utility of a circumspect and prudent conduct in the common affairs of human life. “He that

diggeth a pit" imprudently "shall fall into it," and he that "breaketh an hedge" carelessly shall be bit by serpents, which usually lodge there; and in like manner many evils befall the imprudent and foolish, which might be avoided by wisdom and discretion.—See Doederlein, *Scholia* in loc. and Critical Note (*.)

9. *shall be endangered*—See Critical Note (†.)

10. *If the iron, &c.*—The workman who has not the wisdom or the prudence to sharpen his tools must use greater exertions in performing his task; "but Wisdom is excellent to cause success" in the common acts and occupations of life. The

* It is plain that גומץ, only found here, means *a pit*. It is so rendered by the ancient translators, and it has the same sense in Chaldee and Syriac. Schultens, in his *Clavis Dialect.* p. 199, appeals to the Arabic غُمَض; there seems, however, but little analogy between them.—(See Golius, *Lex. Arab.* p. 1734.) The word נדר seems properly to mean *a wall of stones*.—(Parkhurst in *voc.*; Harmer, *Observations*, vol. ii. p. 219, vol. iii. p. 231.) Walls full of chinks must be a common receptacle for venomous reptiles.

† The parallelism shows that סכן must, in this place, have some signification allied to *endangering*, or *hurting*; and so it is understood by the authors of the Septuagint, Vulgate, and Syriac versions, and by the generality of modern translators; but how this sense is to be deduced from the root סכן is a question of very great difficulty. Perhaps it may be derived from the sense which the radix has of *being poor*; (see notes to ch. iv. 13;) as those who are poor are exposed to many dangers: certainly it means *periclitari* in Chaldee.—(See Buxtorf, *Lex. Chald. Talm. Rab.* p. 1476.) Parkhurst in his *Lex.* understands it in the sense of *profiting*; "he who cleaveth wood shall be profited by it," to which the parallelism opposes an insuperable objection.

argument, therefore, is to this effect: As the mechanic, who pays no attention to the goodness and sharpness of his tools, is forced to perform his work clumsily, and by dint of strength, while the skilful artisan executes his with ease, neatness, and despatch; so, in the conduct of life, a fool is ever in error, while a wise man uses the properest means, and directs them to the wisest ends.—See הכשיר explained in the notes to ch. ii. 21.

11. *Surely a serpent, &c.*—This verse has been rendered, “A serpent will bite without warning, and one that loves to prate is no better,” that is, a prater wounds you before you can be aware of him.—(Wemyss, *Biblical Gleanings*, p. 151; see also Job Orton’s *Paraphrase*.) But this is totally opposed by the original, the sense of which is, that a babbler will sting with his words, like a serpent when it is not charmed: yet as the poison of noxious animals may be avoided by the power of certain charms, so may the offences of the tongue be prevented by the exercise of prudence and discretion.—(See Calmet.) An idea that serpents might be charmed by music prevailed in antiquity, and still does in the East at the present time. It is unnecessary for the illustration of this verse before us to enlarge upon this curious subject; I shall, therefore, content myself with referring to the following works, where the reader will find much learned and entertaining matter relative to the charming of serpents by musical sounds, namely, Bochart, *Hieroz.* P. ii. lib. 3, cap. 6; Shuckford, *Connections*, vol. iii. p. 318, *et seq.*; Michaelis, *Commentaries on the Laws of Moses*, art. 255; Jahn, *Archæologia Biblica*, § 403; Paxton, *Illustrations of Scripture*, P. ii. cap. 4; Parkhurst in לָחַשׁ; Blaney on *Jeremiah* viii. 17; Gataker, *Adversaria*, cap. viii. p. 71.

— *And a babbler*—A different turn is given to this clause by some, who think the phrase means “an enchanter,” not “a babbler,” namely, if the serpent hath bitten before the enchanter hath exercised his art, there is no profit to the enchanter; (see van der Palm, Bauer, and Boothroyd;) but the original clearly

signifies a babbler, and there is no authority for adopting a different reading with the two former annotators. Luther's German version is to this effect, "A babbler or gossip is nothing better than a serpent, that stings without provocation."

12. *swallow up himself*]—Some refer the pronoun to "grace," in the former hemistich; thus, "The words of the wise are grace, *i. e.* are gracious; but the lips of a fool destroy it, *i. e.* grace."—See Poli *Synop.*

13. *The beginning, &c.*]—Both this and the following verse are illustrative of the second hemistich of the preceding one, and describe the mischievous madness of a fool's words.

14. *A fool also is full of words, &c.*]—A description of the empty futility of the much speaking of the foolish. Though the fool may use ever so many words we are no wiser; the event of things is equally unknown, and no man can foresee the future. This seems the most easy interpretation of the verse, and though it may be allowed that its pertinency to the Preacher's discourse is not very striking, and that it does not well account for the tautology in the latter part of it, yet, as the reader must be aware, neither of these objections present an insuperable difficulty. Another exposition is given in the collections of Pool, which takes the latter part of the verse as a mimesis, or representation of the fool's words; thus, "And the fool useth many words, *saying*, A man cannot tell what shall be," &c. But it is very unlikely that Solomon should put into the mouth of a fool a sentiment which he had expressed himself more than once, ch. iii. 22, vi. 12, viii. 7. Another interpretation is proposed by that able commentator, Geier, and adopted by Dr. Hodgson, which is to this effect: "Though the fool use many words, no man can tell what they mean, and to what purpose they tend no man can inform him." This, however, appears irreconcilable with the signification of the same expressions in the texts above referred to; so that, upon the whole, the first interpretation, though liable

to some exceptions, seems preferable to any other. There is not an atom of external evidence for the conjecture of van der Palm, though approved by Bauer in his *Scholia*, that the last clause is an interpolation; and the difficulty of interpretation cannot be allowed to form even a colourable reason for expunging either a word or a verse.

15. *Because he knoweth not, &c.*—This clause I consider as one of those instances where the literal rendering would be better exchanged for an equivalent. The expressions “he knoweth not how to go to the city” are undoubtedly a proverbial phrase, denoting extreme ignorance of the plainest matters; and therefore the sense of the original is, “The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because each is ignorant of the plainest matters.”—See Critical Note (*.)

16. *Wo to thee, O land, &c.*—The Preacher here reverts to the folly of rulers, which he had touched upon before, (verse 5 *et seq.*), and specifies a particular instance of it in the pernicious

* Doederlein, who is followed by van der Palm and Dathe, takes עיר, *a city*, ex usu Arabico, for *a multitude of men*, and thus explains the verse; namely, That the fool who avoids friendly intercourse with others, sustains more trouble and fatigue in his various labours, than those who seek the aid and counsel of their fellow-creatures. The Arabic عسك, it is true, denotes *simul iter facientium cohors*, vulgo, *caravana*; (Golius, *Lex. Arab.* p. 1677;) but this sense of עיר is wholly without example in the Old Testament; and, indeed, the Arabizing critics are puzzled in deriving from the Arabic the sense of *city*, which certainly belongs to עיר, as the root in that language has no such meaning.—There is another explanation, thus stated by Dathe: “Aliter Michaelis: Stultus magis quam alii sibi sapere videtur. Propterea non vult incedere via trita; novam quærit, eventu vero parum felici.”

effects, when they are destitute of Wisdom, and are intemperate, contrasted with the blessings of those who are of an opposite disposition.

— *is a child*].—Because of the opposition in the following verse, and because the word here translated “a child” (נער) sometimes means *a servant*, or *slave*, Desvoeux, Doederlein, Bauer, and Dathe ascribe that meaning to it in the present instance. Others take it for one to whom the crown descends during his minority; but it is plain to me that it here signifies a child in understanding, in experience, and in knowledge; one unskilled in the arts of government, fribblish, and therefore unfit to rule an empire.

— *eat in the morning*].—It is evident, that by this expression a degree of intemperance is indicated. The breakfast of the Orientals usually consists of bread, honey, milk, fruits, and such like edibles; hence to feast in the morning was a proof of intemperance.—(See Prov. xxxi. 4, 5, and my note there; Harmer, *Observations*, &c. vol. i. p. 370; Jahn, *Archæol. Bibl.* § 145.) Van der Palm explains it of carousing till the morning, “*usque ad diluculum* ;” which, to say the least, is very doubtful.

17. *the son of nobles*].—Namely, “one nobly seasoned with just principles of honour and government; as a son of death, of perdition, of wrath, is one devoted to death, &c.—By sons of nobles we are not to understand such as are descended from noble parents, and who have noble blood in their veins, but those also who are noble in virtue, as well as in birth and blood. This is true nobility.”—Bishop Reynolds.

— *in due season*].—That is, when they only spend the usual time allotted to the banquet, and employ the remaining hours of the day in business or needful recreation; or, in other words, when they do not transgress the bounds of temperance in eating and

drinking. As in the authorized translation there is some incongruity in saying that princes *eat* for *drunkenness*, the original might, perhaps, be better rendered “who eat in due season, for strength, and not for revelry.”

18. *By much slothfulness, &c.*—Having now demonstrated the value of Wisdom, and vindicated it from the objections of sensual Epicurean cavillers, the Preacher proceeds, from this verse to the end of the book, to enforce practical Wisdom, and to deduce several moral inferences illustrative of its nature and advantages. The maxims and admonitions which he delivers are in themselves highly important, and prove that the Wisdom he eulogizes in this treatise is not speculative, but operative or practical, the Wisdom of the heart rather than of the head, and in all respects answering to what we should term Religion. Some understand this as an illustration of the sixteenth verse; namely, a kingdom may be compared to a house; and as a building decayeth when the householder is too indolent to repair it, so a state is brought to ruin by the negligence of the rulers. But it rather seems a dissuasive from idleness in general, than which few things are more inimical to Wisdom.

19. *A feast is made, &c.*—After attentively considering those commentaries in which this verse is connected with the foregoing, I am far from being satisfied; and therefore I deem it best to take it as a detached and isolated apophthegm, teaching the extensive sway and predominating power of wealth. If, however, it should be thought proper to connect it with the former verse, it may be thus paraphrased: “*Through idleness of hands the house droppeth through*; for, instead of labouring to repair it, *a feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh them merry*; and instead of purchasing what is necessary towards the repairs, their *money answereth all things*, that is, procureth whatever their craving appetites demand.” When it is said that “*money answereth all things*,” *i. e.* supplieth all things, common sense

requires it to be understood with proper limitations.—See Critical Note (*.)

20. *for a bird of the air, &c.*—The general sense is, That malediction and detraction of the opulent and powerful cannot be concealed, but will be discovered in a way, perhaps, little suspected. The particular image, however, is difficult to explain. The “bird” and “wings” may represent either spies and informers, and the celerity with which they give their information; or the rapid progress of fame. By some the meaning is represented to be this: That inward curses, however hidden from the notice of men, are heard by that Almighty Being who will certainly punish them. It has been supposed, that Solomon alludes to the custom of sending despatches between distant places by means of carrier-pigeons; (see Calmet, *in loc.*; Bochart, *Opera*, vol. i. p. 20.; and Paxton, *Illustrations*, &c. vol. ii. p. 63;) but there is no evidence that such a custom obtained at so early an age. Neither is there any reason for believing, with Grotius, that here is an allusion to some such story as the classical one of the Cranes of Ibycus, though an Eastern tale of the same kind has been adduced.—(See Burder's *Oriental Literature applied to the Illustration of the Scriptures*, just published.) But whatever

* The verb ענה, according to the various senses of the root, may be rendered “afflicteth,” (so Syriac,) and “exerciseth,” as well as “answereth” or “supplieth”; but in the two former translations the proposition is not true; for which reason the standard version is to be preferred: “*argentum dicitur exaudire omnem, vel respondere omni*, i. e. facere, ut responsum exoptatum reportet et exaudiat.”—(Simonis, *Lex. Heb.* in ענה, ed. Eichhorn.) To this effect LXX, Vulgate, Symmachus, Cocceius, Desvieux, Geier, van der Palm, Bauer, Dathe, &c.; but Doederlein renders ענה by “*canere facit omnes*, lætificat. Sic respondit טו שחק et שמח.”—*Scholia* in loc.

doubts may exist about the particular image, the general sense of the text is very clear.—See Critical Note (*.)

CHAPTER XI.

1. *Cast thy bread upon the waters*—Having evinced the wisdom of obedience to governors, and of becoming patience under their misconduct, the inspired Penman now adverts to the utility of Wisdom in directing our conduct towards our indigent inferiors. The second verse demonstrates that the discourse touches upon charity; and, however the particular image in the verse before us may be explained, the drift of the passage undoubtedly is to recommend benevolent and diffusive charity. Some think that the phrase, “cast thy bread, or rather bread-corn, upon the waters,” is taken from mercantile affairs, when

* As there is an apparent incongruity in representing that as revealed which only passes in the thoughts, Desvieux interprets the word במדעך thus, “though thou shouldest know reason for it;” a very far-fetched interpretation at least, and perhaps contrary to grammar and idiom. Van der Palm renders it “‘in thalamo tuo,’ vel ‘in loco concubitus tui;’ respiciens ad peculiarem illum usum verbi ידע, quo de *rebus conjugalibus* usurpatur;” an exposition, if any can be, ingeniously erroneous. I once thought it might be translated “among thy kinsfolk or acquaintance;” but in that case it would most likely have been in the plural number, not to mention that the word for *kinsman* is מורע, not מדע.—(Ruth ii. 1; Prov. vii. 4.) The noun מדע in other places signifies *scientia, knowledge, understanding*; (2 Chron. i. 10, 11, 12; Dan. i. 4, 17;) and though, according to the rendering, “in thy thought,” the matter which only passes in the mind is said to be revealed, yet, as the verse is highly figurative, it is an admissible hyperbole, and is certainly favoured by the ancient versions.

goods are intrusted in ships on the ocean, in the hope of future profit: some, again, that it is taken from agriculture, when the husbandman sows his seed-corn in moist and irriguous grounds, and though it may, for a while, rot and perish, it afterwards springs up, and yields an abundant increase. It has also been explained as an allusion to a practice, common in Egypt, of sowing the seed previous to the complete recession of the waters of the Nile, which produced a more equable distribution of the seed than if it had been sown upon the dry ground, and, consequently, a more abundant crop, though to the inexperienced it might seem like throwing it away.—(See Gerard's *Institutes of Biblical Criticism*, § 478, and Hewlett's *Bible*.) In the opinion of others, it is a proverbial expression, denoting widely-extended liberality. Desvoeux's version is, "Sow thy corn before the waters," *i. e.* before the rainy season; so Boothroyd; but it may be doubted whether עַל פְּנֵי ever means *before*, though Noldius gives it that signification. Nearly allied to this is the version of Dr. Hodgson, "Sow thy seed when showers approach." Dathe considers it as a dissuasive from pursuing present to the neglecting future gain and advantage;* an interpretation altogether unwarranted, as the context proves that charity and benevolence are the subject. For the same reason we must reject the opinion of those who explain it literally of the sowing of grain, or of the exercise of merchandise. Upon the whole, the opinions of those who suppose the image to be taken from agriculture is most probable; and I have given, in the Paraphrase, what appears to be the sense, and which is sanctioned by Bishop Lowth's learned friend in *Prælect. de Sac. Poes. Heb.* p. 121, ed. Oxon. 1810. "Bread," it is obvious, like the same word in the Lord's Prayer, here includes all things necessary to the subsistence of life. Whatever the poor and distressed stand in need of should be liberally supplied.

* "Suadet auctor ut non præsens lucrum tantum et certum appetamus, sed etiam futurum et incertum non negligamus; cum hac tamen cautione, v. 2, ut non omnia uni committamus, sed cum pluribus negotia partiamur, quod fit in mercatura per navigationem."—Dathe, *Nota* in loc. See also Doederlein, *Scholia* in loc.

— *for thou shalt find it after many days*—This cannot mean, that thou shalt find again that which was distributed, but something equivalent to it: namely, thou shalt in process of time be remunerated, in this world with the gratitude and kindness of mankind, and with the satisfaction of conscious virtue; in the next, with everlasting happiness. Consequently, the meaning of the verse, stript of the metaphor, is, Distribute thy wealth with liberality, for in process of time thou shalt be remunerated.

2. *for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth*—That is, according to Bishop Patrick, “for thou knowest not how calamitous the times may shortly be, and then the good thou hast done will stand thee in greater stead than all the goods thou enjoyest:” or, according to others, “For thou knowest not what calamities may befall, which will deprive thee of the opportunity of doing good.” But I am of opinion that the meaning is, “For thou knowest not what evil is, or exists upon the earth;” namely, Distribute thy wealth in acts of charity and kindness to as many as possible; for, being rich, thou art ignorant to what degree poverty and misery prevail upon the earth. As this, however, would require an alteration in the received rendering, to which many might object, I have followed Bishop Patrick in the Paraphrase. It is probable, as some imagine, that there is an allusion to the ancient custom, in feasts and entertainments, of distributing portions to the guests, and of sending provisions to the poor.—(Gen. xliii. 34; Neh. xiii. 10; Esth. ix. 22. See Bishop Reynolds *in loc.*) “To seven and also to eight” is a definite for an indefinite number. Compare Job v. 19; Prov. vi. 16, xxx. 15, 18, 21; Amos i. 3, 6, 9, &c.; Micah. v. 5.

3. *If the clouds, &c.*—Without attempting to enumerate the various expositions of this verse, which would require a considerable space, I shall state that which, in my judgment, is the best supported. It may be gathered from the context, that it relates to charity and benevolence; and the obscurity arises from the second part of the comparison not being expressed. If the

comparison be completed, as in the Paraphrase, the whole becomes exceedingly clear and luminous: Like as clouds drop rain and fertilize the earth, so should wealth be diffused in beneficial acts of charity; and as the tree, when it is fallen, supplies neither fruit to the hungry nor shade to the weary, so he who hoards up riches is useless to mankind.—יְהוָה, I think, is 3 sing. fut. in the Chaldaic form; but see Dathe, *Not. in loc.*

4. *He that observeth the wind*]—This, again, is an imperfect comparison, the *πρωτασις* only being mentioned, leaving the *αποδοσις* to be supplied, and the meaning is, Like as the husbandman who observes the wind and clouds, and who is ever watching for what he conceives a proper state of the weather, will retard, if not altogether defeat, his agricultural pursuits; so the man who looks only for proper objects of charity, or waits for convenient seasons, or till others set the example, will never be active in benevolence, and mankind will derive little advantage from his wealth and possessions.

5. *As thou knowest not, &c.*]—The sense is, If we are ignorant of the ordinary works of Providence, as “the way of the spirit,” how the soul animates the body; if we know not “how the bones do grow” in living beings, how can we pretend to scrutinize the deep counsels and designs of God? And, therefore, we should embrace the present opportunity of doing good, without being solicitous about the future, or waiting for convenient seasons and proper objects of charity, in the conviction that Providence will so order things that our benevolent intentions will tend to good, whatever present appearances may be. In the opinion of some, there is an intimation of the miraculous conception of Christ; but this, it must be confessed, is somewhat doubtful. See my *Scripture Testimonies to the Divinity of Christ*, p. 400.

6. *In the morning sow thy seed, &c.*]—That is, Be diligent in the work of charity; be liberal and benevolent at all times, and upon all occasions. The metaphor is taken from the diligent

husbandman, who sows his seed early and late. Deeds of charity, as Deodati remarks, are the seeds of the harvest of eternal life, 2 Cor. ix. 10; Gal. vi. 7. It is, then, an exhortation to charitable conduct, founded on the doctrine in the preceding verse. Thus: The ways of Providence are past finding out, and that which appears useless to us is sometimes followed with the most beneficial results, (verse 5;) therefore, “in the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withdraw not thine hand;” begin early and continue to the end in well-doing, distributing freely, without entertaining any scruples as to the propriety of thy charities, or hesitating about the consequences; leave the rest to Heaven; “for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that” act of kindness, “or whether they both shall be alike good” and useful in relieving the necessities of others. Hence it is a duty to be charitable, and to leave the result to the superintending Providence of God.

7. *Truly the light is good, &c.*]—Those commentators, I think, are mistaken who suppose that a new paragraph begins here. This and the next verse, on the contrary, seem to be intimately connected with the foregoing ones, and contain another argument in favour of charity, to this effect: However great may be the sweets and pleasures of life, and whatever delights a man may enjoy, yet seasons of pain, and sickness, and sorrow will occur; and the experience of human frailty should melt his heart to active benevolence towards every suffering child of the dust. By “light” and “beholding the sun” we are to understand the various pleasures and comforts of life. “It is indeed true,” says Bishop Reynolds, “to enjoy ‘the light of the sun,’ and the comforts of the present life is very sweet; *sensually* sweet to those who are voluptuous; *solidly* and *substantially* sweet to those who have obtained spiritual wisdom to cure the vanity and vexation of spirit inherent in them. Yet, both the one and the other must remember, that though life be sweet under the sun, it is not long, much less perpetual. Days of darkness are to come; there remains, therefore, something more to be effected to

the attainment of complete happiness, and such an estate to be secured as may bear full proportion to the capacities of an immortal soul, and may constitute the whole of man."

8. *and rejoice in them all*].—These words must be understood with some limitation, namely, comparatively rejoicing, or happy for the most part; otherwise there could be no days of darkness at all.

— *All that cometh is vanity*].—This clause is ambiguous. It may mean, every one that is born into the world is subject to vanity, or every thing that cometh to pass in the world is vanity, or all that is past is vanity, or all that is to come is vanity. These are severally supported by the authority of respectable names, and may all be so connected with the other clauses as to afford a consistent meaning; but the second seems preferable; namely, All that cometh to pass in the world, all that can be derived from its labours and pleasure, is nothing better than vanity.

9. *Rejoice, O young man, &c.*].—The Preacher here proposes another argument to the practice of charity, from the consideration that God will punish the man who, devoted to a course of luxurious enjoyment, neither pities nor relieves his distressed brethren. Notwithstanding what Geier, Dathe, in his edition of *Glassii Phil. Sac.* p. 913, and others say to the contrary, the first part of the verse appears to be ironical; for if it were the design of Solomon, in this place, to instruct youth in the lawful enjoyment of the good things of life, how could he say, that God will bring a man into judgment for such lawful indulgences? Considered as an irony, how beautifully does it illustrate the context! The subject of this section is charity and benevolence; and, after several observations in recommendation of these virtues, the royal philosopher addresses youth, that season of gaiety and voluptuousness, in a strain of cutting irony: Go, young man,

indulge in such enjoyments as are common to the vigour of youth; gratify thy sensual inclinations; but, to be serious, recollect that, if thou be devoted to luxurious self-indulgence, without regarding or relieving thy suffering brethren, thou wilt incur the vengeance of Heaven. Therefore, (says he, in verse 10,) remove obduracy and an uncharitable disposition from thy heart, and put away all carnal desire; for the pleasures of youth are vanity, while true wisdom and virtue are the only real good, securing lasting happiness, which will endure when the world and all the fashion thereof shall vanish away. There is, probably, an allusion to a future state; though it may be explained in reference to the Mosaic covenant, founded on the sanction of temporal rewards and punishments.

— *in the days of thy youth*—Or, “in thy choicest days,” as Durell and Parkhurst chuse to render the phrase here and chap. xii. 1.

10. *obduracy*—Literally, “anger,” by which I understand, that obduracy or uncharitable disposition which refuses the meed of sympathy and compassion to distress. It may justly be called “anger,” (כעס *ira*, *indignatio*,) because it is, as it were, indignation against mankind, and because it brings down the wrath of God.

— *put away evil from thy flesh*—A periphrasis for sensuality, or carnal desires, *i. e.* put away thy sensual lusts and inclinations.—See Critical Note (*.)

* The word translated “childhood” is השחרות, literally, “the dawn of life,” by which, probably, is meant the ignorance of early youth; η *avoua*, LXX; ܐܝܢܐ, ܐܝܢܐ *ignorantia*, Syriac.—(See Parkhurst on שחר.) Dathe’s version is, “juventus enim æque fugax est ac aurora;” but the Hebrew text will not bear it.

CHAPTER XII.

1. *Remember now thy Creator, &c.*—We are here exhorted to cultivate in youth, the choicest time of life, every sentiment and disposition proper to be exercised towards the great Father of all. In the original it is *Creators* in the plural number. Some MSS., indeed, have it in the singular, and it is so rendered in the ancient versions; but it by no means follows that it was singular in the copies from which these translations were made. Nothing can be more evident, from the collations of Kennicott and De Rossi, than that *Creators* (plural בוראִיךְ) is the true reading; and the employment of a plural appellation of God, in this and other passages of Scripture, was designed, we may fairly presume, to indicate, though obscurely, a plurality of Persons in the Divine Essence. See more in my Note to Proverbs ix. 10.

— *the evil days*—By these is not meant days of sin and criminality, but the period of those pains, weaknesses, and infirmities which are the frequent concomitants of age. That the particles עַר אֲשֶׁר לֹא are properly rendered “before,” in this verse and verses 2 and 6, see Noldius, *Concord. Partic.* in voc. πρὶν, Sym.; “antequam,” Vulgate.

2. *Before the sun, &c.*—Desvieux supposes this verse to be an introduction or transition to the mention which is about to be made of old age, and not a part of its description; in which, however, he is clearly wrong, since it is explanatory of what the Preacher had just before asserted, “Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the evil days come, namely, before the sun, and the light, and the moon, and the stars be darkened,” &c. In the first verse he lays down a proposition concerning age, which is illustrated in those that follow. But, though it unquestionably forms part of the description, it may be matter of doubt whether it is to be taken in a literal or figurative sense. Those who adopt the former,

interpret it of the dimness of the eyes and defect of vision, by which the aged are prevented from beholding the luminaries of heaven. In this view, however, it becomes a mere tautology with the last clause of the third verse, which makes strongly for a figurative sense. Yet, among the widely-varying opinions of commentators, which shall we choose? By different expositors the sun, the light, the moon, and the stars are made to denote the heart, and the different organs of the body; the several ages through which a man must pass; the hilarity and serenity of the countenance, which decay in old people; the decay of the mental faculties. Though this last is the opinion of Witsius, (*Miscel. Sac.* T. 2, Exerc. vi. § 15,) Dr. Smith, (*Solomon's Portraiture of Old Age*, p. 26,) Dr. Mead, (*Medica Sacra*, p. 36,) and others, there are two insuperable objections to the considering it as a description of the imbecilities of the mind's internal powers. *First*, it does not appear that the sun, light, moon, and stars are ever used metaphorically in the Scriptures for the mental faculties; and the writers just cited have not been able to produce any example. *Secondly*, this exposition is irreconcilable with the second hemistich, "and the clouds return after the rain," which cannot be explained in reference to the intellectual powers. Such are the conclusive objections to the interpretation of these learned critics; and much likewise may, with equal reason, be opposed to the other expositions before mentioned. I accede to the opinion of those who understand the verse as a general statement of the pains and miseries of age, the first hemistich describing the insensibility to pleasure, and the second the succession of pains and infirmities, which usually attend on that period of life. This accords with the metaphorical sense of the terms in other passages of the Sacred Writings, happiness and prosperity being often represented by light, and the contrary by darkness, Judges v. 31; 2 Sam. xxiii. 4; Isaiah xxx. 26, lx. 20; Esther viii. 16, &c. Great afflictions are expressed by the darkening of the sun, moon, and stars, Isaiah xiii. 9, 10, 11, xxiv. 23; Jer. iv. 23; Ezek. xxxii. 7; Joel ii. 10, iii. 15; Amos, viii. 9; Matt. xxiv. 29.—(See Glass, *Phil. Sac.* p. 1042, *et seq.*) Here, then, is a striking

picture of a morbid and melancholy old age, when the heyday of youthful frolic and amusement has been succeeded by the lingering years of imbecility, weakness, and decay.

— *and the clouds return after the rain*].—Though this is referred by some to the defluxions from the ears, nose, eyes, &c. with which age is often afflicted, it seems rather to be an image taken from the weather, and denoting a perpetual succession of pains and infirmities, according to the exposition of Grotius, Geier, Calmet, Pool, Hewlett, van der Palm, Wells, Michaelis, Smith, Mead, Doederlein, Dathe. Age, in many instances, has few moments of comfort, and may be compared to a season of continued gloom, when the cheerful rays of the sun seldom shine forth, but after torrents of rain the clouds return dark and lowering. Happy is the man who escapes these infirmities; who lengthens his years in the full exercise of the powers of his understanding; who, cheered by the recollection of a well-spent life, and the glorious hope of immortality, beholds the gentle decay of nature with calm tranquillity, and at last sinks into the grave “in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season.”—Job v. 26.

3. *In the day when the keepers, &c.*].—This verse has been explained, by the general current of expositors, to denote the members and organs of the body. The Targumist and Mercer consider the ribs to be meant by “the keepers of the house;” but, as Dr. Smith observes, “how they shall be said to tremble is not to be made appear; forasmuch as experience doth sufficiently confirm, that they stand as fixed in old as in young, and more fixed too. And indeed their articulation, both to the *sternon* and also to the *vertebræ* of the back, is such, that they admit of very little and obscure motion, but not at all of this trembling.”—(*Solomon’s Portraiture*, p. 56.) Those who make “the keepers of the house” to denote the hands and arms are in the right; for, *first*, the body is represented in Scripture by a house, (Job iv. 19;

2 Cor. v. 1,) and the hands are described as a defence and protection.—(Gen. xlix. 24; Nehem. iv. 17; Job xxxi. 21, 22; Psalm xliv. 3.) And, *secondly*, “the keepers of the house” are here said to tremble, which well adumbrates the palsied arm of age. The image appears to be taken from a palace; the hands and arms being as much a protection to the body as guards and attendants are to the habitations of princes.

— *and the strong men shall bow themselves*—Having represented the arms “by the keepers of the house,” the author now speaks of the lower limbs, and “the strong men” can be no other than the knees and legs, which, scarcely able to support the body, bend and totter under the aged. The allusion is still to the guards of a royal palace, who bow and tremble in the presence of their sovereign.

— *and the grinders cease*—Some suppose that the word translated “grinders” means *grinding-maids*, used metaphorically for the teeth which masticate the food. The ancient Jews having only hand-mills, consigned the working of them to their slaves, particularly to the females, whose business it was to grind the corn, as may be collected from Exod. xi. 5; Isa. xlvii. 2; Matt. xxiv. 41; Luke xvii. 35.—(See Jahn, *Archæologia Bibl.* § 138, 139.) The same custom still prevails in the East.—(Harmer, *Observations*, vol. i. p. 433; Burder, *Oriental Customs*, Nos. 637, 764, 993.) The reasons, however, given by Desvoeux (p. 370) and others, for rendering it “grinding-maids,” are, in my apprehension, not convincing.—See Critical Note (*.)

* The chief reason for the opinion, that the word translated “grinders” literally means *grinding-maids*, is, that השחנות is feminine; yet this does not necessarily imply that they were females, as the feminine is frequently used in Hebrew for the neuter; (Storr, *Observat. ad Anal. et Synt. Heb.* p. 247;) or,

— *those that look out of the windows be darkened*—This, it is evident, denotes the eyes and their infirmities. Harmer thinks there is an allusion “to the circumstances of the females of the East, who, though confined much more to the house than those of Europe are, and afraid to show themselves to strangers even there, are sometimes indulged with the pleasure of looking out of the windows, when any thing remarkable is to be seen, or of assembling on the house-top on such occasions.”—*Observations*, vol. iii. p. 171. So Desvieux, *Philol. Obs.* lib. ii. cap. 3, § 18.

4. *And the doors shall be shut in the streets*—Of those who understand this literally, some explain it of the doors of his house, by which he went out into the street, being closed, so that he keeps within doors in consequence of his infirmities, without being able to go abroad for business or pleasure; while others take it to mean his being excluded from public assemblies, because his voice is too low to be heard in such meetings. But it seems more just to explain it allegorically of the lips; the image being founded on the resemblance between the lips and the doors of a house. Similar expressions are used in Job xli. 14; Ps. cxli. 3; Mich. vii. 5.—The word שוק, here rendered “streets,” only occurs, in addition to the place before us, in verse 5; Prov. vii. 8; Cant. iii. 2, in all which it signifies *street*. It is in this place used metaphorically for some part of the body. It cannot, however, mean “those open ways and passages in the body of man which the matter of nourishment passeth along, without let or molestation,” as Dr. Smith supposes; for, besides the general objection to the ascription of recondite meanings to the images of this portrait, when these passages are shut death immediately

it may agree with שנים, which is often, at least, feminine, in the same way as הראות, in the next clause, agrees with עינים understood.—(See Walther, *Ellips. Heb.* p. 82, 104.) The verb בטל only occurs here; but in Chaldee and Syriac it means *to cease, to be idle*; ὀτiosæ erunt, LXX; “otiosæ erunt,” Vulgate.

ensues. If “doors” in the former part actually denote the lips, there can be little doubt that by “street” is meant the principal passage of the body, of which the mouth is the entrance, and which may be compared to a street, or the chief passage in a palace. “The doors shall be shut in the streets,” therefore, means, when stript of the metaphor, that the lips of the mouth shall be shut, or shall press close together in consequence of the loss of the teeth.

— *when the sound of the grinding is low*—To preserve the consistency of the image, this must be explained of mastication, which cannot be heard when the teeth are lost.* According to Geier, Grotius, Doederlein, Bauer, and Dathe, there is a reference to the difficulty of enunciation through the loss of the teeth, by reason of which the aged cannot speak distinctly; but though this is often the case, the former clause opposes such an interpretation, as we do not find that “the doors of the mouth are shut” when this impediment is experienced. Upon the whole, the expressions “the doors shall be shut in the streets when the sound of the grinding is low,” are a poetical description of the loss of the teeth; in consequence of which the lips press closely together, being deprived of that support or fulcrum which the teeth supplied, and no sound is produced in the act of mastication. Harmer’s objections to this interpretation are so evidently futile as not to require a refutation; and his own ideas of this passage will not, I am persuaded, meet with many supporters.—See *Observations*, &c. vol. iii. p. 179, *et seq.*, and Burder, *Orient. Cust.* No. 637.

— *he shall rise up at the voice of the bird*—A description of the sleepless nights of the aged. Though there is no antecedent nominative expressed to the verb “he shall rise,” (קום,) it

* “Senes propter appetitus imminutionem labra sua rarius, quam olim, aperiunt; ita ob dentium ad cibos comminuendos defectum sonitu etiam minori id faciunt. Horum autem posterius incommodum eleganter admodum verbis *exili sonitu molæ* designari videtur.”—Mead, *Med. Sac.* p. 40.

evidently refers to the person whose condition the Preacher is describing, namely, the aged man. The word “bird” (צפור) may be put generically for the feathered tribe, agreeably to which the sense is, that the aged, being weary of couches on which they enjoy no rest, arise as soon as the birds awake their first notes in the morning. Several commentators, however, take it to mean *a swallow*; and, if this opinion be correct, the meaning may be, that the aged sleep so unsoundly as to be awakened by any noise, even by the soft notes of a small bird; but others explain it of *the cock*, making “the voice of the bird” to denote the first crowing of the cock, which is in the night, before the dawning of the day; and Mr. Harmer, who adopts this exposition, observes that “it is common to all, the young and the healthy, as well as the aged, in the East to rise with the dawn;—but it is visible that rising earlier than common was what Solomon meant.—Accordingly, we find that Solomon does not speak of the birds in the plural, but of the bird, the bird whose voice was first heard in the morning of all the feathered tribe proclaiming its approach.”—(*Observations*, vol. iii. p. 184. See also Bochart, *Hieroz.* P. 2, lib. i. c. 21, 23.) All these interpretations come to the same thing, implying that the aged too commonly pass the night in painful slumbers, and are glad to quit their uneasy pillows as soon as the herald of the morn has tuned his early notes. See this beautifully described in Job. vii. 4.

— *all the daughters of music*—These, according to some commentators, are the singing women, who, as is well known, were in great request among the Orientals. Thus Barzillai says, “I am this day fourscore years old; and can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women?”—(2 Sam. xix. 35.) Dr. Smith, who is followed by Parkhurst, understands the phrase to mean the organs which have reference to music, which he divides into active and passive; *i. e.* “such as make music themselves, or such as take and receive the music

that is made by others.”—(*Solomon's Portraiture of Old Age*, p. 133.) To this interpretation I accede. “All the daughters of music,” namely, all the organs employed in the production and enjoyment of music, “shall be brought low,” or rendered powerless to afford delight; words excellently portraying the old man’s insensibility to the charms of melody and song, arising as well from deafness as from satiety with terrestrial enjoyments.

5. *Also when they shall be afraid, &c.*—That is, as the commentators observe, through weakness, dimness of sight, and difficulty of respiration, old people are incapable of ascending high places; and, through the natural timidity of age, are even afraid of some mishap when they walk in the public ways. Or it may be understood in a more general sense, that the aged, being subject to doubts and alarms, and being conscious of the decay of their powers, consider every the least undertaking as hazardous and difficult, if not insuperable.—See Critical Note (*.)

— *the almond tree shall flourish*—This is a very difficult clause, and has, of course, been variously interpreted. “And he that is wakeful shall be contemned,” Durell; “the commerce of women shall be despised,” Desvieux; “when pleasure shall be despised,” Hodgson; and others may be seen in Poli

* Of the clause, as rendered in the E. T., “they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way,” Desvieux’s version is, “They shall be afraid even of distant objects; nay, of the scarecrows set on the way side.” It is unnecessary to use many words in refuting this absurd rendering. חַתְּחַתִּים, only found here, is derived from חָתַת *to fear*, and consequently means *fears*, or *objects which excite fears*; and as a reduplication of the radical letters heightens the signification, it means *exceeding great fears*. It cannot be a participle, as Parkhurst supposes.

*Synop.** These interpretations, it is obvious, rest upon very slender evidence; whereas the traditionary sense of the Hebrew noun, *an almond tree*, is supported by the use of the word in other passages, as Jer. i. 11, and Gen. xliii. 11; Numb. xvii. 8, where it denotes the fruit of the almond tree, and by the authority of the LXX and Vulgate. Such, most likely, is its meaning in the place before us, and the almond tree represents the hoary head, the usual attendant on advanced years. To this, however, Dr. Mead objects, (*Med. Sac.* p. 44,) that gray hairs are not peculiar to the aged, the hair of the young often turning to that colour; and that the flowers of the almond tree are not white. But the answer is easy. Solomon's picture of age ought not to be held as universally true, but true for the most part, and the hoary head, being usually found in old persons, is properly noticed as characteristic of age. The second objection appears to be founded on a mistake, for Mr. Harmer shows, from Hasselquist, that the almond tree has white flowers; and he observes, that "the hair of Eastern people is almost universally dark; an old man, then, with a white head, appears among those that are young somewhat like an almond tree in blossom among the dark, unclothed twigs of other trees."—(*Observations*, vol. iii. p. 190.) We learn, from Pliny, that this tree was in flower in winter before any other; "florebat prima omnium amygdala, mense Januario."—(*Lib.* xvi. § 42.) There can be no doubt, therefore, that the hoary head is fitly represented by the almond tree.—See Critical Note (†.)

* According to the first of these versions, שקר is taken in the sense of *watching*, *waking*, which is an acknowledged signification of the root; and, according to the two latter, in the sense of *membrum genitale*. Desvoeux, indeed, proposes to read it with a *Sin*, instead of *Shin*, and explains it by *embraced*, or *close pressed*; but Lament. i. 14, to which he appeals, does not bear him out; and his conjecture, however ingenious and plausible, cannot outweigh the evidence for the received sense of שקר.

† The verb נִצַּח may be derived from נָצַח, *to flourish*, which presents a beautiful image, that gray hairs shall come on like an

— *the grasshopper shall be a burden*—I entirely agree with Dr. Smith, whose interpretation is thus summed up by Parkhurst,

almond tree in full blossom; or from נאס, *to despise, to cast off*, that is, the aged shall lose their gray hairs as an almond tree sheds its white flowers. In this latter sense it is understood by the author of *Choeleth, a Poem*, and by the very learned Schroeder, in his *Observationes ad Orig. Heb.* p. 152, who renders נאס השקר “*excutiet amygdala, suos scilicet fructus et folia, ut stet pristino decore orbata. Talis arbor purchra imago est homines confecti senecta, et pristino flore atque vigore destituti.*” Though Michaelis, Schulz, and others agree in this interpretation, I prefer the former, as being conformable to the LXX and Vulgate. The objection of these critics, that a flourishing tree is rather the symbol of youthful vigour than of old age, does not apply to the case before us, as the comparison is restricted to this single circumstance, that through age the hair will become white, like an almond tree in full blossom.—As to the clause, rendered in E. T. “and desire shall fail,” interpreters are greatly at a loss to explain the אבינוה אפאξ λεγ. After an attentive consideration of all the expositions to which I have access, I vastly prefer that which refers it to the root אבה, *velle, concupiscere, acquiescere*, and take it in the sense of *acquiescence, acquiescent satisfaction*; (see Parkhurst *in voc.*;) agreeably to which the clause may be rendered, “and satisfaction shall be abolished.” The LXX, Syriac, and Vulgate render it by “capparis,” the caper tree, or fruit; which is likewise adopted by Dr. Smith, van der Palm, Bauer, and Michaelis, (*Supplem. ad Lex.* No. 6;) and if it be true, that “capparis herba est appetitum provocans,” (see more in Poli *Synop.*) it may be put metaphorically for enjoyment, and so accord in sense with the version here adopted. According to this idea, it is true, capparis alludes “ad appetitum rei venereæ;” but, notwithstanding the objections of Michaelis, this particular instance may be put for the general loss of all satisfaction and enjoyment.

Lex. in חגב: “The dry, shrunk, shrivelled, crumpling, craggy old man, his backbone sticking out, his knees projecting forwards, his arms backwards, his head downwards, and the apophyses, or bunching parts of the bones in general enlarged, is very aptly described by that insect. And from this exact likeness, without all doubt, arose the fable of *Tithonus*, that, *living to extreme old age*, he was at last turned into a grasshopper.” Other and very different opinions may be seen in *Poli Synop.* and *Bochart, Hieroz.* P. ii. lib. 4, cap. 8.—See also *Paxton, Illustrations*, vol. i. p. 324.

— *and the mourners, &c.*—This refers to the ancient custom of employing hired mourners to attend the funeral obsequies, to wail and lament for the departed, and to celebrate their virtues in elegiac strains accompanied with soft and plaintive music.—(2 Chron. xxxv. 25; Job iii. 8; Jer. ix. 17; Jahn, *Archæologia Bibl.* § 211; Brown, *Antiq. of the Jews*, P. xi. § 14.) For the various modes of expressing grief, customary among the ancient Hebrews, see Geier’s learned treatise, *De Luctu Hebræorum*.

6. *Before the silver cord, &c.*—As the four preceding verses are a figurative description of the infirmities which commonly accompany old age; so this is a figurative description of the circumstances attending its final period in dissolution. In no part of the whole picture is it more needful to establish the principle of its interpretation; for on that it depends whether we are to explain it in a popular manner, or to illustrate it from the researches of anatomical science. If what has been advanced in the fifth section in the Preliminary Dissertation is correct, we are to consider this verse as exhibiting only a general account, not presenting a medical detail, of the effects of death; and whatever may be shadowed out under each particular image, we are to understand it of something apparent to common observers. It is more particularly necessary to keep this in view, since, from the boldness of the imagery, bold almost beyond Oriental daring, if any attempt be made to discover deep and recondite meanings,

we shall be led into an exposition which, however ingenious, will only be wild and visionary. The commentators are not agreed whence the images are taken; some supposing that they allude to the golden lamps hanging by silver or silken cords from the roof, and forming no small part of Eastern magnificence; others contending that the allusion is to the cord, bucket, wheel, and cistern of a well, which is, perhaps, most probable; but, as the determination of this question is not necessary to the explanation of the passage, it would be idle to waste time in the discussion.—The Targumist interprets “the silver cord” of the string of the tongue; some, of the humours of the body; others, of the nerves; but most, of the spinal marrow. Dr. Smith thinks it denotes the spinal marrow, and all the nerves thence arising. Several reasons, however, incline me to restrict it to the spinal marrow alone; for, *first*, that is most conspicuous to common observers. *Secondly*, it appears to the eye, as Dr. Smith remarks, of a white, shining, resplendent beauty, bright as silver. *Thirdly*, as the same writer observes, it is placed deep, secret, and secure in the body, like veins of silver in the earth. *Fourthly*, had it been meant to denote the nerves, as well as the spinal marrow, it would, most likely, have been in the plural number. And, *lastly*, it may well, from its excellency, be called “the silver cord.” These reasons show convincingly that it denotes the spinal marrow.—See Critical Note (*.)

* The verb ירחק, *to remove*, when applied to a cord, must mean *to remove the texture, to loose*. Instead of ירחק, the Keri and many MSS. have ירחק, only found as a verb in Nahum iii. 10, and evidently in the sense of *binding* or *girding*; and as a noun in 1 Kings vi. 21; Isaiah xl. 19; Ezek. vii. 23, evidently signifying *chains*; but as this sense is not applicable to the passage before us, we must adopt ירחק as the true reading. The ancient versions render it by words signifying *to cut* or *break*.—In the next clause the word rendered “*bowl*” is גלית, from גלל, *to roll*, and is rightly so rendered, as in Zech. iv. 2, 3.—(See Taylor’s

— *the golden bowl be broken*—That is, as Durell explains it, “before the head is reduced to a mere empty skull, not unlike then in colour to gold, or in form to a bowl.”—(*Critical Remarks* in loc.) It has been suggested to me by a friend, that the epithet “golden” is meant to apply more to the *importance* of the head than to any resemblance to gold in *colour*, which it has neither in life nor in death.

— *the pitcher be shattered at the fountain, and the wheel be broken at the cistern*—By “the pitcher” Dr. Smith understands the veins; by “the fountain,” the right ventricle of the heart; by “the wheel,” the great artery called the aorta; and by “the cistern,” the left ventricle of the heart. As there are no grounds, however, for supposing this description to be anatomically correct, it is more likely that the first clause describes, in a popular manner, though in highly figurative language, the cessation of the action of the heart; and the latter, the loss of the power of respiration by the lungs. “The images of this text,” says Bishop Horsley, “are not easy to be explained on any other supposition than that the writer, or the Spirit which guided the writer, meant to allude to the circulation of the blood, and the structure of the principal parts by which it is carried on. And upon the supposition that such allusions were intended, no obscurity, I believe, will remain for the anatomist in the whole passage.”—(*Sermons*, vol. iii. p. 190, Lond. 1813.) But, with all deference to this sagacious writer, I must dissent from his opinion, that the circulation of the blood is intimated in this passage. It appears to me to be the sole intention of the writer to describe the cessation of those animal functions which are observable to every beholder.

Concordance.) The LXX render it by *αρθρομον*, a word of uncertain import; (see Biel, *Thesaur.* in voc.;) Symmachus by *περιφερεις, zona*, according to Montfaucon, but probably meaning something round, a bowl; Vulgate by “*vitta*,” but the meaning is obscure.

To attempt drawing a profound meaning from every circumstance mentioned in this poetical account of the closing scene of life, is surely to refine upon the expressions in a very culpable degree. It cannot reasonably be believed, that the royal author intended any thing more than to describe the evident effects of death, as exhibited in the cessation of the vital functions of the head, heart, and lungs. For this purpose he employs images taken, as is most probable, from the machinery used in drawing water from a well. There is undoubtedly a general resemblance, and in this general resemblance we ought to rest, without vainly endeavouring to assimilate every minute circumstance, or to show its accordance with the anatomy of man. This view is one more likely to be just, when it is considered that those who have attempted to investigate the minutiae with medical precision have adopted widely-diversified and most unfounded opinions; and that even the learning and abilities of Dr. Smith could not elicit a medical interpretation that can at all satisfy a sober inquirer.

7. *Then shall the dust, &c.*—In the first hemistich is declared the general dissolution of the whole human frame, and, in the second, that the vital spark survives the wreck of the body; which proves that the immortality of the soul was believed in the age of Solomon.—See Prelim. Dissert. § 4, and Hackspan, *Notæ Philol.* vol. ii. p. 507.

8. *Vanity of vanities, &c.*—Professor Doederlein, both in his *Scholia* and in his *Institutio Theol. Christ.* § 40, maintains, that the remainder of the chapter, from this verse, has no coherence with the argument of the discourse, and that it was added by the compiler, whoever he might be, who collected together the several parts of the Sacred Volume. The same opinion was entertained by Peters; (*Crit. Diss. on Job. Pref.* p. 59;) it rests, however, upon no better foundation than mere assertion. Though it is no easy matter to say by what person or persons the Sacred Writings were first collected together, we may rest assured, from the religious scrupulosity of the Hebrews, with respect to all matters

pertaining to their public creed and worship, that it was done by such as were properly qualified for the undertaking. It is enough to be convinced, that they have been received into the canon by the concurrent authority of the whole Jewish Church. There is not the smallest reason for supposing, that the last seven verses of the Ecclesiastes were not written by the same author as the rest. The expressions in verse 12, “and further, my son, by these be admonished,” are unsuitable to a compiler, as van der Palm observes, (*Diss. de Lib. Eccles.* p. 84,) while they agree well with Solomon, who was accustomed, in his moral writings, to address his hearers in this manner. Nor is it probable that any person either would or could add the concluding verses to the book without some intimation of it. They form, moreover, a proper conclusion to the treatise, and, except they had been added, the book would have been left lame and imperfect. After showing the vanity of all terrestrial things, and describing the nature and excellence of Wisdom, the philosophical monarch very naturally proceeds to state the inference intended to be drawn from the whole disquisition. It was as necessary to hear the conclusion of the whole matter as the arguments which led to it. He, therefore, sums up in verses 8—12 what had been discussed in the first part of the discourse, giving, at the same time, a short statement of his labours in the pursuit and inculcation of heavenly Truth; and delivers, in the two last verses, the result of the second part of the book, that the Sovereign Good and real happiness of man consists in true, practical Wisdom, in fearing God, and keeping his commandments.

9. *he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs*—Literally, “he weighed, or diligently considered, and sought out, *and* arranged many proverbs;” but the two former verbs are, probably, used adverbially, and if so, these clauses may be rendered, “and with diligent inquiry he composed many proverbs:” “*diligenter omnia explorans multas congegessit sententias,*” Dathe.

10. *The Preacher sought, &c.*—There seems an opposition between “acceptable words” and “words of truth;” the former probably meaning the agreeableness of the style and expression, and the latter, the propriety of the sentiments.—See Critical Note (*.)

11. *The words of the wise, &c.*—This does not mean the words of any who may be accounted wise, but of those whose Wisdom is from above, men divinely inspired. That it refers alone to the words of inspiration appears from what follows, “the collectors have published them from one Shepherd,” namely, God, which cannot possibly be meant of the sayings of mere human wisdom. We have, moreover, in these expressions, a confirmation of the Divine authority of that which has been handed down to us in the Scriptures as the words of the wise. They have been inspired by the “one Shepherd,” who is God, as is plain from the emphatical manner in which it is expressed, or, perhaps, the Son of God, as Diodati and many others maintain, that Son who was the Church’s supreme Shepherd, (John

* Houbigant and Durell, instead of the textual כְּתוּב, would read יָכַת; and the Syriac, Vulgate, and Aquila render it “he wrote:” it cannot, however, be inferred that they found יָכַת in their copies, for they might take כְּתוּב as the infinitive put for the præterite, as it sometimes is.—(Glass, *Phil. Sac.* p. 288.) Bishop Patrick says the verse runs thus, word for word, in the Hebrew: “The Preacher carefully sought to meet with desirable words; and the writing of uprightness; and the words of truth.” As to the latter part, I think it best to take יָשַׁר adverbially, or to supply the preposition ב, and to render it “— and to write down properly, or rightly, the words of truth.” This seems the most easy interpretation. “He searched that he might find pleasant words, and wrote rightly the words of truth,” Luther’s German version.

x. 11; 1 Peter v. 4,) and by whose Spirit all the prophets have spoken. From the Holy Trinity the sayings of the wise have proceeded; by their sanction and authority they are published; and thus Solomon asserts the inspiration of the Jewish *Meshalim*, which include not only proverbs, in our common acceptance of the word, but any weighty and important maxim or sentiment.—See *Prel. Diss. to Prov.* p. 10, and Critical Note (*.)

* This verse supplies abundant matter for critical and philological remarks; I shall, therefore, as briefly as possible, state the observations I have to make, according to the order of the words. —*as goads*—It is not absolutely certain that דרבן means *a goad*, but there is all the evidence for it the case admits; for, first, it suits the context, both here and 1 Sam. xiii. 21, the only other place where it is found. Secondly, it is confirmed by the Polyglott versions. Thirdly, in Arabic ذرب is *acutus fuit*. —*like nails*—So כמשמרות is rendered in the ancient versions; and though there is no other example where משמר is rendered in that sense, it may be observed, that many MSS. have כמסמרות, and that *Samech* and *Sin*, being letters of the same organ, are sometimes changed. This also is both the traditionary sense, and is very suitable to the context. —*deeply infixed*—As משמרות and נטועים do not agree in gender, E. T., “as nails fastened by,” &c. is improper. The latter, therefore, refers to דברי, “the words of the wise,” which are like goads, and are deeply infixed, like nails; so Dathe and Lowth (*Prel. de Poes. Heb.* xxiv.) This, though differing from the Masoretic punctuation, appears to be the true interpretation; but Desvieux’s version is, “like planted repositories;” and Parkhurst’s, “like the fences of plantations,” namely, to guard the plants and trees of righteousness.—(*Lex.* in שמר 2.) —*the collectors*.—The great Rabbinical scholar, Dr. Lightfoot, supposes בעלי אספות to mean the servants that attend about the flock under the shepherd, and he would render the words by way of paraphrase: “*The words of the wise are as goads, and as*

12. *Of making many books, &c.*—This, it is evident, must be taken with some such limitations as in the Paraphrase. Such

nails fastened by those that gather the flock into the fold: Goats to drive away the thief or the wild beast; and nails to preserve the sheepfold whole and in good repair. Which goads and nails are furnished by the chief shepherd, the master of the flock, for these uses.—(*Works*, vol. ii. p. 575.) If, as before observed, נטועות does not agree with “nails,” but with “the words of the wise,” this ingenious explication cannot be admitted. Van der Palm takes the phrase to mean the moral precepts which are collected together; “*jam vero cum putem בעלי אספות parallelum esse דברי חכמים, tum per dominos collectionum intelligo sententias virorum prudentum ac præcepta moralia.*” To this Bauer accedes in his *Scholia*. The learned Dr. Hales also renders בעלי אספות by “master-collections,” and thinks they correspond to the *κρυαὶ δοξαί*, the authoritative aphorisms of Epicurus and other Heathen philosophers.—(*New Analysis*, vol. ii. p. 405.) But these interpretations cannot be correct, as בעל is never applied by the Sacred Writers to *inanimate things*; and, besides, it has invariably reference to *ownership*, or *possession*, which, when applied to “collections,” must mean “master of collections.” This is evident beyond all doubt; but still the question returns, what is intended by this expression? Harmer thinks that אספות בעלי ought to be translated “masters, or rather, lords of assemblies,” denoting the persons who distinguished themselves by the superiority of their compositions in those assemblies so frequent among the Orientals, in which they entertained themselves with reciting and listening to literary productions in prose and verse.—(*Observations*, vol. iii. p. 215, *et seq.*) Though אספות occurs nowhere else, it may be alleged, in favour of this interpretation, that the root אסף certainly means *to assemble, to collect together*, and that some of its derivatives likewise denote *a gathering together, an assembly*, as Isaiah xxiv. 22; Numb.

observations as this verse contains are not mathematical axioms, and common sense requires them to be understood with proper restrictions.—See the Prelim. Dissert. § i. p. xxiii.

13. *Let us hear the conclusion*—Literally, “the end,” that is, the end of, or the inference from “the whole matter” contained in the second part of the book, the sum and substance of the whole argument of it.

— *for this is the whole duty of man*—This elliptical clause is properly supplied by our translators. It may be literally rendered, “for this is to, or belongs to every man,” that is, taking the words in the largest sense, this practical Wisdom is profitable to every man, is the duty of every man, is his supreme good, and the perfection of his nature.—Geier, Le Clerc, and others properly supply the particle ל before כל.

14. *For God shall bring, &c.*—That this verse does not refer to the temporal retribution exercised under the Theocracy, but to

xi. 4; Nehem. xii. 25, where באספי is rendered in E. T. “at the thresholds,” but would be better “at the congregations or assemblies.” According to this, “the lords, or masters of assemblies” denote *those who rule and teach in the sacred assemblies*, which *masters or teachers* are given from, that is, *appointed and directed by one Shepherd or Supreme Governor, namely, God.*—(Wells’s *Paraphrase.*) This, however, is open to several objections; (see Prel. Diss. § iii. p. 41;) for which reason I adopt another interpretation, which, after Le Clerc and others, takes בעלי אספות, *masters of collections*, to be a Hebraism for “collectors;” by which expression no other can be meant than those who collected and disposed in order the sayings of men divinely inspired, as the men of Hezekiah, mentioned Proverbs xxv. 1.

a future state of rewards and punishments, see the Prelim. Dissert. § iv. p. 53, *et seq.*

— *whether it be good, or whether it be bad*—It is doubtful whether this clause refers to “every work,” or to “every secret thing,” or to both; though the last is most probable.—See Critical Note (*.)

* The clause “with every secret thing” is rightly translated; for the particle *לְ* has the sense of *with, una cum*.—(See Noldius, *Concord. Partic.* in *לְ* 9.) Schultens thus renders it: “omne opus adducet Deus in judicium, *לְכָל לְ* *לְ*, quantumvis omne sit signatum, qua bonum, qua malum.”—*Origines Hebrææ*, p. 390.

THE END.

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