

ECCLESIASTES

Chapter 1

Verse 1. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 1:1]]{{field-on:Bible}}**The words.** Golden words, weighty, and worthy of all acceptation; grave and gracious apophthegms, or rather oracles, meet to be well remembered. Solomon's sapiential sermon of the sovereign good, and how to attain to it; Solomon's soliloquy, as some style it; others, his sacred retractations; others, his ethics, or *tractate de summo bono*,⁽¹⁾ of the chiefest good, compiled and composed with such a picked frame of words, with such pithy strength of sentences, with such a thick series of demonstrative arguments, that the sharp wit of all the philosophers, compared with this divine discourse, seems to be utterly cold, and of small account; their elaborate treatises of happiness to be learned dotages, and laborious loss of time.⁽²⁾ How many different opinions there were among them concerning the chief good in Solomon's days is uncertain. Various of them he confuteth in this book, and that from his own experience, the best school dame.⁽³⁾ But Varro, the most learned of the Romans, reckoneth up two hundred and eighty in his time; and no wonder, considering man's natural blindness, not unlike that of the Syrians at Dothan, or that of the Sodomites at Lot's door.⁽⁴⁾ What is an eye without the optic spirit but a dead member? and what is all human wisdom without divine illumination but wickedness of folly, yea, foolishness of madness? as our preacher, not without good cause, calleth it. "A spirit there is in man," saith Elihu—viz., the light of reason; and thus far the animal man goes, and there he makes a halt; (**Ecclesiastes 7:15**) he cannot transcend his orb—but "the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding." (**Job 32:8**) God had given Solomon wisdom above any man; Abulensis saith above Adam in his innocence, which I believe not. He was **παιδαριος**^{ερω}—as Macarius was called—a man at twelve years old.⁽⁵⁾ His father, had taught him; (**Proverbs 4:3, 4**) his mother had lessoned him; (**Proverbs 31:1**) the prophet Nathan had had the breeding of him. But besides, as he was Jedidiah, loved of God, so he was **θεοδιδάκτος**, taught of God. And being now, when he penned this penitential sermon, grown an old man, he had experimented all this that he here affirmeth; so that he might better begin his speech to his scholars than once Augustus Caesar did to his soldiers, *Audite senem iuvenes, quem iuvenem senes audierunt*, Young men, hearken to me, an old man, whom old men hearkened unto when I was yet but young. "Have not I written for you excellent things in counsel and knowledge?" (**Proverbs 22:20**) Or, have I not written three books for thee—so some read those words—proverbial, penitential, nuptial? See the note there.

*"Nescis temerarie, nescis
Quem fugias, ideoque fugis."—Ovid. Metam.*

Surely, "if thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that speaketh unto thee," (**John 4:10**) thou wouldst "incline thine ear and hear," (**Isaiah 55:3**) thou wouldst listen as for life itself. Knowest thou not that I am a preacher, a prince, son of David, king in Jerusalem, and so do come *multis nominibus tibi commendatissimus*, much commended to thee in many respects? But "need I, as some others, epistles of commendation" (**2 Corinthians 3:1**) to my readers, or letters of commendation from them? Is it not sufficient to know that this book of mine, both for matter and words, is the very work of the Holy Ghost speaking in me, and writing by me?⁽⁶⁾ For "prophecy comes not by the will of man, but holy men of God speak it as they are moved by the Holy Ghost." (**2 Peter 1:21**) And albeit this be proof good enough of my true, though

¹ Serranus.

² τὸ τοῦ χρόνου παρανάλωμα.—Arist.

³ *Experientia optima magistra.*

⁴ Aug., *De Civ. Dei*, lib. xviii.

⁵ Niceph.

late, repentance, whereof some have doubted, some denied it. ⁽⁶⁾ Yet take another.

Of the Preacher. Or, Of a preaching soul (for the Hebrew word *koheleth*, is of the feminine gender, and hath nephesh, soul, understood), or of a person reunited and reconciled to the church, ⁽⁷⁾ and in token of reconciliation to God, readmitted by him to this office in his Church; like as Christ sealed up his love to Peter, after his shameful fall, by bidding him "feed his lambs"; and to the rest of the apostles that had basely forsaken him, by saying to them, after his resurrection, "Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. Receive ye the Holy Ghost." (**John 20:21-22**) See the like mercy showed to St Paul. (**1 Timothy 1:12**) Howbeit, some learned men here observe, that it is no new thing in the Hebrew tongue to put feminine names upon men, as Ezra is called *Sophereth*, *descriptrix*, a she scribe, in the very same form as Solomon is here called *Koheleth*, a preacheress; and the gospel preachers, *Mebaseroth*, (**Psalms 68:11; Isaiah 52:7**) either to set forth the excellence and elegance of the business, or else to teach ministers to keep themselves pure as virgins; whence they are also called Wisdom's maids; (**Proverbs 9:3**) and Christ's paranymphs; (**John 3:29**) to "present the church as a chaste virgin to Christ." (**2 Corinthians 11:2**)

The son of David. So Christ also is said to be, (**Matthew 1:1**) as if David had been his immediate father. "The glory of children are their fathers," (**Proverbs 17:6**) to wit, if they be godly and pious. The Jews made great boasts that they were "the seed of Abraham"; (**Matthew 3:9; John 8:33**) and that wretch, Elymas the sorcerer, had surnamed himself Barjesus, (**Acts 13:6**) or the son of Jesus, as if he had been of nearest alliance to our Saviour, of whom "the whole family of heaven and earth is named." (**Ephesians 3:15**) What an honour is it now accounted to be of the posterity of Latimer, Bradford, Ridley, &c.! How much more of David, that man of renown, the father of our princely Preacher, who himself took also not scorn to teach and do the office of a preacher, (**Psalms 32:9; 34:11**) though he were the governor of God's people, (**Psalms 78:71**) and head of many heathen! (**Psalms 18:43**) The like may be said of Joseph of Arimathea, who of a counsellor of state became a Preacher of the gospel. So did Chrysostom, a noble Antiochian; Ambrose, lieutenant and consul of Milan; George, prince of Anhalt; Earl Martinengus; John a Lasco, a noble Polonian; and various others of like quality and condition. The Psalmist (**Psalms 138:4-5; 119:72**) shows by prophesying, that they that have tasted the joys of a crown shall leave the throne and palace to sing with the saints, and to publish the excelling glory of God and godliness.

King in Jerusalem. And of Jerusalem. The Pope will allow the Duke of Milan to be king in Tuscany, but not King of Tuscany: ⁽⁸⁾ Solomon was both (**Proverbs 1:1**) (*See Trapp on "Proverbs 1:1"*) Hither came the Queen of Sheba from the utmost parts of the earth to hear him: here he wrote his excellent book, these "words of delight," which he had learned from that one Shepherd, the Lord Christ, (**Ecclesiastes 12:10-11**) and hath left them faithfully set down for the use of the Church; so honouring learning with his own labours,—as Sylvester said of Caesar. Here, lastly, it was that he sovereigned over God's own peculiar, the people of his purchase, Israel, God's firstborn, and in that respect "higher than the kings of the earth." (**Psalms 89:27**) So that if Maximilian, the Emperor of Germany, could say, *Rex hominum Hispanus, asinorum Gallus, regum ego* ⁽⁹⁾ the Spaniard is king of men, the French is king of asses, and I am King of kings; how much better might Solomon have said so!

⁽¹⁰⁾ {{field-off:Bible}}

⁶ *Regis epistolis acceptis, quo calamo scriptae sint, ridiculum est quaerere.*—Greg.

⁷ *Bellarminus Solomonem inter reprobos numerat.*

⁸ *Anima congregata, et cum ecclesia se colligens.*—Cartwright.

⁹ *Spec. Europ.*

¹⁰ *Joh. Manlius.*

Verse 2. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 1:2]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Vanity of vanities.** Or, Most vain vanity: therefore, no happiness here to be had but in the reverential fear of God, (**Ecclesiastes 12:13**) and this is the sum of the whole sermon, the result of the discourse, the impartial verdict brought in by one that could best tell; and he tells it over and over, that men might the sooner believe him, without putting themselves to the fruitless pains of trying any further conclusions. Sin hath hurled confusion over the world, and brought a vanity on the creature. This our first parents found, and therefore named their second son Abel, or vanity. David comes after and confirms it, (**Psalms 144:4**) "Adam is as Abel," ⁽¹¹⁾ or, "Man is like to vanity." There is an allusion in the original to their two names: yea, all-Adam is all-Abel, ⁽¹²⁾ when he is best underlaid—so the Hebrew hath it ⁽¹³⁾—"Every man at his best estate," when he is settled upon his best bottom, "is altogether vanity: surely, Selah." It is so, it is so; you may seal to it. (**Psalms 39:5**) But who, alas! hath believed our report? These outward things are so near to us, and so natural to us, that although we can say, nay swear, with the Preacher, "Vanity of vanities," a heap, a nest of vanities,—It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer, yet, when gone apart, we close with them; albeit, we know they are naught and will come to naught. (**1 Corinthians 2:6**) Neither will it ever be otherwise with us, till, with Fulgentius, we have found, after much trial, the vanity of all earthly triumph; ⁽¹⁴⁾ till, with Gilimer, King of Vandals, led in triumph by Belisarius, we cry out, as here, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity"; ⁽¹⁵⁾ till, with Charles V, Emperor of Germany (whom of all men the world judged most happy), we cry out with detestation to all our honours, pleasures, trophies, riches, ⁽¹⁶⁾ *Abite hinc, abite longe*, Get you hence, let me hear no more of you. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 3. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 1:3]]{{field-on:Bible}}**What profit hath a man?** What durable profit? *Quid residui?* what excess? what more than will serve to satisfy back and belly? Our life is called, "the life of our hands," (**Isaiah 57:10**) because it is maintained by the labour of our hands. *Si ventri bene, si lateri*, as he in Horace saith, If the belly may be filled, the back fitted, that's all that can here be had, and that most men care to have; which if they have (some have but prisoners' pittance, so much as will keep life and soul together), yet *quid amplius?* as the Vulgate renders this text, what have they more to pay them for their pains? Surely, when all the account is subducted, such a labouring man's happiness resolved into its final issue and conclusion, there resteth nothing but ciphers. This should make us more moderate in our desires and endeavours after earthly things, since we do but "labour in the very fire, and weary ourselves for very vanity." (**Hebrews 2:13**) They that seek after the philosopher's stone, they must use so much gold, and spend so much gold, and then they can turn as much into gold by it as they have spent in making of it; and so they have their labour for their pains. *Quid emolumentum?* What profit hath a man? Do we not see many take a great deal of pains to go to hell? whereinto at length they are turned as a sumpter horse is at night, after all his hard travail, with his back full of galls and bruises. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 4. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 1:4]]{{field-on:Bible}}**One generation passeth away, &c.** Therefore, no happiness here, because no assurance of life or long continuance:—

*"Omnia sunt hominum tenui pendentia filo:
Et subito casu, quae valere ruunt."*

Xerxes, looking upon his huge army, wept to think that, within less than a hundred years, not

¹¹ Adam is Abel's mate.

¹² *Omnis Adam est totus Abel.*

¹³ *Nitsub, fundatus, constitutus.*

¹⁴ *Fulgentius triumphos Romanos ludosve cum spectarit appellavit vanitatem.*

¹⁵ *Procop., lib. ii., de bello Vand.*

¹⁶ Philip. Morn.

one of those many should be left alive. Mortality is the stage of mutability; mere man is but the dream of a dream, but the generation of a fancy, but an empty vanity, but the curious picture of nothing, a poor feeble, unable, dying flash. How then can he here work out unto himself a happiness worth having? Why should he lay up and "load himself with thick clay," (*Habakkuk 2:6*) as if his life were riveted upon eternity?

But the earth endureth for ever. As a stage, whereon the several generations act their parts and go off; as the centre of the world and seat of living creatures, it stands firm and unmovable. That was an odd conceit of Plato's that the earth was a kind of living creature, having stones for bones, rivers for veins, trees for hairs, &c. And that was worse of Aristotle, teaching the world's eternity; which some smatterers in philosophy fondly strive to maintain out of this text, not rightly understanding the force of the Hebrew phrase for ever, which oftentimes, and here, signifies a periodical perpetuity, a long indefinite time, not an infinite. (see *2 Peter 1:3, 10*) The whole engine shall be changed. By *ever* then is meant, *till the end of all things*. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 5. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 1:5]]{{field-on:Bible}}**The sun also ariseth.** That sweet and swift creature (the Persians deified it); so sweet that Eudoxus professed himself willing to be burnt up by the sun presently, so he might be admitted to come so near it as to learn the nature of it; ⁽¹⁷⁾ so swift that the Persians dedicated a horse to their god the sun, as the swiftest on earth to the swiftest in heaven. ⁽¹⁸⁾ He courseth about the world with incredible speed, and "rejoiceth as a giant to run a race." (*Psalms 19:5*) He exceedeth the eagle's flight more than it goes beyond the slow motion of a snail. Whether it run nearer the earth now by 9976; German miles than it did in Ptolemy's days, as some mathematicians affirm, I know not; but that, being of a fiery nature, it should, contrary to the nature of fire (which is to fly upward), send down its beams, its heat, light, and influence, this I admire, with Chrysostom, ⁽¹⁹⁾ as a gracious work of God, in making this great servant of the world—as his name in Hebrew ⁽²⁰⁾ signifies—so sweetly serviceable.

And hasteth to the place. Heb., Panteth, as if tired, and even breathless, A figurative speech, like that in *Daniel 9:21*, where the angel Gabriel is said to "fly swiftly," or with weariness of flight, to inform Daniel. For use hereof, hear the poet:—

*"The sun doth set and rise,
But we contrariwise,
Sleep after one short light,
An everlasting night."* ⁽²¹⁾{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 6. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 1:6]]{{field-on:Bible}}**The wind goeth toward the south,** &c. It is a little very small thing at first, a vapour rising out of the earth; but, by circuiting and whirling about, it gathers strength—now rushing toward the south, and anon toward the north, &c.; the original is very lively in expressing the manner of it. *Una Eurusque Notusque ruunt,* &c. ⁽²²⁾ The restlessness of these insensible creatures, and diligence in doing their duties, as it taxeth our dulness and disaffection, so it reminds us of the instability of our states, and that we should seek and set up our rest in God alone. All earthly things are to the soul but

¹⁷ Plutarch.

¹⁸ ὥσπερ τὸ τάχιστον, τῷ ταχυτάτῳ θεῶν.—Paus.

¹⁹ Hom. 8; Ad. Pop. Antioch.

²⁰ חַמְשָׁה.

²¹ Soles occidere et redire possuat, Nobiscum semel! occidit brevis lux, Nox est perpetua una dormienda.—Catull.

²² Virg., *Aeneid*.

as the air to the stone,—can give it no stay till it come to God the centre.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 7. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 1:7]]{{field-on:Bible}}**All the rivers run into the sea.** And the nearer they come to the sea, the sooner they are met by the tide; sent out, as it were, to take their tribute due to the sea, that seat and source of waters. Surely as the rivers lead a man to the sea, so do all these creatures carry him to God by their circular motion. A circle, we say, is the most perfect figure, because it begins and ends; the points do meet together; the last point meets in the first from whence it came; so shall we never come to perfection or satisfaction till our souls come to God, till he make the circle meet. A wise philosopher could say, that man is the end of all things in a semicircle; that is, all things in the world are made for him, and he is made for God, to whom he must therefore hasten.

Unto the place from whence the rivers come. *Sc.*, From the sea, through the pores and passages of the earth, where they leave their saltness. This is Solomon's opinion, as it was likewise the opinion of the ancient philosophers, which yet Aristotle finds fault with, and assigns another cause of the perennity of rivers, of their beginning and origin—viz., that the air thickened in the earth by reason of cold, doth resolve and turn into water, &c. ⁽²³⁾ This agrees not with that which Solomon here saith by the instinct of the Holy Ghost. And therefore Averroes is by no means to be hearkened unto in that excessive commendation he gives Aristotle—viz., that there was no error in his writings, that his doctrine was the chiefest truths, and that his understanding was the utmost that was by any one attainable; himself the rule and pattern that Nature invented to show her most perfect skill, &c. ⁽²⁴⁾{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 8. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 1:8]]{{field-on:Bible}}**All things are full of labour.** *Labor est etiam ipsa voluptas.* Molestation and misery meet us at every turn. The whole world is a "sea of glass" (for its vanity), "mingled with fire" (for its vexation),—(**Revelation 4:6**) *Vota etiam post usum, fastidio sunt:* All things are sweeter in the ambition than in the fruition. There is a singular vanity in this splendid misery. One well compares it to a beautiful picture, drawn with white and red colours in sackcloth, which afar off is very lovely, but near by it is like the filthy matter of a sore or wound, purulent rottenness, or the back of a galled horse. No man ever yet found any constant contentation in any state; ⁽²⁵⁾ yet may his outward appearance deceive others, and another's him.

Man cannot utter it. If Solomon cannot, no man can; for "what can the man do that cometh after the king?" (**Ecclesiastes 2:12**)

The eye is not satisfied with seeing. Though these be the two 'learned senses,' as Aristotle calls them, whereby learning is let into the soul, yet no man knows so much but he would know more. Herillus, therefore, and those other philosophers that placed the happiness of a man in the knowledge of natural causes and events, were not in the right. There is a curse of dissatisfaction which lies upon the creature. The soul, that acts in and by the outward senses, flickers up and down, as Noah's dove did, but finds no firm footing; shifts and shifts from one thing to another for contentment, as the bee doth from flower to flower for honey, and desires still more things in number, and new things for manner. Hence the particles in the Hebrew that signify and and or, come of a word that signifieth to desire, ⁽²⁶⁾ because the desires of man would have this and that, and that and another; and doth also tire itself, not knowing whether to have this or that or that or the other, so restless it is, after utmost endeavours of plenary

²³ *Hinc poetae fingunt Inachum fluvium ex Oceano genitum.*

²⁴ Alsted. *Chronol.*, p. 460.

²⁵ *Chiron, cum ob iustitiam Dii permetterent ut perpetuo viveret, maluit mori, quod offenderetur taedio rerum semper eodem tenore recurrentium.*

²⁶ I and, ו of און.

satisfaction, which this life affords not.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 9. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 1:9]]{{field-on:Bible}}**The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be.** History, therefore, must needs be of noble and necessary use; because, by setting before us what hath been, it predicts what will be again, since the self same fable is acted over again in the world, the persons only are altered that act it. Plato ⁽²⁷⁾ will therefore have history to have its name, *παρὰ τὸ οὐστανά τὸν ῥοῦν* of stopping the flux of endless errors and restless uncertainties. ⁽²⁸⁾ His conceit of a general revolution of all things, after thirty thousand years expired, is worthily exploded and learnedly confuted by Augustine (De Civ. Dei, lib. xii. cap. 13), but in no wise confirmed by this text, as some would have it, and Origen among the rest. Plato might haply hint at the general resurrection, called the "regeneration," by our Saviour. (**Matthew 19:28**) (See Trapp on "Matthew 19:28"){{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 10. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 1:10]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Is there anything whereof it may be said, See, this is new? Hoc ego primus vidi,** saith Zabarel. But how could he tell that? Many men have been so befooled. We look upon guns and printing as new inventions; the former found out by Birchtoldin the monk, A.D. 1380, the other by friar Faustus, A.D. 1446. But the Chinese are said to have had the use of both these long before. Should we then so eagerly hunt after novelties, those mere new nothings, till we lose ourselves in the chase? *Nil admirari prope res est una Numici.* Get spiritual eyes rather to behold the beauty of the new creature (all other things are but nine days' wonderment), the bravery of the new Jerusalem. Yea, get this natural itch after novelties killed by the practice of mortification, and get into Christ, that thou mayest be a new creature. So shalt thou have a new name upon thee; (**Isaiah 62:2**) a new spirit within thee; (**Ezekiel 36:27**) new alliance; (**Ephesians 2:14**) new attendants; (**Psalms 91:11**) new wages, new work; (**Isaiah 62:11**) a new commandment; (**1 John 2:8**) a new covenant; (**Jeremiah 31:33**) a new way to heaven; (**Hebrews 10:20**) and a new mansion in heaven. (**John 14:2; 2 Corinthians 5:8**) {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 11. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 1:11]]{{field-on:Bible}}**There is no remembrance of former things.** None to speak of. How many memorable matters were never recorded! How many ancient records long since perished! How many fragments of very good authors are come bleeding to our hands, that live, as many of our castles do, but only by their ruins! God hath by a miracle preserved the Holy Bible from the injury of times and tyrants, who have sought to abolish it. There we have a true remembrance of former things done in the Church by Abraham and his offspring, when the grandees of the earth, Ninus, Belus, &c., lie wrapt up in the sheet of shame, or buried in the grave of utter oblivion. Diodorus Siculus confesseth that all heathen antiquities, before the Theban and Trojan wars, are either fabulous relations or little better. Ezra—that wrote one of the last in the Old Testament—lived before any chronicles of the world now extant in the world.

Neither shall there be any remembrance. Unless transmitted to posterity by books and writings, which may preserve and keep alive their memory, and testify for their authors that such have one day lived.

“—*Quis nosset Erasmum,
Chilias aeternum si latuisset opus?*”

Nineveh, "that great city," is nothing else but a sepulture of herself; no more shall Rome be ere long. Time shall triumph over it, when it shall but then live by fame, if at all, as others now do. {{field-off:Bible}}

²⁷ Plato in *Cratylus*.

²⁸ Macrob., Joseph., Plin.

Verse 12. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 1:12]]{{field-on:Bible}}**I, the Preacher, was king over Israel.** And so had all the helps that heart could wish, the benefit of the best books and records that men or money could bring me in, the happiness of holy conference, beside mine own plentiful experience, and therefore you may well give credit to my verdict. Mr. Foxe had a large commission under the great seal to search for all such monuments, manuscripts, registers, ledger books, as might make for his purpose in setting forth that worthy work, the 'Acts and Monuments of the Church of England.' And the like had Polydor Virgil for the framing of his history, though with unlike success; for he had the ill hap to write nothing well, saith one, ⁽²⁹⁾ save the life of Henry VII, wherein he had reason to take a little more pains than ordinary, the book being dedicated to Henry VIII, his son. (*See Trapp on "Ecclesiastes 1:1"*).{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 13. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 1:13]]{{field-on:Bible}}**And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom.** God had given Solomon a large heart, and great store of wisdom; and this made him not more idle, but more industrious, more sedulous and serious in seeking and...

Searching out by wisdom. i.e., By the best skill that he had, maturely and methodically, the causes, properties, and effects, with the reason of all things that are, and are done under heaven. Neither did he this in pride and curiosity (as Hugo de Sancto Victore here sharply censureth him), but soberly and modestly, setting down his disquisitions and observations of things political and natural for the use of posterity. And forasmuch as these ⁽³⁰⁾ are now lost—because haply too much admired and trusted to, by those that had the use of them under the first temple, in and with the which some Jews say they were burnt—what a high price we all set upon this and the other two books of Solomon, the wisest of men, as, not Apollo, but the true God of heaven hath called him, and commended him unto us! Surely, as in the Revelation, heaven never opened but some great mystery was revealed, some divine oracle uttered; so we may be confident that the Holy Ghost never sets any penman of Scripture a work but for excellent purpose. And if we disregard it, he will complain of us as once,—“I have written for them the great things of nay law, but they were counted as a strange thing.” (*Hosea 8:12*) As for those other worthy works of Solomon (the fruits of this privy search into the natures of the creatures here mentioned), that the injury of time bereft us of, how much better may we say of them, than a godly and learned man ⁽³¹⁾ once did of Origen's Octapla, *Huius operis iacturam deplorare possumus, compensare non possumus*, This great loss we may well bewail, but cannot help.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 14. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 1:14]]{{field-on:Bible}}**I have seen all the works that are done.** I have seen them, and set down mine observations of them. (*1 Kings 4:33*) Pliny did somewhat like unto this in his Natural History; which work of his, saith Erasmus, *Non minus varium est quam ipsa rerum natura: imo non opus, sed thesaurus, sed vere mundus rerum cognitu dignissimarum*, it hath as much variety in it as nature herself hath. To speak truth, it is not a work but a treasury; nay, a world of things most worthy to be known of all men.

And behold all is vanity and vexation of spirit. *Nothing* in themselves, and yet of sufficient activity to inflict vengeance and vexation upon the spirit of a man; so far are they from making him truly happy. They do but “feed the soul with wind,” as the text may be rendered. Wind gotten into the veins is a sore “vexation.” {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 15. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 1:15]]{{field-on:Bible}}**That which is crooked cannot be**

²⁹ Peacham.

³⁰ *1 Kings 4:32-33.*

³¹ Rolloc., *De Vocatione*, p. 130.

made straight. Most men are so wedded and wedged to their wicked ways, that they cannot be rectified but by an extraordinary touch from the hand of Heaven. Hesiod, speaking of God, saith that he can easily set crooked things straight, and only he. ⁽³²⁾ Holy Melanchthon, being himself newly converted, thought it impossible for his hearers to withstand the evidence of the gospel; but after he had been a preacher a while, he complained, that 'old Adam was too hard for young Melanchthon'; and yet, besides the singular skill and learning that God had given him—for the which he merited to be called the phoenix of Germany—*Ad eum modum in hoc vitae theatro versatum Philippum Melanchthonem apparet*, saith a friend and scholar of his—i.e., It well appeareth that Melanchthon was, Solomon-like, on this wise busied upon the theatre of his life, that, seeing and observing all he could, he made profit of everything, and stored his heart, as the bee doth her hive, out of all sorts of flowers, for the common benefit. Howbeit, he met with much crossness and crookedness that wrung mahy tears from him, as it did likewise from St Paul, (**Philippians 3:18**) not in open enemies only, as Eccius and other Papists, but in professed friends, as Flaccius, Osiander, &c., who not only vexed him grievously while alive, but also fell foul upon him when he was dead, ⁽³³⁾ as Zanchins complaineth. ⁽³⁴⁾ Of all fowl, we most hate and detest the crows, and of all beasts the jackals, a kind of foxes in Barbary; because the one digs up the graves and devours the flesh, the other picks out the eyes of the dead. But to return to the text: sinful men grow aged and crooked with good opinions of themselves, and can seldom or never be set straight again. The Pharisee sets up his counter for a thousand pound,—“I am not as other men,” saith he, “nor as this publican”; he stands upon his comparisons, nay, upon his disparisons, and although he turn aside unto his crooked ways, as Samson did to his Delilah, yet he thinks much to be “led forth with the workers of iniquity,” but cries, “peace shall be upon Israel.” (**Psalm 125:5**) How many are there that, having “laden themselves with thick clay,” (**Habakkuk 2:6**) are bowed together, as he in the gospel was, (**Luke 13:11**) and can in nowise lift up themselves! They neither can nor will (*O curvae in terras animae, &c.*), but are frample and foolish.

The Greek word for crooked, ⁽³⁵⁾ comes of a Hebrew word that signifies a fool, ⁽³⁶⁾ and every fool is conceited; he will not part with his bauble for the Tower of London. Try to straighten these crooked pieces, and they will sooner break than bend, venture all, than mend anything. Plato went thrice to Sicily to convert Dionysius, and could not do it. A wiser than Plato complains of a “perverse and crooked generation.” (**Deuteronomy 32:5; Acts 2:40; Philippians 2:15**) It is the work of God’s Spirit only, by his corrective and directive power, to set all to rights. (**Luke 3:5**) Philosophy can *abscondere vitia, non abscindere*,—chain up corrupt nature, but not change it.

And that which is wanting cannot be numbered. *Et stultorum infinitus est numerus*, so the Vulgate renders it; ‘there is a numberless number of fools,’ such as are wanting with a witness; witless, sapless fellows, such as have *principium laesum*, their brains cracked by the first fall, and are not cured of their spiritual frenzy by being reunited to the second Adam. Of such fools there are not a few; all places are full of them, and so is hell too; the earth is burdened, the air darkened, with the number of them, as the land of Egypt was with the flies that there swarmed. Bias the philosopher could say, that the ‘most were the worst’; ⁽³⁷⁾ and

³² Πειος δετ ιθύνει σκολιόν.—Hes.

³³ Melch. Adam in *Vita Mel.*

³⁴ Melanchthon. mortuus tantum, non ut blasphemus in Deum cruci affigitur.—Zanch. Miscel., Ep. Ded.

³⁵ Σκολιός.

³⁶ פֹּל

³⁷ Οί πλείστοι κακοί είσι.

Cicero, that there was a great nation of bad people, but a few good. ⁽³⁸⁾ *Rari quippe boni*, saith Juvenal, There is a great paucity of good people. And those few that are, find not a few wants and weaknesses in themselves, *quae tamen non nocent, si non placent*, these hurt us not, if they please us not; for God considers whereof we are made, and will cast out condemnation for ever, as one renders that place, **Matthew 12:10**: *Triste mortalitatis privilegium est, licere aliquando peccare.* ⁽³⁹⁾ Our lives are fuller of sins than the firmament is of stars, or the furnace of sparks. *Nimis augusta res est nusquam errare.* ⁽⁴⁰⁾ David saw such volumes of infirmities, and so many *errata* in all that he did, that he cries out, "Who can understand his errors? Oh, cleanse thou me from secret sins." (**Psalm 19:12**).{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 16. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 1:16]]{{field-on:Bible}}**I communed with mine own heart, saying,** &c. Here Hugo de Sancto Victore proceeds to censure Solomon (as he had done before, **Ecclesiastes 1:13**) (*See Trapp on "Ecclesiastes 1:13"*) of pride and vain-glory, but with greater pride. For *puerilis iactantiae est accusando illustres viros suo nomini famam quaerere.* ⁽⁴¹⁾ It is a childish vanity to seek for fame by aspersion of better men. Solomon might, without boasting, say of himself, as here he doth, Lo, I am come to great estate, or, I have greatened and added wisdom above all that have been before me. Doth not God say as much of him? (**1 Kings 3:11-13; 4:29-34; 5:7; 10:4-9**) And had he not good reason to praise himself in this sort? For, whereas some might here object that the cause that men get not happiness by the knowledge of natural philosophy is, because they understand it not. That cannot be, saith the wise man, for I have out-gone all that went before me in wisdom and perspicacity, and yet I can do no good on it; try you another while if you think you can outdo me. I think a man may break his neck before his fast of these sublunary felicities.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 17. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 1:17]]{{field-on:Bible}}**And to know madness and folly.** That by comparing of contraries, I might the sooner find and fish out what I sought for. *Sed frustra fui*, but I disquieted myself in vain. *Philosophandum igitur, sed paucis*; there is a deceit in philosophy, (**Colossians 2:8**) and he who chooseth to hold fast this "lying vanity," doth by his own election "forsake his own mercy." (**Jonah 2:8**) {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 18. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 1:18]]{{field-on:Bible}}**For in much wisdom is much grief.** And herein children and fools have the advantage; as they want wit, so they want woe; as little is given to them, so little is required of them. *Nihil scire vita iucundissima*, To know nothing is the bravest life, as the Greek proverb hath it. ⁽⁴²⁾ But this must be taken with a grain of salt; and we must know, that heavenly wisdom hath infinite pleasure; and so far as all other arts and sciences are subservient to it, and regulated by it, they afford to the mind an incredible delight and sweetness. {{field-off:Bible}}

³⁸ *Deteriorum magna est natio, boni singulares.—Cic. ad Attic.*

³⁹ *Lud. de Dieu. Euphor.*

⁴⁰ *Amama.*

⁴¹ *Jerome.*

⁴² *Ἐν τῷ φρονεῖν γὰρ μηδὲν ἡδιστος βίος—Soph.*

Chapter 2

Verse 1. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 2:1]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth.** The merry Greeks of the world think that they have the only life of it; that there is no such happiness as to 'laugh and be fat,' to 'sing care away,' and to lie carousing and melting in sinful pleasures; yea, though they perish therein, as the Duke of Clarence did in his butt of malmsey.⁽⁴³⁾ But a little time will confute these fools, saith Solomon, and let them see that it is better to be preserved in brine than to rot in honey. Flies and wasps use to come to honey and sugar, and such sweet things; so doth Beelzebub, the god of flies, to the hearts of epicures and voluptuaries. Behemoth haunteth the fens. (**Job 40:21**) Here, therefore, this wise man was utterly out, and made an ill transition from the search of wisdom to the pursuit of pleasures; from the school of Socrates, to the herd of Epicurus. For though these hogs may grunt out their "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die," yet, if death but draw the curtain, and look in upon them, all the mirth is marred, and they put into as great an agony as Belshazzar was at the sight of the handwriting that was against him.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 2. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 2:2]]{{field-on:Bible}}**I said of mirth, It is mad.** *q.d.*, Thou mad fool, what dost thou? Yet is not mirth amiss, so it be moderate; nor laughter unlawful—as some Anabaptists in Calvin's time held—so that it be well limited. Carnal mirth, and abuse of lawful things, doth mightily weaken, intenerate, and emasculate the spirit; yea, it draws out the very vigour and vivacity of it, and is therefore to be avoided. Some are so afraid of sadness that they banish all seriousness; they affect mirth as the eel doth mud, or the toad ditches. These are those that dance to the timbrel and harp, but suddenly turn into hell. (**Job 21:12-13**){{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 3. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 2:3]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Yet acquainting my heart with wisdom.** *i.e.*, Resolving to retain my wisdom; but that could not be, "For whoredom, and wine, and new wine take away the heart"; (**Hosea 4:11**) they dull and disable nature, and so set us in a greater distance from grace; they "fight against the soul," (**1 Peter 2:11**) and take away all scent and sense of heavenly comforts: much like that parcel of ground in Sicily, that sendeth such a strong smell of fragrant flowers to all the fields thereabouts, that no hound can hunt there.⁽⁴⁴⁾ And here I believe began Solomon's apostasy, his laying the reins on the neck to pursue sinful pleasures, pleasing himself in a conceit that he could serve God and his lusts too. A Christian hath ever God for his chief end, and never sins with deliberation about this end; he will not forego God upon any terms; only he errs in the way, thinking he may fulfil such a lust, and keep God too. But God and sin cannot cohabit; and God's graces groaning under our abuses in this kind cry unto him for help, who gives them thereupon, as he did to the wronged Church, (**Revelation 12:14**) the wings of an eagle: after which, one lust calls upon another, as they once did upon their fellow soldiers, "Now Moab to the spoil," till the heart be filled with as many corruptions as Solomon had concubines.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 4. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 2:4]]{{field-on:Bible}}**I made me great works.** I took not pleasure in trifles, as Domitian did, in catching and killing flies with his penknife; or as Artaxerxes did, in making hafts for knives; or as Solyman the great Turk did, in making notches of horn for bows; but I built stately houses, planted pleasant vineyards, &c. A godly man may be busied in mean, low things; but he is not satisfied in them as adequate objects: he trades for better commodities, and cannot rest without them.

I builded me houses. Curious and spacious, such as is the Turk's seraglio or palace, said to be

⁴³ A strong sweet wine, originally the product of the neighbourhood of Monemvasia (Napoli di Malvasia) in the Morea; but now obtained from Spain, the Azores, and the islands of Madeira and the Canaries, as well as from Greece.

⁴⁴ Arist., *De Mirab. Auscul.*, lib. viii.

more than two miles in compass. William Rufus built Westminster hall, and when it was done, found much fault with it for being built too little, saying, It was fitter for a chamber than for a hall for a king of England, and took a plot of land for one far more spacious to be added unto it.⁽⁴⁵⁾

I planted me vineyards. That no pleasant thing might be wanting to me. To plant a vineyard is a matter of much cost and care; but it soon quits cost by bearing (1.) Plenty of fruit in clusters and bunches, many grapes together; (2.) By bearing pleasant fruit, no fruit being more delectable to the taste than is the grape, nor more comfortable to the heart than is the wine made of the grape. (**Judges 9:13**) Solomon had one gallant vineyard at Baalhamon that yielded him great profit. (**Solomon's Song 8:1**).^{{{field-off:Bible}}}

Verse 5. ^{[[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 2:5]]^{{{field-on:Bible}}}**I made me gardens.** So called, because guarded and enclosed with a wall, (**Solomon's Song 4:12**) like as we call garments *quasi guardments*, in an active acception of the word, because they guard our bodies from the injury of wind and weather. The Hebrew word גן, *Gan*, comes likewise from a word that signifieth *to protect* or *guard*; and there are those who give this for a reason why the Lord forbade the Jews to keep swine, because they are such enemies to gardens, whereof that country is very full.}

And orchards. Heb., Paradises; famous for curious variety and excellence of all sorts of trees and foreign fruits, resembling even the garden of God for amenity and delight. And herein perhaps he gratified Pharaoh's daughter—the Egyptians took great pleasure in gardens—like as that king of Assyria did his wife *horto pensili*, with a garden that hung in the air, to his incredible cost.⁽⁴⁶⁾^{{{field-off:Bible}}}

Verse 6. ^{[[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 2:6]]^{{{field-on:Bible}}}**To water therewith the wood.** *i.e.*, The gardens or hort yards, that were as large as little woods. Christ's garden in the Canticles, as it hath a wall, (**Solomon's Song 4:15**) so a well to water it, and make it fruitful. ^{{{field-off:Bible}}}}

Verse 7. ^{[[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 2:7]]^{{{field-on:Bible}}}**I got me servants,** &c. Too many by one, viz., Jeroboam, who rent ten tribes from his son. It is well observed by an interpreter, that Solomon, among all his delights, got him not a fool or jester, which some princes cannot be without, no, not when they should be most serious. It is recorded of Henry III, king of France, that in a solemn procession at Paris, he could not be without his jester, who, walking between the king and the cardinal, made mirth to them both.⁽⁴⁷⁾ There was sweet devotion the while.}

I had great possessions of great and small cattle. Μῆλα,⁽⁴⁸⁾ *pecudes, et postea synechdochicos, opes significant: sic pecunia a pecude.* So *chesita* signifies in Hebrew both money and a lamb.^{{{field-off:Bible}}}

Verse 8. ^{[[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 2:8]]^{{{field-on:Bible}}}**I gathered me also silver and gold.** Gold of Ophir, now called Peru, where the Spaniards are said to meet with more gold ore than earth; besides his great gifts from other princes, as Hiram, the queen of Sheba, &c., his royal revenue, his tributes from foreign nations subdued by his father David, to a very great value. Sextus IV was wont to say, that a pope could never want money while he could hold a pen in his hand. His predecessor, John XXII, left in his treasury to his heirs two hundred and fifty tons of gold.⁽⁴⁹⁾ Boniface VIII being plundered by the French, was found to have more wealth, saith}

⁴⁵ Daniel's History.

⁴⁶ Athenaeus, *Diod.*, lib. ii. cap. 4. Q. Curt., lib. v.

⁴⁷ Epit. Hist. Gallica.

⁴⁸ Melanch., in *Hesiod.*

⁴⁹ Petrarch.

mine author, ⁽⁵⁰⁾ than all the kings of the earth could have raised by one year's revenue. It should seem, by the people's complaint after Solomon's death, (**1 Kings 12:4**) that he lay over heavy upon them by his exactors and gold gatherers, which caused the revolt of the ten tribes. One act of injustice oft loseth much that was justly gotten. Chedorlaomer and his fellow kings were deprived of the whole victory, because they spared not a man whom they should have spared. Ill-gotten gold hath a poisonous operation, and will bring up the good food, together with ill humours. (**Job 20:15**)

And the delights of the sons of men. These drew out his spirits and dissolved him, and brought him to so low an ebb in grace; his wealth did him far more hurt than his wisdom did him good. It is as hard to bear prosperity as to drink much wine and not be giddy. It is also dangerous to take pleasure in pleasure, to spend too much time in it; as Solomon, for seven years spent in building God's house, spent thirteen in his own. Lovers of pleasures, φιλήδονοι, are set as last and worst in that catalogue of wickedness in the last days. (**2 Timothy 3:4**).{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 9. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 2:9]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Also my wisdom remained with me.** Outward things are dead things, and cannot touch the soul, a lively spirit, unless by way of taint. Solomon, if not at first, yet at length, was fearfully tainted by them, making good that of the poet—

*"Stultitiam patiuntur opes...
Ardua res haec est, opibus non tradere mores,
Et cum tot Croesos viceris, esse Numam."
—Martial. {{field-off:Bible}}*

Verse 10. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 2:10]]{{field-on:Bible}}**And whatsoever mine eyes desired,** &c. I fed them with pleasant pictures, shows, sights, and other objects of delight, which yet have *plus deceptionis quam delectationis*, ⁽⁵¹⁾ able to entice and ready to kill the entangled. How many are there that have died of the wound in the eye; David, knowing the danger, prayeth, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding of vanity." (**Psalms 119:37**) Job steps one degree further, from a prayer to a vow, (**Job 31:1**) yea, from a vow to an imprecation. (**Ecclesiastes 2:7**) If our first parents fell by following the sight of their eyes and lust of their hearts, what can Solomon or any of us promise of ourselves, *qui animas etiam incarnavimus*, who have made our very spirit a lump of flesh, prone to entertain vice, yea, to solicit it?

For my heart rejoiced in all my labour. This is not every worldling's happiness. For some live not to enjoy what they have raked together, as that rich fool in the gospel; others live indeed, but live beside what they have gotten, as not daring to diminish ought, but defrauding their own genius, and denying themselves necessaries. So did not Solomon, and yet he found not the good he sought for either, as he tells us in the next words. Nor is it want of variety in these pleasures, but inward weakness, an emptiness and insufficiency in the creature. In heaven the objects of our delight and blessedness shall be, though uniform, yet everlastingly pleasing.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 11. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 2:11]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Then I looked on all the works.** A necessary and profitable practice, well worthy our imitation—viz., to recognise and review what we have done, and to how little purpose we have "wearied ourselves in the multitude of our counsels." (**Isaiah 47:13**) "God looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not, he will deliver his soul from going into

⁵⁰ Heidfield.

⁵¹ Lactant.

the pit, and his life shall see the light." (**Job 33:27-28**) Cicero ⁽⁵²⁾ could tell Nevius, that if he had but well weighed with himself those two words, *Quid ago?* What do I? his lust and luxury would have been cooled and qualified.

And behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit. In the very pursuit of them is much anguish, many grievances, fears, jealousies, disgraces, interruptions, discontentments. Next, it is seldom seen that God allows to the greatest darlings of the world a perfect contentment. Something they must have to complain of, that shall give an unsavoury verdure to their sweetest morsels, and make their very felicity miserable. "Yet all this avails me nothing so long as I see Mordecai," saith Haman the king's minion. Lastly, after the unsanctified enjoyment follows the sting of conscience, that will inexpressibly vex and torture the soul throughout all eternity.

And there was no profit under the sun. *Nulla emolumenta laborum*, nothing but labour for travail, no contentation but desperation, no satisfaction but endless vexation; as children tire themselves to catch a butterfly, which when they have caught profits them nothing, only fouls their fingers. Or rather as the dropsical body, by striving to quench thirst by drinking, doth but increase the disease, and in the end destroy itself. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 12. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 2:12]]{{field-on:Bible}}**For what can the man do that cometh after the king?**—*q.d.*, Who is it that can outdo me in this review and discovery? Neither is this a vainglorious vaunting of his own virtues, but an occupation or prevention of an objection: thus,

Objection. It may be thou hast not perfectly known the difference of things, and so hast not rightly determined.

Solution. To this he answers, that he hath to quit himself in searching and trying the truth in these points, that it is not for any other to go beyond him. And having removed this rub, having carried this dead Amasa out of the way, that might have hindered his hearers' march, he proceeds in his discourse. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 13. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 2:13]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly.** *i.e.*, Philosophy and human wisdom, though it cannot perfect the mind, nor make a man happy, yet it is as far beyond sensuality and brutishness as light is beyond darkness. Those that seek for the philosopher's stone, though they miss their end, yet they find many excellent things by the way. So philosophers, politicians, moralists, though they missed the "pearl of price," yet they sought out other "goodly pearls" (with that wise merchant, **Matthew 13:45**), for the which they have their just praise and profit: {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 14. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 2:14]]{{field-on:Bible}}**The wise man's eyes are in his head.** He judiciously pondereth things past, and prudently ordereth things present, and providently foreseeeth to prevent dangers likely to ensue. ⁽⁵³⁾ The Chinese use to say of themselves, that all other nations of the world see but with one eye, they only with two. ⁽⁵⁴⁾ Italians tell us, that, whereas Spaniards seem wise and are fools, Frenchmen seem fools and are wise, Portuguese neither are wise nor so much as seem to be so, they themselves both seem wise, and are so. ⁽⁵⁵⁾ This I could sooner believe if from a better mouth than their own. *Romani, sicut non acumina, ita non imposturas habent*, saith Bellarmine; The Romans (those wittiest of the Italians) are neither very subtle nor very simple.

⁵² Orat. pro Quintio.

⁵³ Πρόσω και όπίσω.

⁵⁴ Description of the World, Ec. Of China.

⁵⁵ Heyl., Geog.

But the fool walketh in darkness. He hath neither sight nor light, but is acted and agitated by the prince of darkness, who holds his black hand before the eye of such men's minds and blinds their understandings—dealing with them as Pliny saith the eagle deals with the hart; she lights upon his horns, and there flutters up and down, filling his eyes with dust borne in her feathers, that at last he may cast himself from a rock, and so be made a prey unto her.

One event happeneth to them all. As did to Josiah and Ahab in the manner of both their dying in battle. They may be all wrapped up together in a common calamity, and *sapientes sapienter in gehennam descendant*,⁽⁵⁶⁾ the world's great wise men go very wisely down to hell; there, for want of saving grace, fools and wiser men meet at one and the same inn, though by several ways, at one and the same haven, though from several coasts. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 15. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 2:15]]{{field-on:Bible}}**As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth.** It is with men as with counters, though in the account one stand for a penny, another for a pound, yet in the bag there is no difference; so here in the event all our wisdom is soon refuted with one black Theta, which understanding us not, snappeth us unrespectively without distinction, and putteth at once a period to our reading and to our being.

And why was I then more wise? This is a piece of peevishness, a childish folly we are all prone to—viz., to repent us of our best pains if not presently paid for it; so short spirited are we, that unless we may sow and reap all in a day, unless all things may go with us as well as we could wish, we repent us of our repentance with David, (*Psalm 73:13*) hit God in the teeth with our obedience, as those hypocrites in *Isaiah 58:2-3*, and as that elder brother in the parable, that told his father he had never been worth a kid to him for all his good service. But, what! is God like to break or to die in our debts that we are so hasty with him? This was good Baruch's fault, and he is soundly chidden for it. (*Jeremiah 45:1-5; 36:32*) Good men oft find it more easy to bear evil than to wait till the promised good be enjoyed. It was so with those Christian Hebrews, (*Hebrews 10:34, 36*) whom therefore the apostle there tells they had need of patience, ὑπομονή, or tarrance, to tarry God's time. It needs not repent the wise of this world, much less the children of light, of any good they have done or gotten, however it prove with them, since some degree of comfort follows every good action, as heat accompanies fire, as beams and influences issue from the sun. And this is so true, that very heathens, upon the discharge of a good conscience, have found comfort and peace answerable. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 16. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 2:16]]{{field-on:Bible}}**For there is no remembrance of the wise.** viz., Unless he be also wise to salvation, for then he shall be had in everlasting remembrance. Or otherwise, either he shall be utterly forgotten, as being not written among the living in Jerusalem, (*Isaiah 4:3*) or else he shall not have the happiness to be forgotten in the city where he had so done; (*Ecclesiastes 8:10*) I mean, where he had been either a dogmatic, or at least a practical atheist, as the very best of the philosophers were, (*Romans 1:18-31; 1 Corinthians 1:17-31*) the choicest and the most picked men among them. (*1 Corinthians 3:21*)

And how dieth the wise man? as the fool. (See Trapp on "Ecclesiastes 2:14") (See Trapp on "Ecclesiastes 2:15") Wise men die as well as fools, (*Psalm 49:10*) good men die as well as bad, (*Ezekiel 21:4*) yet with this difference, that "the righteous hath hope in his death," which to him is neither total, but of the body only; nor perpetual, but for a time only, till the day of refreshing. See both these, *Romans 8:10-11*. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 17. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 2:17]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Therefore I hated life.** i.e., I less loved it than I had done; I saw mortality to be a mercy, with Cato; I was neither fond of life, nor afraid of death, with Queen Elizabeth. I preferred my coffin before my cradle, my burial day

⁵⁶ Augustine.

before my birthday⁽⁵⁷⁾ (**Ecclesiastes 7:1**) A greater than Solomon threatens those that love life with the loss of life, (**Luke 17:33**) and hath purposely set a particular vanity and vexation upon every day of our life, that we may not dote upon it, since "we die daily." "Sufficient to the day is the evil (that is, the misery) thereof." *Quicquid boni est in mundo*, saith Augustine; what good thing soever we have here, is either past, present, or to come. If past, it is nothing; if to come, it is uncertain; if present, yet it is insufficient, unsatisfactory. So that, while I call to mind things past, said that incomparable Queen Elizabeth, behold things present, and expect things to come, I hold them happiest that go hence soonest,⁽⁵⁸⁾ {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 18. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 2:18]]{{field-on:Bible}} **Yea, I hated all my labour.** *i.e.*, I was sorry to think that I had been so eager and earnest in getting a great estate, which now I must leave, and to whom I know not; sure I am to those that never took any pains for it. And herein we see the corruption of our nature discover itself, in that we are so wedded to the things of this world—especially if gotten by our own art and industry—that we think much to be divorced from them by death, and to leave them to others, when ourselves can enjoy them no longer. Henry Beaufort, that rich and wretched cardinal, bishop of Winchester, and chancellor of England, in the reign of Henry VI, when he perceived that he must die, and that there was no remedy, murmured at death, that his riches could not reprieve him till a further time. For he asked, 'Why should I die, being so rich? If the whole realm would save my life, I am able either by policy to get it, or by riches to buy it. Fie, quoth he, will not death be hired? will money do nothing?'⁽⁵⁹⁾

Latimer, in a sermon before King Edward VI, tells a story of a rich man, that when he lay upon his sick bed, there came one to him and told him that certainly, by all reason they can judge by, he was like to be a man for another world, a dead man. As soon as ever he hears but these words, saith Latimer; What! must I die? said he. Send for a physician; wounds, sides, heart, must I die? wounds, sides, heart, must I die? and thus he goes on, and there could be nothing got from him, but Wounds, sides, heart, must I die? Must I die and go from these? Here was all, here is the end of a man that made his portion to be in this world. If this man's heart had been ripped up after he was dead, there might have been found written in it, 'The god of this present world.'

Mr Jeremy Burroughs relates in print⁽⁶⁰⁾ of another rich man, that had sometime lived near unto him, who, when he heard his sickness was deadly, sent for his bags of money, and hugged them in his arms, saying, Oh! must I leave you? Oh! must I leave you? And of another, who, when he lay upon his sick bed, called for his bags, and laid a bag of gold to his heart, and then bade them take it away, It will not do, it will not do.

Mr Rogers in his "Treatise of Love," tells of one that, being near death, clapped a twenty shillings piece of gold into his own mouth, saying, Some wiser than some, I will take this with me howsoever. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 19. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 2:19]]{{field-on:Bible}} **And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man.** A friend or an enemy, an acquaintance or a mere stranger; riches oft change masters. How many by a just hand of God die childless! or else leave what they have to spendthrifts, that will spend it as merrily as ever their parents got it miserably! scatter with a fork, as it were, what they have wretchedly raked together. Our Henry II, some few hours before he died, saw a list of their names who conspired with the King of France, and Earl

⁵⁷ *Usque adeone mori miserum.*—Virgil.

⁵⁸ *Camden's Elisabeth*, fol. 325.

⁵⁹ *Acts and Mon.*, fol. 925.

⁶⁰ *Serm. on Psalm 17:14*, April 3, 1643, before the Lord Mayor.

Richard, his son and successor, against him; and finding therein his son John—whom he had made Earl of Cornwall, Somerset, Nottingham, Derby, and Lancaster, and given him a vast estate—to be the first, he fell into a grievous passion, both cursing his sons, and the day wherein himself was born and in that distemper departed the world, which so often himself had distempered. ⁽⁶¹⁾{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 20. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 2:20]]{{field-on:Bible}} **Therefore I went about to cause my heart, &c.** *i.e.*, I set myself to take off the edge of my affections from these outward comforts that are so uncertain, and so unsatisfactory, and to take another course for the attaining of true happiness. The Hebrew word ⁽⁶²⁾ signifies, *I set a compass*, I turned round, or I turned short again upon myself, by a reflex action of my mind, as Ephraim did, (**Jeremiah 31:19-20**) as the prodigal did when he "came to himself," who before had been beside himself in the point of salvation, and as Solomon elsewhere prays, that the captive people may bethink themselves, or, as the Hebrew hath it, "bring back to their heart," (**1 Kings 8:47**) "return and discern between the righteous and the wicked." (**Malachi 3:18**) Thus David examined his ways, and finding all to be naught and stark naught—contrary to that of God, who, reviewing His works, found all good and very good—he bethought himself of a better course, he "turned his feet to God's testimonies." (**Psalms 119:59**) "Set not thy heart upon the asses," said the prophet to Saul, forasmuch as better things abide thee "the desire of all Israel is to thee."{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 21. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 2:21]]{{field-on:Bible}} **For there is a man whose labour is in wisdom.** This seemed to Solomon—whose own case it was like to be—so unworthy a thing, and such a vexation of spirit, that he can never say enough of it; but could find in his heart to cry out with the poet, **Τρις κακοδαίμων καὶ τετράκις καὶ πεντάκις καὶ δωδεκάκις καὶ μυριάκις**, I am thrice miserable, nay, ten times, nay, a hundred, nay, a thousand times so, that am born to be a provident and a perfect drudge of an idle drone, or perhaps of a mere stranger.

This is also vanity and a great evil. Not privation of good only, a nothing; but a position of evil, a sad thing; an inconvenience not to be avoided by the most circumspect prudence; for it is written, He taketh ⁽⁶³⁾ the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts ⁽⁶⁴⁾ of the wise, their inward disceptations, their debating the matter with themselves, that they are vain. (**1 Corinthians 3:19, 20**) The rich fool talked to himself, ⁽⁶⁵⁾ as fools used to do, and set down how everything should be; (**Luke 12:17**) but it proved somewhat otherwise ere he was a day older.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 22. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 2:22]]{{field-on:Bible}} **For what hath a man of all his labour.** What makes he of it, everything reckoned? See **Ecclesiastes 1:3**. What takes he with him when he dies, more than a poor winding sheet? As that great Emperor of Egypt caused to be proclaimed at his funeral, that that shirt of his, there hanged up for the purpose, was all that he now had of all his labour and great achievements. Saladin the mighty monarch of the East is gone, and hath taken no more with him than what you see, said the bare priest that went before the bier. ⁽⁶⁶⁾ (**See Trapp on "1 Timothy 6:7"**).{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 23. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 2:23]]{{field-on:Bible}} **For all his days are sorrows, &c.** All the days of the afflicted are evil, (**Proverbs 15:15**) and every day hath a sufficient evil laid

⁶¹ Daniel's History, 112.

⁶² **οὐβὴ**, Περιήχθην. Symmachus. Metaph. ab equis, quos qui agitant circumagunt.

⁶³ Δρασόμενος.

⁶⁴ διαλογισμούς.

⁶⁵ Διελογίζετο.

⁶⁶ Carion. Chron.

upon it by God. (**Matthew 6:34**) "Few and evil" were the days of Jacob's pilgrimage. (**Genesis 47:9**) God gave him not a draught only of the cup of affliction, but made him a diet drink. "Man is born to trouble," saith Eliphaz, (**Job 5:7**) "as the sparks fly upward." *Man* and *miserable* are in a manner terms convertible. He that remembers that himself is a man, will not think much of any sorrow betides him, saith the heathen orator. ⁽⁶⁷⁾ For,

*"Si nisi res cuius nulla est contraria votis
Vivere nemo potest, vivere nemo potest."*

Yea, his heart taketh no rest in the night. As a clock can never stand still so long as the plummets hang thereat, so neither can a worldling's heart for cares and anxieties. These gnats will not suffer him to sleep; these flies of Egypt are continually stinging him, Nocte ac die non dabunt requiem, as those tyrants. (**Jeremiah 16:13**) Night and day he is disquieted with them; he lies upon a pillow stuffed with thorns. Not so the godly man; he contracts his cares into a narrow compass, communes with his own heart upon his bed, and having made all even with God, sleeps undisturbed. (**Psalms 3:5; 4:8**) Jacob rests sweetly when his head lay upon a hard stone at Bethel. Ahasuerus cannot rest, though upon a bed of down, but calls for the chronicles. It was wisely done of Burleigh, Lord Treasurer, to put off his cares together with his clothes; when he laid by his gown he would commonly say, Lie there Lord Treasurer, and so quietly compose himself to take his sleep. ⁽⁶⁸⁾ "In nothing be careful," saith the apostle, "but let the peace of God guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." (**Philippians 4:6-7**).{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 24. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 2:24]]{{field-on:Bible}} **There is nothing better for a man,** &c. This may seem to savour of epicurism, as may also some following passages of this book. For which cause some of the old Jewish doctors were once in a mind to hide this whole book out of the way, and not allow the common sort to see it any more. But this they needed never to have done, for the Preacher expressly calls carnal mirth "madness" in this very chapter, and shows that the happiness of a man stands in fearing God and keeping his commandments; (**Ecclesiastes 12:13-14**) all which is point blank against atheism and epicurism. And whereas here and elsewhere the liberal use of the creatures is commended and commanded; this is done in opposition to, and detestation of, such parsimonious penny fathers as deny themselves that necessary and honest affluence that God hath permitted and afforded them; living sordidly, that they may grow rich suddenly, although they know not how soon they may leave all, nor yet to whom.

This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God. It is he that "fills our hearts, as with food, so with gladness." (**Acts 14:17**) He can curse our blessings, make our table a snare, sauce that we eat, spice that we drink, with his fierce wrath, as he did the quails to those Israelites. He can dissweeten our delicacies either with sickness, (**Job 33:20**) or sorrow, (**Psalms 107:17-18**) or sudden terror. (**1 Samuel 30:16-17; 1 Kings 1:41**) Adoniah's feast ended in horror; astonishment was served up for their last dish. Let God, therefore, be sought for a comfortable use of the creature, and then be merry at thy meat, and put sorrow from thy heart. (**Ecclesiastes 9:7**) "Eat the fat, and drink the sweet, &c., for the joy of the Lord is your strength." (**Nehemiah 8:10**) {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 25. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 2:25]]{{field-on:Bible}} **For who can eat, or who can hasten?** &c. And yet I have found—and so shall you—that tranquillity and true happiness, the kingdom of God, doth not consist in meats and drinks. A Turk may believe sensualities in his fool's paradise, but no servant of God is a slave to his palate. {{field-off:Bible}}

⁶⁷ Ὁ μνηστικός ὅτι ἐστὶν ἀνθρώπος, &c.—*Isocr.*

⁶⁸ Camden.

Verse 26. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 2:26]]{{field-on:Bible}} **Wisdom and knowledge.** To get these things rightly, and to use them comfortably.

To gather and to heap up. *Converrere et congerrere*, to rake and scrape together—the muckworm’s occupation.

That he may give. As he did the Egyptians’ goods to Israel, Nabal’s to David, Haman’s to Mordecai. {{field-off:Bible}}

Chapter 3

Verse 1. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 3:1]]{{field-on:Bible}}**To everything there is a season.** A set time, such as we can neither alter nor order. This is one of those keys that God carries under his own belt. (**Acts 1:7**) To seek, to do, or get anything before the time, is to pull apples before they are ripe, saith a father,⁽⁶⁹⁾ which set the teeth on edge, and breed stomach worms. They labour in vain that would prevent the time prefixed by God, as those hasty Ephraimites in Egypt (**1 Chronicles 7:22; Psalm 78:9-10**) those heady Israelites in the wilderness. (**Numbers 14:40**) Moses would be acting the judge before his time, (**Exodus 2:12**) he is therefore sent to keep sheep in Midian. (**Exodus 2:15**) David stayed God's leisure for the kingdom, those in Esther for deliverance—they knew that God would keep his day exactly, as he did with the Israelites in Egypt. "Even the self same day," when the "four hundred and thirty years" foretold were expired, God's people were thrust out of Egypt. (**Exodus 12:40-41**) So in **Daniel 5:30**. In that night was Belshazzar slain; because then exactly the "seventy years" were ended. And as God fails not his own time, so he seldom comes at ours, (**Jeremiah 8:20**) for he loves not to be limited. We are short breathed, short sighted, apt to antedate the promises in regard of the accomplishment. (**Habakkuk 2:2**) And no less apt to outstand our own markets, to let slip opportunities of grace which are ever headlong, and once past, irrecoverable. "Oh, if thou hadst known at the least in this thy day," "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" (**Hebrews 2:3**) "Therefore shall every one that is godly seek thee in a time when thou mayest be found." (**Psalm 32:6**) There is a certain time set for men to come in and be saved; as Alexander set up a taper when he besieged a town; as Tamerlane hung out first a white flag and then a red. Many a man loseth his soul, as Saul did his kingdom, by not discerning his time. Esau came too late; so did the foolish virgins. If the gale of grace be past over, the gate shut, the draw bridge taken up, there is no possibility of entrance. "Let us, therefore, fear lest a promise being left us," and an overture made us "of entering into God's rest, any of us should seem to fall short" ὑστερηκέναι, (**Hebrews 4:1**) or come late, a day after the fair, an hour after the feast. God, who in his eternal counsel hath appointed things to be done, hath also ordained the opportunity and time wherein each thing should be done, which to neglect is such a presumption as he usually punisheth with final hardening. (**Ezekiel 24:13**).{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 2. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 3:2]]{{field-on:Bible}}**There is a time to be born, and a time to die**]]. We do not hear the wise man say, There is a time to live. What is more fleeting than time? yet life is not long enough to be worthy the title of time. Death borders upon our birth, and our cradle stands in our grave. *Orimur, morimur.* we spring forth, we die.

*"Multos ostendunt terris bona faeta, nec ultra
Esse sinunt... Finisque ab origine pendet."*

How many have we seen carried from the womb to the tomb;⁽⁷⁰⁾ from the birth to the burial! And what a short cut hath the longest liver from the grave of the womb to the womb of the grave! Men chop into the earth before they are aware many times; like as he that walks in a field covered with snow falls suddenly into a clay pit.

A time to plant, &c. In point of good husbandry fit seasons are to be observed, or else little increase can be expected. God also, the great vinedresser, plants and plucks up more churches or particular persons at his pleasure. (**Isaiah 5:1-8; Matthew 15:13**) Jerusalem, that plant of renown, is now of an Eden become a Sodom, and that which Moses threatened (**Deuteronomy 28:49-57**) is fulfilled to the utmost. Susa in Persia signifies a lily, and was so called for the

⁶⁹ *Poma importuni tempore decerpunt.—Tertul.*

⁷⁰ *Ab utero ab urnam.*

beauty and delectable sight; now it is called *Valdac*, of the poverty of the place. Nineveh, that great city, that once had more people within her walls than are now in some one kingdom, is at this day become a sepulture of itself, a little town of small trade, where the patriarch of the Nestorians keeps his seat at the devotion of the Turks.

*"Roma diu titubans variis erroribus acta
Corruet, et mundi definet esse caput."*⁽⁷¹⁾{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 3. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 3:3]]{{field-on:Bible}} **A time to kill.** viz., To cut off corrupt members by the sword of justice or of war, *ne pars sincera trahatur*: There is a cruel mercy, saith one; There is a pious cruelty, saith another. "But cursed is he that doth the Lord's work negligently; and cursed is he that (in a good cause, and upon a good calling) keepeth back his sword from blood." (**Jeremiah 48:10**) But that soldier can never answer it before God, that striketh not more as a justice of peace than as a soldier of fortune.

A time to break down, and a time to build up. This and the rest, though every one knows to be so in common experience, yet one and the same thing (in effect) is oft repeated, that it may be once remembered—viz., that this whole world is nothing else but a mass of mutabilities; that every man, every state, everything is a planet, whose spherical revolutions are some of longer, some of shorter continuance. *Omnia versantur in perpetuo ascensu et descendu*, there is a perpetual ascending and descending of life and state. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 4. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 3:4]]{{field-on:Bible}} **A time to weep, and a time to laugh.** Only we must not invert the order, but weep with men that we may laugh with angels; lay godly sorrow as a foundation of spiritual joy. Surely out of this eater comes meat; out of this strong, sweet. Strong and sweet refreshments follow upon penitential performances; these April showers bring on May flowers. Tertullian saith that he was *nulli rei natus nisi poenitentiae*, born for no other purpose but to repent; but then he that truly repenteth, *de peccatis dolet et de dolore gaudet*, is grieved for his sins, and then is glad of such a grief. "Those that so sow in tears shall reap in joy": whereas those that will not—in an evil time, especially when God "calls to weeping and mourning," (**Isaiah 22:12**) and even thrusts men down, as it were, with a thump on the back—weep here, where there are weeping handkerchiefs in the hands of Christ, are like to have their eyes whipt out in hell, and to howl with devils.

A time to mourn. Matter enough of mourning we shall be sure of (and we should be soberly sensible of it) while we are in this vale of misery, valley of tears, *in hoc exilio, in hoc ergastulo, in hoc peregrinatione*, as Bernard hath it, in this prison house, purgatory, pilgrimage. In this place of banishment and bondage, how can we look for better? God sets us not here, as he did Adam in paradise, to take his pleasure, or as he did Leviathan in the sea, to sport and dally. We must not think to do as the people of Tombutum, in Africa, who are said to spend their time in singing and dancing. The way of this world is like the wilderness of Sin, or the vale of Siddim, or the Pacific Sea, which Captain Drake found tempestuous and troublous above measure.⁽⁷²⁾ Many miseries and molestations, both satanical and secular, we are sure to meet with, to make us mourn. Jerome complains that he had furrows in his face, and icicles from his lips, with continual weeping. Origen is thought to have died of grief. Chrysostom calls the days of his life the days of his sorrow. Basil was made old and unprofitable for God's Church before his time, with travail and trouble. Rebecca is weary of her life; so is Elijah. Naomi will be Naomi no longer, but Marah; Paul veils all his topsails, and sits down in the dust, (**1 Timothy 1:15**) besides his sympathising with others. (**2 Corinthians 11:29-30**)

And a time to dance. Or, Skip, as young cattle do at spring time. Here is nothing for mixed

⁷¹ Frid. secund. Imper.

⁷² Camden's *Elisabeth*.

immodest dancings. *Quid opus est talibus salsamentis?* What need people provoke themselves to that evil they so naturally incline to? *Nemo sobrius saltat*, said the heathen orator: No sober man will offer to dance. Where there is dancing, there the devil is, saith a Father: ⁽⁷³⁾ and cannot men be merry unless they have the devil for their playfellow? Dancing, saith another, ⁽⁷⁴⁾ is a circle, whose centre is the devil, but busily blowing up the fire of lust, as in Herod, that old goat.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 5. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 3:5]]{{field-on:Bible}} **A time to cast away stones.** As when King Henry VIII pulled down the abbeys and other religious houses (as they called them), saying, *Corvorum nidos esse penitus disturbandos, ne iterum ab cohabitandum convolent*, that the crows' nests were to be pulled in pieces, that they might never nestle there any more. ⁽⁷⁵⁾ And herein he did but as Cardinal Wolsey did before him for he, by the Pope's own license, had a little before pulled down forty monasteries, and taken their stones and revenues to build and endow his two colleges at Oxford and Ipswich. ⁽⁷⁶⁾ Elapidation is a piece of the Church's happiness. (*Isaiah 5:2*)

And a time to gather stones together. As in building forts, castles, colleges, bridges, causeys, such as was that in *1 Chronicles 26:16, 18; 1 Kings 10:5; 2 Chronicles 9:11; 16:6*.

A time to embrace. With honest conjugal embracements (as the Chaldee paraphrast interprets it), not with those libidinous embracings of the bosom of a stranger ⁽⁷⁷⁾ (*Proverbs 5:20*) No time for such. (*1 Peter 4:3*) *Diabolus capite blanditur, ventre oblectat, cauda ligat.*

And a time to refrain. As in times of common calamity; for should we then make mirth? (*Ezekiel 21:10*) Should not the bridegroom come forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet? (*Joel 2:16*) Some of the ancients ⁽⁷⁸⁾ do very much note the manner of Noah's going into the ark, and how the father and the sons went together, the mother and her daughters-in-law went together, God himself dividing at that time those whom himself had joined together. Others tell us that *et bruta ipsa intra arcam quamdiu diluvium duravit, continuerint*, the very brute creatures bred not in the ark during the deluge. There is both an intemperate and intempestive abuse of the marriage bed, which ought to be kept undefiled, (*Hebrews 13:3*) and not stained and dishonoured with either unseasonable or sensual excesses and uncleannesses, which God will certainly plague (though they lie without the walk of human censure) without true and timely repentance. *Lutheri nuptias amici etiam improbabant*, ⁽⁷⁹⁾ &c. Luther's marrying a wife, then, when all Germany was in a hurly burly, and all Saxony in heaviness for the death of their good Elector Frederick, Luther's greatest friend, was no small grief to his best friends; and afterward also to himself, as Melancthon testifieth in an epistle to Camerarius. ⁽⁸⁰⁾{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 6. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 3:6]]{{field-on:Bible}} **A time to get.** Heb., To seek; for men do but seek here, they do not properly get what they cannot long hold. How much better therefore were it to seek God! *Cuius inventio est ipsum semper quaerere* (as Nyssen hath it here), the finding of whom is always to seek him, and in seeking of whom there is so great

⁷³ Chrysostom.

⁷⁴ Augustine.

⁷⁵ Sander. *Schism. Ang.*, lib. i.

⁷⁶ Acts and Mon.

⁷⁷ Rupertus.

⁷⁸ Ambros., *De Noe et Arca*, cap. 21.

⁷⁹ Scultet. *Annal.*

⁸⁰ *Quoniam vero ipsum Lutherum quodammodo tristierem esse cerno et perturbatum ob vitae mutationem, omni studio et benevolentia consolari eum cupio.*

reward. (**Hebrews 11:6**) "Seek ye me and ye shall live." (**Amos 5:4**) "Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion." (**Amos 5:8**) Seek him "in a time when he may be found." (**Psalms 32:6**) "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." (**2 Corinthians 6:2**) Take the present "now," and be serious, and then God scorns to do as heathen idols did—viz., to say to the seed of Jacob, "Seek ye me in vain." (**Isaiah 45:19**) How greedy are men of getting gain! ⁽⁸¹⁾ Get God, and you get all: *Habet omnia qui habet habentem omnia.* ⁽⁸²⁾

And a time to lose. There is an "uncertainty" in riches; (**1 Timothy 6:17**) a "deceitfulness"; (**Mark 4:19**) a "lie." (**John 8:44**) They were never true to those that trusted them; subject they are to vanity or violence. (**Matthew 6:19-21**) How seldom do gamesters grow rich! *Vitrea est fortuna; cum splendet, frangitur.* ⁽⁸³⁾ And as they say of the metal they make glass of: it is nearest melting when it shines brightest in the fire; so are many rich men nearest ruin when at greatest lustre, as Haman, Herod, Pythias, &c.

A time to keep. It is good for a man to keep somewhat by him. *Bonus servatius facit bonum bonifacium*, according to the Dutch blunt proverb, 'A good saver makes a good well doer.' (**See Trapp on "Proverbs 6:8"**)

And a time to cast away. To "cast bread upon the waters," (**Ecclesiastes 11:1**) upon those poor creatures that, pinched with penury, water their plants, feed upon tears. And although bread and other comforts cast upon such may seem cast down the waters, because no hope of recompense, yet thou shalt be "recompensed at the resurrection of the just," saith Christ to such, and blessed in the meanwhile. (**Luke 14:14**) *Temporalia Dei servis impensa non pereunt, sed parturiunt*, Alms perisheth not, but is put to use.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 7. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 3:7]]{{field-on:Bible}} **A time to rend, and a time to sew.** As in making a new or translating an old garment. Turks wonder at the English for pinking or cutting their clothes, and making holes in whole cloth, which time of itself would tear too soon. ⁽⁸⁴⁾ It was a custom among the Jews to rend their clothes in the case of sad occurrences. The prophet Ahijah rent Jeroboam's new garment in twelve pieces, to show that God would rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon. (**1 Kings 11:31**) Schismatics rend the Church, heretics the Scriptures. God will stitch up all in his own time, and heal the breaches thereof. (**Psalms 60:2**)

A time to keep silence, and a time to speak. It is a singular skill to "time a word," (**Isaiah 50:4**) to set it upon its wheels, (**Proverbs 25:11**) as Abigail did for her family, (**1 Samuel 25:23-31**) as Esther did against Haman. And it is a happy thing when a man can pray, as one once did, *Det Deus ut sermo meus adeo commodus sit, quam sit accommodus*, God grant my speech may be as profitable as it is seasonable. He that would be able to speak when and as he ought, must first learn silence, as the Pythagoreans did of old, ⁽⁸⁵⁾ as the Turks do at this day, *Perpetuum silentium tenent ut muti*, they are not suffered to speak. *Discamus prius non loqui*, saith Jerome upon this text. Let us first learn not to speak, that afterwards we may open our mouths to speak wisely. Silence is fitly set here before speaking, and first takes its time and turn. It is a good rule that one gives, either keep silence, or speak that which is better than silence. ⁽⁸⁶⁾ {{field-off:Bible}}

⁸¹ [Κερδαίνοντες οὐ κοπιῶμεν.](#)—*Naz.*

⁸² [Augustine.](#)

⁸³ [Mimus.](#)

⁸⁴ [Fuller.](#)

⁸⁵ [ἔχεμυθία](#) *Pythagorica.*—*Cuspin. de Caesarib., 475.*

⁸⁶ [Ἡ σιγᾶν ἢ κρείσσονα σιγῆς λέγειν.](#)

Verse 8. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 3:8]]{{field-on:Bible}}**A time to love, and a time to hate.** Yet I like not his counsel that said, *Ama tanquam osurus, odi tanquam amaturus,*⁽⁸⁷⁾ Let a man choose whom he may love, and then love whom he hath chosen. "Let love be without dissimulation; abhor the evil, cleave to the good." (**Romans 12:9**) Hate we may, but then it must be, *non virum, sed vitium,* not the man, but his evil qualities; whereof also we must seek to bereave him, that he may be *totus desiderabilis,* "altogether lovely." (**Solomon's Song 5:16**)

A time of war, and a time of peace. Time, saith an interpreter, is a circle; and the Preacher shutteth up this passage of time in a circle. For having begun with "a time to be born," and "a time to die," he endeth with "a time of war," which is a time of dying, and with "a time of peace," which is a time wherein people, by bringing forth, are multiplied. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 9. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 3:9]]{{field-on:Bible}}**What profit hath he that worketh?** &c. *i.e.,* How can any man, by any means he can use, help or hinder this volubility and vanity that he meets with in every creature? *Cui bono?* What profit? (**See Trapp on "Ecclesiastes 1:3"**) whereunto this verse relateth, as being a conclusion of the principal argument. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 10. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 3:10]]{{field-on:Bible}}**I have seen the travail that God,** &c. Not fortune, but Providence ordereth all cross occurrences; "a wheel" there is "within a wheel"; (**Ezekiel 1**) then when men may think things run on wheels, at sixes and sevens, as they say. "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God." (**1 Peter 5:6**) His holy hand hath a special stroke in all our travails. He both ordaineth (**Acts 2**) and ordereth all, (**Genesis 1 20**) altering the property, (**Romans 8:28**) and disposing them to good, raising profit from all. Thus men afflicted Job for covetousness, the devil for malice, (**Ecclesiastes 1:15, 16**) God, for trial and exercise of his graces. "To be exercised therein," saith the text, or, as the word signifieth, to be "humbled therewith," to "hide pride from man," (**Job 33:17**) to tame and take him a link lower. "Their hearts are brought down," saith the prophet; "they speak out of the ground," (**Isaiah 29:4**) that erst set their mouths against heaven, and said, "I am, and besides me there is none." {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 11. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 3:11]]{{field-on:Bible}}**He hath made everything beautiful,**⁽⁸⁸⁾ &c. Plato was wont to say that God did always *γεωμετρῆν*—work by geometry. Another sage said, *Pondere, mensura, numero, Deus omnia fecit,* God hath done all in number, weight, and measure; made and set all things in comely and curious order and equipage; he hath also prefigured beforehand a convenient and beautiful season for everything; ordering the disorders of the world to his own glory and his Church's good.

Also he hath set the world in their heart. *i.e.,* He hath given to men the creature to contemplate, together with an earnest desire to search into nature's secrets. The Vulgate renders this text thus: *Et mundum tradidit disputationi eorum,* And he hath delivered the world to their disputations. But so foolishly⁽⁸⁹⁾ and impiously have men disputed of God, of his providence, of his judgments, of the chief happiness, &c., that they have reasoned, or rather wrangled away the truth, being able to find out neither the beginning nor end of the causes or uses of God's works. (**Romans 1:21-22**) *Veritatem philosophia quaerit, theologia invenit, religio possidet,* said Picus Mirandula; Philosophy inquires after truth, divinity finds it out, and religion only improves it.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 12. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 3:12]]{{field-on:Bible}}**I know that there is no good in them.** *i.e.,* No other good, but for a man to rejoice and do good in his life—*i.e., Frui praesentibus*

⁸⁷ Cicero *De Amicit.*

⁸⁸ *Κόσμος*, ab ornatu; *Mundus*, a mundicie.

⁸⁹ *ἐμωράνθησαν.* (**Romans 1:22**)

et facere quod in futuro prosit,⁽⁹⁰⁾ to enjoy things present, and to do that which may do him good a thousand years hence; to expend what he hath upon himself, and to extend it unto others that are in necessity, this is to "lay up in store for himself a good foundation against the time to come"; this is to "lay hold upon eternal life." (**1 Timothy 6:18-19**){{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 13. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 3:13]]{{field-on:Bible}}**And enjoy the good of all his labour.** "They that will not labour must not eat," (**2 Thessalonians 3:10**) saith the apostle. As they that do shall enjoy the good of all their labour, eat the labour of their hands, and be thrice happy. (**Psalms 128:1-2**) Jabal and Jubal, (**Genesis 4:20-21**) frugality and music, good husbandry and good content, dwell together; and yet not always, but where God gives the gift. He gives strength to labour, and health to enjoy the good of our labour.⁽⁹¹⁾ This the rich fool in the gospel either knew not or considered not. "Eat, drink, and be merry," said he to himself; but God was not in all his thoughts. How much better David! "Hope in the Lord," (**Psalms 43:5**) saith he to himself and others, "and be doing good; dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." (**Psalms 37:3**){{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 14. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 3:14]]{{field-on:Bible}}**I know that whatsoever God doeth it shall be for ever.** *i.e.*, That his decree is unchangeable, that his "counsel shall stand," (**Proverbs 19:21**) that the sun may sooner be stopped in his course than God hindered of his will or in his work, since his power and grace is irresistible. Nature, angels, devils, men, may all be resisted, and so miss their design. Not so God. For who hath resisted his will? Vain men, while (like proud and yet brittle clay) they will be knocking their sides against the solid and eternal decree of God, break themselves in pieces, as Adonijah did. (**1 Kings 1:5-9, 41-43**) And while, with Pompey, vanquished by Julius Caesar, they complain that there is a great mist upon the eye of Divine providence, they do but blame the sun, because of the soreness of their bleary eyes. Certain it is, and Solomon knows it—though the best of heathens doubted it when they saw good men suffer, bad men prosper—that every creature walks blindfold; only he that dwells in light sees whither they go; and that the chariots of all effects and actions come forth from between those "mountains of brass," God's provident decrees and counsels most firm and immutable. (**Zechariah 6:1**)

That men should fear before him. And not lay the reins on the neck, casting away all care upon pretence of God's decree, as that French king did that thus desperately argued: *Si salvabor, salvabor; si vero damnabor, damnabor*: If I shall be saved, I shall be saved; and if I shall be damned, I shall be damned; therefore I will live as I wish.⁽⁹²⁾ This was to suck poison out of a sweet flower, to dash against the rock of ages, to fall into the pit (like a profane beast) which was digged for better purpose; to "stumble at the word" (an ill sign, and yet an ordinary sin) "whereunto also they were appointed." (**1 Peter 2:8**) A bridge is made to give men safe passage over a dangerous river; but he that stumbleth on the bridge is in danger to fall into the river. So here.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 15. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 3:15]]{{field-on:Bible}}**That which hath been is now, &c.** viz., With God, to whom all things are present. (**Romans 4:17; 2 Peter 3:8; Jeremiah 1:5-7**) Hence God is said to know future things, (**Exodus 3:9; John 18:4**) not to foreknow them. For indeed neither foreknowledge nor remembrance are properly in God, since his whole essence is wholly an eye or a mind; it is the example or pattern of all things, so that he needs but to look upon himself, and then he seeth all things, as in a glass. The eye of man beholds many things at once, as ants in a mole hill; but if it will see other things at the same time, it must remove the sight. The mind of man can take in a larger circuit, even a city, a country, a world;

⁹⁰ Glossa Minor.

⁹¹ Valeat possessor oportet, si comportatis rebus bene cogitat uti.—Horat.

⁹² Ludovicus II.

but this it doth only in the lump or whole mass of it, for else it must remove from form to form, and from thought to thought. But God takes all at once most steadfastly and perfectly. All things without him are but as a point or ball, which with as much ease he discerneth as we turn our eyes.

And God requireth that which is past. Or, Inquireth, asketh, that which is bygone; he bespeaks it as present, "calling those things that are not as if they were." *Non aliter scivit Deus creata quam creancla*, saith Augustine. God knew things to be created, as if they had been before created. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 16. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 3:16]]{{field-on:Bible}}**The place of judgment, that wickedness was there.** *i.e.*, That wrong reigned in the places of judicature, that justice was shamefully perverted, and public authority abused to public injury. Cato saw as much in the Roman States, and complained that private robbers were laid in cold irons, when public thieves went in gold chains, and were clothed in purple.⁽⁹³⁾ Another, not without cause, complains that, even among us Christians, some follow the administration of justice as a trade only, with an unquenchable and unconscionable desire of gain, which justifies the common resemblance of the courts of justice to the bush, whereto while the sheep flees for defence in ill weather, he is sure to lose part of his fleece. Such wickedness saw the wise man in the place of judgment, where he least looked for it. God himself "looked for judgment, but behold a scab." (*Isaiah 5:7, marg.*) So the Hebrew hath it.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 17. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 3:17]]{{field-on:Bible}}**I said in my heart, God shall judge,** &c. He did not deny the Divine providence, as Averroes for this cause did; much less did he turn atheist with Diagoras, because he could not have justice done upon a fellow that had stolen a poem of his, and published it in his own name. But he concluded within himself, that God would surely take the matter into his own hand, judge those unrighteous judges, right and relieve the oppressed, "bring forth their righteousness as the light, and their innocence as the noonday," (*Psalms 37:6*) if not in this world, yet certainly at that great assizes to be held by his Son. "Because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, whereof he hath given assurance to all men." (*Acts 17:31*) His petty sessions he keepeth now, letting the law pass upon some few corrupt judges by untimely death, disgraces, banishment, remorse of conscience, &c.—as he did upon Judge Morgan, that condemned the Lady Jane Grey; Judge Hales, Belknap, Empson, Dudley, that I speak not of Pilate, Felix, &c.—reserving the rest till the great assizes. (*1 Timothy 5:24*) Some he punisheth here, lest his providence—but not all, lest his patience and promise of judgment—should be called into question, as Augustine well observeth. His twenty-two learned books, *De Civitate Dei*, were purposely written to clear up this truth; and so were Salvian's eight books, *De gubernatione Dei, et de iusto praesentique eius iudicio*. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 18. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 3:18]]{{field-on:Bible}}**That they might see that they themselves are beasts.** It is reckoned a great matter that wicked men are made "to know themselves to be but men," and no more. (*Psalms 9:20*) But God will make good men see and say with David, "So foolish was I and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee." *Pulchre addidit, "apud te,"* saith Ambrose upon those words.⁽⁹⁴⁾ Elegantly said the Psalmist, "Before thee," because, in respect of God, what is man but an unreasonable beast? He that is wisest among men, said Socrates, who himself was held the wisest of men, if he be compared to God, *Simia videbitur, non sapiens*, he will seem rather an ape than a wise man.⁽⁹⁵⁾ David calls himself not a

⁹³ A. Gell., lib. xi. cap. 16.

⁹⁴ Ambr. in *Psalms 83*.

⁹⁵ Socrat. apud Platon.

"beast" only, but "beasts," in the plural, ⁽⁹⁶⁾ behemoth, or at least a very great beast, not an ape, but an elephant. And this is that which God would have all good men see, *hemmah lahem*, as this text hath it, themselves to themselves, in their humble account of themselves, as holy Agur did. (*Proverbs 30:2*) (*See Trapp on "Proverbs 30:2"*).{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 19. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 3:19]]{{field-on:Bible}} **For that which befalleth the sons of men.** As hunger, thirst, heat, cold, diseases, aches, and other ill accidents.

As the one dieth. They are sure to die, both of them.

Yea, they have all one breath. They breathe in the same air, and expire alike, in respect of the body. ⁽⁹⁷⁾

So that a man hath no pre-eminence. Unless it be in reason and speech, which he frequently abuseth to his own utter destruction. But otherwise—

*"Nos aper auditu praecellit, aranea tactu,
Vultur odoratu, lynx visu, simia gustu."*{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 20. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 3:20]]{{field-on:Bible}} All are of the dust. (*See Trapp on "Genesis 3:19"*) {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 21. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 3:21]]{{field-on:Bible}} **Who knoweth the Spirit?** *q.d.*, Who but a man that is spiritually rational, and rationally spiritual? Who but he that hath "the mind of Christ?" (*1 Corinthians 2:16*) that hath seen the insides of nature and grace? Whether Plato and Cicero believed themselves in what they wrote touching the immortality of the soul, is a great question. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 22. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 3:22]]{{field-on:Bible}} **Wherefore I perceive.** He resumeth his assertion, (*Ecclesiastes 3:13*) and concludeth. See *Ecclesiastes 2:24*. {{field-off:Bible}}

⁹⁶ Eram apud te sicut bestiae.—Mercer.

⁹⁷ Nec te tua plurima Pentheu, Labentem texit pietas.

Chapter 4

Verse 1. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 4:1]]{{field-on:Bible}}**So I returned, and considered.** Here is a second instance of corruption in civil state, added to that of *Ecclesiastes 3:16*, to fill up the nest of vanities.

And behold the tears of such, &c. Heb., Tear; as if they had wept their utmost, *et vix unicum lachrymulam extorquere possent*, and could hardly squeeze out one poor tear more for their own ease. For as "hinds by calving," so men by weeping "cast out their sorrows." (*Job 39:3*)⁽⁹⁸⁾ Now tears are of many sorts: *Lachrymas angustiae exprimit crux; lachrymas poenitentiae, peccatum; lachrymas sympathiae, affectus; lachrymas letitiae, excellentia gaudii; denique lachrymas nequitiae, vel hypocrisis, vel vindictae, cupiditas.*⁽⁹⁹⁾ Oppression draws tears of grief; sin, tears of repentance; affection, tears of compassion; good success, tears of joy; hypocrisy or spite, tears of wickedness.

And they had no comforter. This was Job's doleful case, and David's, (*Psalms 69:21*) and the Church's in the Lamentations. (*Lamentations 1:2*) *Affert solarium lugentibus suspiriorum societas*, saith Basil Pity allays misery; but incompassionateness of others increaseth it. This was one of Sodom's sins, (*Ezekiel 16:49*) and of those epicures in Amos. (*Amos 6:6*) The king and Haman sat drinking in the gate; but the whole city of Shushan was in heaviness. (*Esther 3:15*)

And on the side of their oppressors, &c. The oppressed Romans sighed out to Pompey, *Nostra miseria tu es magnus*. You, our misery, is great. The world hath almost as many wild beasts and monsters as it hath landlords in various places. It is a woeful thing, surely, to see how great ones quaff the tears of the oppressed, and to hear them make music of shrieks.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 2. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 4:2]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Wherefore I praised the dead.** Because they are out of the reach of wrong doers; and if dead in the Lord, they have "entered into peace, they do rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness." (*Isaiah 57:2*) But if otherwise, men had better do anything, suffer anything here than die; since by death, as by a trap door, they enter into those terrors and torments that shall never either mend or end. Men, like silly fishes, see one another caught and jerked out of the pond of life but they see not, alas! the fire and pan into the which they are cast that die in their sins. Oh it had been better, surely, for such if they had never been born, as Christ said of Judas, than thus to be "brought forth to the murderer" (*Hosea 9:14*)—to the old manslayer—to be hurled into hell, there to suffer such things as they shall never be able to avoid or abide. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 3. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 4:3]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Yea, better is he than both they.** The heathen could say, *Optimum non nasci: proximum mori*. Life is certainly a blessing of God, though never so calamitous. Why is living man sorrowful? saith the prophet: (*Lamentations 3:39*) and it is as if he should say, Man, if alive, hath some cause of comfort amidst all his miseries; if he may escape though but "with the skin of his teeth," (*Job 19:20*) and have his life for a prey, he should see matter of thankfulness, and say, "It is the Lord's mercy that I am not consumed" (*Lamentations 3:22*)—that I am yet on this side hell. But those that have set their hearts upon earthly things, if ever they lose them, they are filled almost with unmedicineable sorrows; so as they will praise the dead above the living, and wish they had never been born. These are they whom Solomon in this sentence is by some thought to personate. {{field-off:Bible}}

⁹⁸ *Expletur lachrymis egeriturque dolor.*—Ovid.

⁹⁹ Alsted.

Verse 4. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 4:4]]{{field-on:Bible}}**That for this a man is envied of his neighbour.** This is another piece of life's vanity; that, as greater men will lie heavy upon you and oppress you, so meaner men will be envying at you and oppose you: as Cain did Abel, Saul's courtiers did David; the peers of Persia, Daniel; the Scribes and Pharisees, our Saviour. Every Zopyrus shall be sure to have his Zoilus. The garment of righteousness, parti-coloured with all variety of graces, is a great eyesore to the wicked, and makes the saints maligned. See *Proverbs 27:4*. (See Trapp on "*Proverbs 27:4*") {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 5. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 4:5]]{{field-on:Bible}}**The fool foldeth his hands together.** A graphical and lively description of a sluggard, fitly called a fool (φᾶυλος), a naughty person. "Thou *idle* and *evil* servant." (*Matthew 25:26*) God puts no difference between *nequaquam* and *nequam*, a drone and a naughty pack, seem he never so "wise in his own eyes," (*Proverbs 26:16*) and have he never so much reason to allege for himself—as in the verse here next following; a fool he is, and so he will soon prove himself; for "he folds up his hands and hides them in his own bosom." (*Proverbs 26:15*) A great many chares he is likely to do the while: (See Trapp on "*Proverbs 19:24*") And as (*Neque mola, neque farina*—nothing do, nothing have) "he eateth his own flesh"—he maketh many a hungry meal, he hath a dog's life, as we say. "Ease slayeth this fool"; (*Proverbs 1:32, marg.*) poverty comes upon him as an armed man; grief also slays him; (*Proverbs 21:25*) envy consumes his flesh, and he is vexed at the plenty of painful persons, and, because he cannot come at, or rather pull out their hearts, he feeds upon his own. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 6. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 4:6]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Better is an handful with quietness.** This is the sluggard's plea, whereby he bolstereth himself up in his wickedness, and would make you believe that he did, *non sine ratione insanire*, not play the madman without good reason. To what end, saith he, should a man toil and tire out himself with hard labour to compass commodity—making a drudge and a beast of himself for a little pelf, since he knows not who shall have the spending of it, and he is sure to be either squeezed by his superiors, (as *Ecclesiastes 4:1*) or else envied by his neighbours? (as *Ecclesiastes 4:4*) Is not a little with ease better? a penny by begging better than twopence by true labour? It is well observed by an interpreter, that this sentence uttered by the sluggard, is, in its true meaning, not much different from that of the wise man in *Proverbs 17:1*, but ill applied by him. Good words are not always to be trusted, from ill men especially. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 7. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 4:7]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Then I returned, and saw vanity, &c.** *i.e.*, Another extreme of vanity, visible wherever the sun is seen. *Dum vitant stulti vitium in contraria currant*: Fools while they shun the sands rush upon the rocks,—as Herod would needs prevent perjury by murder. The sluggard here, seeing those that do best to be envied of others, resolves to do just nothing. Again, the covetous miser, seeing the sluggard lie under so much infamy for doing nothing, *se laboribus conficit*, undoes himself with over doing. *Sed nemo ita perplexus tenetur inter duo vitia, quin exitus pateat absque tertio*, saith an ancient; but no man is so held hampered between two vices but that he may well get off without falling into a third. What need Eutyches fall into the other extreme of Nestorius? or Stancarus, of Osiander? or Illyricus, of Strigelius? but that they were for their pride justly given up to a spirit of giddiness. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 8. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 4:8]]{{field-on:Bible}}**There is one alone, and there is not a second.** A matchless miser, a fellow that hardly hath a fellow; a solivagant, or solitary vagrant, that dare not marry for fear of a numerous offspring. Child he hath none to succeed him, nor brother to share with him, and yet "there is no end of all his labour"; he takes incessant pains and works like a horse, "neither is his eye satisfied with riches"; that lust of the eye—as St John calls covetousness (*1 John 2:16*)—is as a bottomless gulf, as an unquenchable fire, as leviathan that wanteth room in the main ocean, or as behemoth, that "trusteth that he can

draw up Jordan into his mouth." (*Job 40:23*)

Neither saith he, For whom do I labour and bereave my soul of good? *Si haec duo tecum verba reputasses, Quid ago? respirasset cupiditas et avaritia paululum*, saith Cicero to Nevius.

⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ If thou wouldst but take up those two words, and say to thyself, What do I? thy lust and covetousness would be somewhat rebated thereby. But lust is inconsiderate and headlong; neither is anything more irrational than irreligion. The rich glutton bethought himself of his store, and resolved to take part of it, (*Luke 12:17*) so did Nabal; but this wretch here hath not a second, he "plants a vineyard and eats not of the fruit thereof." (*1 Corinthians 9:7*)

And bereave my soul of good. *i.e.*, Deprive myself of necessary conveniences and comforts, and defraud my genius of that which God hath given me richly to enjoy; (*1 Timothy 6:17*) or, bereave my soul of good, of God, of grace, of heaven, never thinking of eternity, of "laying up for myself a good foundation," that I may "lay hold upon eternal life"; (*1 Timothy 6:19*) but by low ends, even in religious duties, making earth my throne and heaven my footstool. "This is vanity" in the abstract; "this is a sore travail," because, *Nulla emolumenta laborum*, No good to be gotten by it—no pay for a man's pains; but, as the bird that sitteth on the serpent's eggs, by breaking and hatching them brings forth a perilous brood, to her own destruction, so do those that sit abroad on the world's vanities.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 9. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 4:9]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Two are better than one.** Friendly society is far beyond that wretched "aloneness" of the covetous wretch; (*Ecclesiastes 4:8*) he "joins house to house and land to land, that he may live alone in the midst of the earth." (*Isaiah 5:8*)

"*Quin sine rivali, seque et sua solus amato.*"—Horat.

Let him enjoy his moping solitariness, if he can. "It is not good for man to be alone," saith God; (*Genesis 2:18*) and he that loves to be alone is either a beast or a god, saith the philosopher ⁽¹⁰¹⁾ Man is ζῷον πολιτικόν, a sociable creature—he is "nature's good fellow," and holds this for a rule, *Optimum solarium sodalitiū*. There is great comfort in good company: next to communion with God is the communion of saints. Christ sent out his apostles by two and two. (*Mark 6:7*) He himself came from heaven to converse with us; and shall we, like stoics, stye up ourselves, and not daily run into good company? The evil spirit is for solitariness, God is for society. ⁽¹⁰²⁾ He dwells in the "assembly of his saints"; yea, there he hath a delight to dwell, calling the Church his Hephzibah, (*Isaiah 62:4*) and the saints were David's Hephzibam, "his delight." (*Psalms 16:3*) Neither doth God nor good men take pleasure in a stern, froward austerity, or wild retiredness, but in a mild affableness and amiable conversation.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 10. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 4:10]]{{field-on:Bible}}**For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow.** Provided that they hold together and be both of a mind. That which is stronger shoreth up that which is weaker. While Latimer and Rid ley lived, they kept up Cranmer, by intercourse of letters and otherwise, from entertaining counsels of revolt. Bishop Ridley, being prisoner in the Tower, had the liberty of the same, to prove, belike, whether he would go to mass or not, which once he did. And Mr Bradford, being there prisoner, and hearing thereof, wrote an effectual letter to persuade him from the same, which did Mr Ridley no little good, for he repented, &c. ⁽¹⁰³⁾ Bishop Farrar also being in the King's Bench prisoner, was travailed

¹⁰⁰ Orat. pro Quinti.

¹⁰¹ Aristot., *Polit.* i.

¹⁰² Dupla et compaginata pleraque fecit Deus, ut coelum et terram, solem et lunam, marem et feminam.—Orig. in Gen. i. Vide Erasm. in Adagio. Σὺν τε οὐ ἐρχομένῳ.

¹⁰³ Acts and Mon., fol. 1930.

with by the Papists at the end of Lent to receive the sacrament at Easter in one kind, who, after much persuading, yielded to them, and promised so to do. But, by God's good providence, the Easter evening, the day before he should have done it, was Bradford brought to the same prison, where, the Lord making him his instrument, Bradford only was the means that the said bishop revoked his promise, and would never after yield to be spotted with that Papistical pitch.⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ Dr Taylor for like cause rejoiced that ever he came into prison, there to be acquainted with that angel of God, John Bradford: so he called him, for the good he received from him.⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ One man may be an angel to another in regard of counsel and comfort; nay, a God to another, as Moses was to Aaron. "Though he fall, he shall arise," for the Lord puts under his hand. (*Psalm 37:24*)

But woe to him that is alone. Because Satan is readiest to assault when none is by to assist. Solitariness, therefore, is not to be affected, because it is "the hour of temptation."

For he hath not a second to help him up. As Elizabeth Cowper, the martyr, in Queen Mary's days had, who, being condemned, and at the stake with Simon Miller, when the fire came unto her she a little shrank thereat, crying once, *Ah!* When Simon heard the same, he put his hand behind him toward her, and willed her to be strong and of good cheer; for, 'Good sister,' said he, 'we shall soon have a joyful and sweet supper. It is but winking a little, and you are in heaven.' With these and the like speeches, she, being strengthened, stood still and quiet, as one most glad to finish that good work.⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ It was therefore a devilish policy in Julian and other heathen persecutors to banish Christians into far countries one from another, and to confine them to isles and mines, where they could not have access one to another. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 11. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 4:11]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Again, if two lie together, then they have heat.** Heat of zeal and good affection. "Did not our hearts *burn* within us," said those two disciples, when Christ once made the third with them, and by holy conference kindled them. (*Luke 24:32*) So when Silas and Timotheus came from Macedonia, Paul was "pressed in spirit." (*Acts 18:5*) Warm he was before, but now all of a light fire, as it were. Those dull daughters of Jerusalem, by hearing the spouse describe her beloved, as she doth from tip to toe, were fired up with desire to join with her in seeking after him whom her soul loved. The lying together of the dead body of one with the bones of Elisha, gave life to it. So doth good company give life to those that are dead in sin. Let two cold flints be smitten together, and fire will come forth. So let two dull Christians confer and communicate their soul secrets, and it shall not repent them; they shall find the benefit of it. "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades?" saith God to Job. (*Job 38:31*) These Pleiades be the seven stars, that have all one name, because they all help one another in their work, which is to bring the spring, and, like seven sisters, so are they joined together in one constellation, and in one company. We see that God will have the sweetest works in nature to be performed with mutual help. The best time of the year, the sweetest warmth cometh with these Pleiades, and the best time of our life cometh when we lie together in true love and fellowship, No sooner had the Philippians received the gospel, but they were in "fellowship" to a "day." (*Philippians 1:5*) They knew, that as sincerity is the life of religion, so is society the life of sincerity. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 12. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 4:12]]{{field-on:Bible}}**And if one prevail against him, &c.** *Vis unita fortior.* God bade Gideon to go down to the camp of the Midianites, and if he feared to go, then to take with him his servant Phurah. Jonathan will not go without his armourbearer—David without Abishai. (*1 Samuel 26:6*) Christ, when to begin his passion in the garden, took Peter, James, and John with him, for the benefit of their prayers and company,

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 1457.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 1981.

though they served him but sorrily. "My dove is but one." (*Solomon's Song 6:9*) "Jerusalem is a city compact together." (*Psalms 122:3*) The Church is "terrible as an army with banners"; (*Solomon's Song 6:4*) "the gates of hell cannot prevail against her." (*Matthew 16:18*) Unity hath victory, but division breeds dissolution, as it did once in this island when Caesar first entered it. *Dum singuli pugnant universi vincuntur*, saith Tacitus of the ancient Britons. The Turks pray daily that the differences among us Christians may be heightened, for that will soonest undo us, and one of their emperors, when his council dissuaded him from a war against the Germans, because of their multitude, said that he feared them not, because sooner would his fingers be all of one length than their princes all of one mind. ⁽¹⁰⁷⁾

And a threefold cord is not easily broken. A proverbial confirmation well interpreted by Lyra: *Quanto plures et boni in amicitia coniuncti sunt, tanto status eorum melioratur*,—The more they are that unite, so they be good, the better it is with them. See **2 Samuel 10:9-12**. We lose much of our strength in the loss of friends; our cable is as it were untwisted. Hence David so bemoans the loss of Jonathan, and made him an epitaph. (**2 Samuel 1:17-27**) Hence St Paul counted it a special mercy to him that Epaphroditus recovered. (*Philippians 1:27*).
{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 13. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 4:13]]
{{field-on:Bible}} **Better is a poor and wise child.** Such as was Joseph, David, Daniel, and his three comrades, &c.; apt to learn, ready to receive instruction, and as careful to follow it. And well doth the Preacher join poverty with wisdom, for, *Nescio quomodo bonae mentis soror est paupertas*, saith he in Petronius; and, *Paupertas est philosophiae vernacula*,—Poverty is the proper language of philosophy, and wisdom is undervalued little and set by. Those wisest of the Greeks were very poor—Aristides, Phocion, Pelopidas, Epaminondas, Socrates, Ephialtes. ⁽¹⁰⁸⁾ So were those worthies "of whom the world was not worthy; they wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins, being destitute." (**Hebrews 11:38**) Sweet smelling Smyrna was the poorest of all the seven churches, yet hath the richest price set upon it. (**Revelation 2:8-11**) Lactantius died miserably poor; so did Theodorus Gaza, that learned Greek. Of Archimedes thus sings Silius,—

"Nudus opum, sed cui coelum terraeque patebant." ⁽¹⁰⁹⁾

But I am fully of Aeneas Sylvius's judgment, that popular men should esteem wisdom as silver, noblemen as gold, princes as pearls. Of Queen Elizabeth (that peerless princess) it is said that she hated, no less than did Mithridates, such as despised virtue forsaken of fortune. ⁽¹¹⁰⁾

Than an old and foolish king. *Brabanli quo magis senescunt, eo magis stultescunt.* ⁽¹¹¹⁾ So do many men of quality, monarchs and others, weak, and yet wilful, short witted, and yet self-conceited; such as were Saul, Rehoboam, Jehoiakim, Nebuchadnezzar, our Henry III, called *Regni dilapidator*, destroyer of kingdoms, and that James that reigned in Scotland in our Edward IV's time, of whom as the story is told that he was so much wedded to his own opinion, that he could not endure any man's advice (how good soever) that he fancied not. He would seldom ask counsel, but never follow any. ⁽¹¹²⁾ Xerxes, in his expedition against Greece, is reported to have called his princes together, and thus to have spoken to them: Lest I should seem to follow mine own counsel, I have assembled you; and now do you remember, that it

¹⁰⁷ Camer., *Medit. Hist.*, cen. ii. cap. 23. Rich., *Axiom. Polit.*, p. 86.

¹⁰⁸ *Aelian*, lib. ii.

¹⁰⁹ Sil., lib. xiv.

¹¹⁰ Camden's *Elisabeth*.

¹¹¹ Erasm.

¹¹² Daniel's *History*.

becomes you rather to obey than to advise. ⁽¹¹³⁾{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 14. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 4:14]]{{field-on:Bible}}**For out of prison he cometh to reign.** As Valentinian the emperor; Sultan Mustapha the great Turk, A.D. 1622; our Henry IV, who was crowned the very same day that, the year before, he had been banished the realm. ⁽¹¹⁴⁾ As, on the other side, Henry VI was sent again prisoner to the Tower the same day that he had been carried through the city, as it were, in triumph, and had heard the shouts of the commons in every street, crying, God save King Henry. Lo! he that had been the most potent monarch for dominions, saith the chronicler, ⁽¹¹⁵⁾ that ever England had, was not now the master of a molehill, nor owner of his own liberty. So that in him it appeared that mortality was but the stage of mutability, when a man born in his kingdom, yea, born to a kingdom, became thus miserably poor. Furthermore, Henry Holland, Duke of Exeter, grandchild to John of Gaunt, may serve as a fit instance and example to all how uncertain Adam's sons are of any continuing greatness. For, saith Philip Commines, I once saw him run on foot bare legged after the Duke of Burgundy's train, begging ⁽¹¹⁶⁾ his bread for God's sake; but he uttered not his name, he being the nearest of the house of Lancaster, and brother-in-law unto King Edward IV, from whom he fled; and being known who he was, Burgundy gave him a small pension to maintain his estate. ⁽¹¹⁷⁾{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 15. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 4:15]]{{field-on:Bible}}**I considered all the living,** &c. He means the multitude, that shallow brained, but great and many headed beast, making defection from their old prince, though never so prudent, and setting up his own son against him, as they dealt by David more than once, merely out of an itch of instability and affectation of novelty. Now, as this is to others, so to kings also a vexation, to see already the common aspect of their people bent upon another object before the time; to behold them worshipping the rising sun, ⁽¹¹⁸⁾ as the proverb is, and themselves laid aside, in a manner, as broken vessels out of request in comparison. ⁽¹¹⁹⁾ Crowns have their cares and crosses, and high seats are never but uneasy. *O vilis pannus!* O base clout! said one king concerning his diadem, were it but known how many molestations and miseries do attend thee, *Nemo foret qui te tollere vellet humo*, no man would deign to take thee up lying at his feet. Antoninus the philosopher said often that the empire was *malorum oceanus*, an ocean of mischiefs; and another caused it to be written upon his tomb, *Felix si non imperitasset*, Happy had I been if I had never reigned. It is seldom seen, as before hath been observed, that God allows unto the greatest darlings of the world a perfect contentment, be they never so well deserving. Something they must have to complain of, that shall give an unsavoury verdure to their sweetest morsels, and make their very felicity miserable.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 16. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 4:16]]{{field-on:Bible}}**There is no end of all the people.** *i.e.*, They are infinitely discontented and restless in their desires after a new and another governor. *Αἰ γὰρ τὸ παρὸν βαρὺ*, as Thucydides long since observed, The present government, be it never so good, is always grievous. "O that I were made judge in the land," said Absalom. (2 **Samuel 15:4**) Oh that thou wert, said the people, who yet soon had enough of him. And so had they of their new king, Saul, whom *contra gentes*, they would needlessly have, after the

¹¹³ Val. Max., lib. ix. cap. 5.

¹¹⁴ Daniel's Hist., fol. 480.

¹¹⁵ Speed, 881.

¹¹⁶ Date obolum Bellisario.

¹¹⁷ Speed, 887.

¹¹⁸ Omnes solem orientem adorant, contemnunt occidentem.

¹¹⁹ Macro, expirante Tiberio, Caium fovebat. Cui Tiberius, Tu recte, inquit, Macro, τὸν δυόμενον ἐγκαταλιπὼν πρὸς τὸν ἀνατελλο τὰ ἐπείγη.—Dio.

manner of all other nations. (**1 Samuel 8:6-7**) How soon did the Baptist grow stale to the Jews, that had lately "heard him gladly," (**Mark 6:20**) and was no more set by than "a reed shaken with the wind!" (**Matthew 11:7**) How suddenly did they change their note concerning Christ from "Hosanna" to *Crucify him!* The common people are like to children, saith an interpreter, that rest not contented with any schoolmaster, and like to servants that love to change every year their masters. People are desirous to hear new preachers, as feasters to hear new Songs and new instruments. (**Ezekiel 33:32**) {{field-off:Bible}}

Chapter 5

Verse 1. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 5:1]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Keep thy foot.** *q.d.*, Wouldst thou see more of the world's vanity than hitherto hath been discoursed? get thee "to the sanctuary," as David did. (**Psalm 73:17**) For as they that walk in a mist see it not so well as those that stand on a hill; so they that have their hands elbow deep in the world cannot so easily discern what they do as those that go a little out from it. To the house of God therefore, to the temple and synagogues, to the churches and oratories steer thy course, take thy way. Only "see to thy feet," *i.e.*, keep thy senses and affections with all manner of custody, from the mire of wicked and worldly matters. Shoes we have all upon our feet—that is, to speak in St James's phrase, "filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness" (**James 1:21**) in our hearts, that must be put off at God's school door, as God taught Moses and Joshua. (**Exodus 3:5; Joshua 5:15**) And Pythagoras, having read Moses belike, taught his scholars as much, when he saith, ἀνυπόδητος θῦε καὶ προσκυνεῖ, Put off thy shoes when thou sacrificest and worshippest. His followers, the Pythagoreans, expounded his meaning, when they would not have men ἐν παρόδῳ προσκυνεῖν, but οἴκοθεν παρασκευασάμενοι, worship God carelessly or by the way, but prepare themselves at home aforehand. And Numa Pompilius, one that had tasted of his learning, would not have men worship the gods ἐν παρέργῳ καὶ ἀμελῶς, by the by, and for fashion, but χολῆν ἄγοντας ἀπὸ τῶν ἄλλων, at good leisure, and as making religion their business.⁽¹²⁰⁾ In the law of Moses, the priests were commanded to wash the inwards and the feet of the sacrifice in water. And this was done, πάνυ συμβολικῶς, saith Philo, not without a mystery—*sc.*, to teach us to keep our feet clean when we draw nigh to God. Antonius Margarita, in his book of the rites and ceremonies of the Jews, tells us that before their synagogues they have an iron plate, against which they wipe and make clean their shoes before they enter; and that being entered, they sit solemnly there for a season, not once opening their mouths, but considering who it is with whom they have to do. Thus it was wont to be with them; but alate though they come to their synagogues with washen hands and feet, yet for any show of devotion or elevation of spirit, they are as reverent, saith one that was an eyewitness,⁽¹²¹⁾ as grammar boys are at school when their master is absent: their holiness is the mere outward work itself, being a brainless head and a soulless body. And yet upon the walls of their synagogues they write usually this sentence, by an abbreviature, "Tephillan belo cauvannah ceguph belo neshamah," *i.e.*, A prayer without effect, is like a body without a soul. Solinus reporteth of the Cretians, that they do very religiously worship Diana, and that no man may presume to come into her temple but barefooted.⁽¹²²⁾ *Satan Dei aemulus*, The devil is God's ape. He led these superstitious Ethnics captive, as the Chaldeans did the Egyptians, "naked and barefoot"⁽¹²³⁾ (**Isaiah 20:2, 4**)

When thou goest to the house of God. Called "the gate of heaven," (**Genesis 28:17**) such as none but "the righteous" may "enter;" (**Psalm 118:20**) the "beauty of holiness," the place of angels and archangels, the kingdom of God, yea, heaven itself,⁽¹²⁴⁾ as Chrysostom calls it. The French Protestants called their meeting house in Paris paradise. The primitive Christians⁽¹²⁵⁾ called such places κυριακούς, whence kirks, churches, and the Lord's houses; and basilicas, kingly palaces. Now it is held an uncivil thing to come to the palace of a king with dirty shoes, or to eat at his table with foul hands. Men wash their hands every day of course, but when to

¹²⁰ Plutarch.

¹²¹ Spec. Europ.

¹²² Buxtorf., *Abbréviat.*, p. 186.

¹²³ *Aedem numinis praeterquam nudus vestigia nullus licito ingreditur.*—Cap. 16.

¹²⁴ Αὐτὸς μὲν ὁ οὐρανός.

¹²⁵ Concil. Laodic., cap. 28.

dine with a prince, they wash them with balls. So it should be here; when we come to God's house we should come with the best preparation we can make; we should also be there with the first, and stay till the last, as doorkeepers use to do, which office in God's house David held a high preferment. (**Psalm 84:10**) And while we are there, let our whole deportment be as in the presence of the great God, whom we must look full in the face, and be ready to hear, as those good souls in **Acts 10:33**; "Now therefore we are all here present before God," say they, "to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." Neither must we hear only with the hearing of the ear, but with the obedience of the heart and life—for so the original word here signifieth; **Genesis 3:17**, "Because thou hast heard," that is, obeyed, "the voice of thy wife," &c.—hearing diligently without distraction, and doing readily without sciscitation.

Than to give the sacrifice of fools. *i.e.*, The formalities and external services of profligate professors that think to set off with God for their sins by their sacrifices; for their evil deeds by their good. Hence they burden God's altar, and even cover it with their sacrifices; sticking in the bark and gnabbling upon the shell of holy services, not once piercing to the heart or tasting of the kernel thereof, and are therefore "abominable, because disobedient, and to every good work reprobate." (**Titus 1:16**) How many are there at this day that not only pray by tale, as Papists do by their beads, but turn over other duties of religion as a mere task, holding only a certain stint of them, as malt horses⁽¹²⁶⁾ do their pace, or mill horses their round, merely out of form and custom, those banes and breaknecks of due devotion! These do not only lose their labour but commit sin, (**Isaiah 1:14**) compass God with a lie, (**Hosea 11:12**) because they wash not their feet before they compass God's altar. The heathen orator⁽¹²⁷⁾ can tell these fools of the people, *Deum non superstitione coli velle, sed pietate*, that God requires the heart in all holy duties, and must be served in spirit, (**John 4:24**) even *toto corde, id est amore summo, more vero, ore fideli, re omni*.

"Hoc non fit verbis: Marce, ut ameris, ama."—Martial.

For they consider not that they do evil. That they despite him with seeming honours, with displeasing service, which is double dishonour; with seeming sanctity, which is double iniquity, and deserves double damnation. This they so little consider, that they think God is greatly beholden to them, and does them no small wrong that he so little regards and rewards them. (**Isaiah 58:3; Malachi 3:14**) *Non sic Deos coluimus ut ille nos vinceret*, said that emperor,⁽¹²⁸⁾ going into the field against his enemy. We have not so served the gods, that they should serve us no better than to give the enemy the better of us.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 2. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 5:2]]{{field-on:Bible}} **Be not rash with thy mouth.** From hearing, the Preacher proceeds to give directions for speaking, whether it be of God or to him. For the first, the very heathens could say, *Non loquendum de Deo sine lumine*,⁽¹²⁹⁾ We may not speak of God without a light—*i.e.*, without a deliberate premeditation and well advised consideration. In speaking of God, saith one,⁽¹³⁰⁾ our best eloquence is our silence. And if we speak at all on this subject, saith another,⁽¹³¹⁾ no words will so well become us as those, *quae ignorantiam nostram praetendunt*, that most discover our small knowledge of him. "How little a portion or pittance is heard of him," saith holy Job; (**Job 26:14**) the Hebrew word signifies a little bit or particle—nay, a little piece of a word, such as an echo resoundeth, "But the thunder of his power who can understand?" it is ineffable, because inconceivable. Here, if ever,

¹²⁶ A heavy kind of horse used by maltsters; used occas. as a term of abuse.

¹²⁷ Cicero.

¹²⁸ Antonin. Philos. referente Vulcat.—Gal.

¹²⁹ Pythag.

¹³⁰ Mr Hooker.

¹³¹ Jul. Scalig.

"Claudicat ingenium, delirat linguaque mensque."—Lucret.

But although Jerome ⁽¹³²⁾ thinks it best to understand the Preacher here of a speaking of God, yet others, and for better reason, conceive his meaning to be rather of a speaking to God by prayer, and particularly by a vow, which implies a prayer, as the Greek words εὐχή and προσευχή import. Here then,

Let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything. Heb., Let not thine heart through haste be so troubled or disturbed, as to tumble over, and throw out words without wisdom, in a confused manner, in a slubbering sort. But as there was "half an hour's silence in heaven" when the seventh seal was opened, (**Revelation 8:1**) and or ever the seven trumpets sounded, so should there be a sad and serious weighing of our petitions before we utter them. *Nescit poenitenda loqui, qui proferenda prius suo tradidit examini,* ⁽¹³³⁾ He repents not of his requests who first duly deliberates what to request. Whereas he that blurts out whatsoever lies uppermost—as some good men have done in their haste and heat of passion (as Job, **Job 6:5**; David, **Psalm 116:11**; Jeremiah, **Jeremiah 15:10, 18**; Jonah, **Jonah 4:1-3**, who brawled with God instead of praying to him)—displeaseth God no less than the Muscovy ministers do their hearers if they mispronounce but any syllable in their whole liturgy.

For God is in heaven, and thou upon earth. He is the "high and Holy One that inhabiteth eternity," (**Isaiah 57:15**) and thou art *E palude sua procedens et repens vilis ranuncula*, as Bernard hath it, a base toad creeping or crawling out of a ditch: there is an infinite distance and disproportion between him and thee; therefore see to it that thou come to him with all possible reverence, humility, and self-abasement. See **Job 42:6**; **1 Kings 18:42**; **Matthew 26:38**. It is observable that when the great Turk comes into his mosque or temple, he lays by all his state, and hath none to attend him all the while.

Therefore let thy words be few. But full, as the publicans were. (**Luke 18:13**) *O quam multa quam paucis!* Oh, how much in a little! said Cicero of Brutus's Epistle. So may we say of that publican's prayer; how much more of the Lord's prayer, set in fiat opposition to the heathenish battologies ⁽¹³⁴⁾ and vain repetitions usual with pagans and papagans. (**See Trapp on "Matthew 6:7"**) (**See Trapp on "Matthew 6:8"**) (**See Trapp on "Matthew 6:9"**) It is reported of the ancient Christians of Egypt, *Quod brevissimis et raptim iaculatis orationibus uti voluerint, ne per moras evanesceret et hebetaretur intentio,* ⁽¹³⁵⁾ that they made very short prayers that their devotion might not be dulled by longer doings. Cassian also makes mention of certain religious persons in his time, *Qui utilius censebant breves quidem orationes sed creberrimas fieri, &c.*, who thought it best that our prayers should be short, but frequent: the one, that there might be continual intercourse maintained between God and us; the other, that by shortness we might avoid the devil's darts, which he throws especially at us, while we are praying. These are good reasons, and more may be added out of **Matthew 6:5-15**, as that "our heavenly Father knows what we need," &c. That which the Preacher here presseth is the transcendent excellence and surpassing majesty of almighty God. "I am a great King," saith he, (**Malachi 1:14**) and I look to be served like myself. Therefore "take with you words," (**Hosea 14:2**) neither over curious, nor over careless, but such as are humble, earnest, direct to the point, avoiding vain babblings, needless and endless repetitions, heartless digressions, tedious prolixities, wild and idle discourses of such extemporary petitioners, as not disposing their matter in due order by premeditation, and with it being word bound, are forced to go forward and backward, like hounds at a loss; and having hastily begun, they know not how handsomely

¹³² Jerome, *in loc.*

¹³³ Cassiodor, lib. x. Ep. 4.

¹³⁴ A needless and tiresome repetition in speaking or writing.

¹³⁵ Augustine.

to make an end.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 3. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 5:3]]{{field-on:Bible}}**For a dream cometh through the multitude of business.** When all the rest of the senses are bound up by sleep, the soul entereth into the shop of the fancy, and operates there usually according to the businesses and employments of the day past; *et fieri videntur quae fieri tamen non videntur*, saith Tertullian, ⁽¹³⁶⁾ those things seem to be done in a dream, which yet are not seen to be done at all: these are but *vanae iactationes negotiosae animae*, the idle tossings of a busy mind. In like sort a fool, a heartless, sapless fellow, that being sensual and void of "the spirit of grace and supplications," hath neither the affections nor expressions of holy prayer, "multiplies words without knowledge," thinks to make out in words what he wants in worth, being *λαλεῖν ἄριστος, λέγειν δὲ ἄδυνατώτατος*, as Plutarch saith of Alcibiades, one that could talk much but speak little: "His voice is known by multitude of words." It is but a "voice" that is heard, it is but a sound that is made, like the uncertain sound of a trumpet, that none can tell what it meaneth, what to make of it. *Corniculas citius in Africa, quam res rationesque solidus in Turriani scriptis reperias*, saith one, ⁽¹³⁷⁾ so here if there be any worth of matter in the fool's words, it is but by chance, as Aristotle saith, ⁽¹³⁸⁾ that dreams do by chance foretell those things that come to pass. Let it be our care to shun as much as may be all lavish and superfluous talkativeness and tediousness, but especially in prayer, lest we "offer the sacrifice of fools," and God be angry with us. For as it is not the loudness of a preacher's voice, but the weight and holiness of his matter, and the spirit of the preacher, that moves a wise and intelligent hearer, so it is not the labour of the lips, but the travail of the heart that prevails with God. The Baalites' prayer was not more tedious than Elijah's short, yet more pithy than short. And it was Elijah that spake loud and sped in heaven. Let the fool learn, therefore, to show more wit in his discourse than words, lest being known by his voice, he meet, as the nightingale did, with some Laconian that will not let to tell him, *Vox tu es, praeterea nihil*, Thou art a voice, and that's all.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 4. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 5:4]]{{field-on:Bible}}**When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it.** (See Trapp on "Deuteronomy 23:22") It is in thy power to vow or not to vow. *Vovere nusquam est praeceptum*, saith Bellarmine. ⁽¹³⁹⁾ We have no command to vow. That of David, "Vow and perform to the Lord your God," is not *purum praeceptum*, saith Mr Cartwright, a pure precept, but like that other, "Be angry, and sin not"; where anger is not commanded, but limited. So neither are we simply commanded to vow, but having voluntarily vowed, we may not defer to pay it; delays are taken for denials, excuses for refusals.

For he hath no pleasure in fools. He "needs" them as little as King Achish did; (**1 Samuel 21:15**) he "abhors" them (**Psalms 5:5**) as deceitful workers, as mockers of God. Jephthah *in vovendo fuit stultus, inpraestando impius*: ⁽¹⁴⁰⁾ Jephthah was a fool invowing, and wicked in performing. But he that vows a thing lawful and possible, and yet defers to perform it, or seeks an evasion, is two fools for failing; since—{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 5. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 5:5]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Better it is that thou shouldst not vow.** *q.d.*, Who bade thee be so forward? Why wouldst thou become a voluntary votary, and so rashly engage to the loss of thy liberty and the offence of thy God, who expected thou shouldst have kept touch, and not have dealt thus slipperily with him? ⁽¹⁴¹⁾ "Thou hast not lied unto

¹³⁶ Tertull., *De Anima*, cap. 49.

¹³⁷ Beringer, *Contra Idol. cum Salut. Angel.*

¹³⁸ Aristot., *De Divinat. per Insom.*

¹³⁹ *De Monac.*, lib. ii. cap. 15.

¹⁴⁰ Jerome.

¹⁴¹ *Dicta factis deficientibus crubescunt.*

men, but unto God." (*Acts 5:4*) "As the truth of Christ is in me," saith Paul; (*2 Corinthians 11:10*) so he binds himself by an oath, as the learned have observed. And "as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay; for the Son of God who was preached among you by me was not yea and nay; but in him all the promises of God are yea and amen." (*2 Corinthians 1:19, 20*) Why, what of that? some might say; and what is all this to the purpose? Very much, for it implieth that what a Christian doth promise to men (how much more to God?) he is bound by the earnest penny of God's Spirit to perform. He dares no more alter or falsify his word than the Spirit of God can lie. And as he looks that God's promises should be made good to him, so is he careful to pay what he hath vowed to God, since his is a covenant of mercy, ours of obedience; and if he shall be all-sufficient to us, we must be altogether his. (*Solomon's Song 2:16*).^{{{field-off:Bible}}}

Verse 6. ^{[[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 5:6]]^{{{field-on:Bible}}}**Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin.** Heb., *Nec des*, Give not liberty to thy mouth, which of itself is so apt to overflow and run riot in sinful and superfluous language. Rein it in therefore, and lay laws upon it, lest it "cause thy flesh to sin," thyself to become a sinner against thine own soul. Say to it in this case, as Christ did to those Pharisees in the gospel, "Why temptest thou me, thou hypocrite?" or as the witch said to Saul, that sought to her, "Wherefore layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die?" (*1 Samuel 28:9*) Shall my prayer become sin, and my religious vows, through non-payment, a cause of a curse? (*Psalms 109:7*) When thou art making such an ill bargain, say to thy mouth, as Boaz said to his kinsman, "At what time thou buyest it, thou must have Ruth with it"; (*Ruth 4:5*) so thou must have God's curse with it—for that is the just hire of the least sin, (*Romans 6:23*) how much more of thy crimson crime! And let thy mouth answer, No, I may not do it; I shall mar and spoil a better inheritance; I shall anger the angel of the covenant, who, if his wrath be kindled, yea, but a little, "he will not pardon my transgression, for God's name is in him," (*Exodus 23:21*) who, as he is *pater miserationum*," the Father of mercies," so he is *Deus ultionum*," the God of recompenses." (*Psalms 94:1*) True it is that anger is not properly in God; "Fury is not in me"; (*Isaiah 27:4*) but because he chides and smites for sin, as angry men use to do, therefore is anger here and elsewhere attributed to him, that men may stand in awe and not sin, since sin and punishment are linked together with chains of adamant.^{{{field-off:Bible}}}}

Verse 7. ^{[[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 5:7]]^{{{field-on:Bible}}}**For in the multitude of dreams, and in many words.** *i.e.*, As in the multitude of dreams, so in many words, &c. There may be some matter in some of either; but neither of them wants their vanities. Dreams are of various sorts. (*See Trapp on "Genesis 20:3"*) Epicurus judged them all vain. The Telmisenses *nulla somnia evacuabant*, saith Tertullian,⁽¹⁴²⁾ made no dreams to be vain. But that some dreams are divine, some diabolical, and some natural, *Peculiare solarium naturalis oraculi*, as one speaketh, good symptoms and indications of the natural constitution, no wise man ever doubted. That of the philosopher⁽¹⁴³⁾ hath a truth in it, *Iustum ab iniusto non somno, sed somnio discerni*, that a good man may be distinguished from a bad, though not by his sleep, yet by his dreams in his sleep.}

But fear thou God. And so eschew this evil of fond babbling (in God's service especially), which is no less a vanity than plain doting, and procures Divine displeasure. *Deum siquis parum metuit, valde contemnit.*⁽¹⁴⁴⁾ He that fears not God's wrath is sure to feel it. (*Psalms 90:11*).^{{{field-off:Bible}}}

Verse 8. ^{[[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 5:8]]^{{{field-on:Bible}}}**If thou seest the oppression of the poor.** And so mayest be drawn to doubt of Divine providence, and to withdraw thine awful}

¹⁴² Tertul., *De Anima*, c. 46.

¹⁴³ Aristot. *Ethic*.

¹⁴⁴ Fulgent.

regard to the divine Majesty, to forego godliness, and to turn fiat atheist, as Diagoras and Averroes did.

Marvel not at the matter. *Nil admirari prope res est una Numici.* ⁽¹⁴⁵⁾ A wise man wonders at nothing; he knows there is good cause why God should allow it so to be, and gives him his glory. *Opera Dei sunt in mediis contrariis*, saith Luther: ⁽¹⁴⁶⁾ God's works are effected usually by contraries. And this he doth ἵνα καὶ μᾶλλον θαυμάζηται, that he may be the more marvelled at, saith Nazianzen. Hence he commonly goes a way by himself, drawing light out of darkness, good out of evil, heaven out of hell, that his people may feelingly say, "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders." (**Exodus 15:11**) "Verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth." (**Psalms 58:11**)

For he that is higher than the highest regardeth. And "wherein they deal proudly, he is above them," (**Exodus 18:11**) and overtops them; (**Psalms 2:4**) sets a day for them, and "sees that their day is coming." (**Psalms 37:13**) "The Most High cuts off the spirit of princes" (**Psalms 76:12**)—he slips them off, as one should slip off a flower between his fingers; or he cuts them off, as grapegatherers do the clusters off the vines; such a metaphor there is in the original—"He is terrible to all the kings of the earth," those dread sovereigns, those hammers of the earth and scourges of the world, ⁽¹⁴⁷⁾ as Atilas styled himself; such as Sennacherib, whom God so subdued and mastered, that the Egyptians, in memory of it, set up his statue in the temple of Vulcan, with this inscription, Ἐμὲ τις ὀρέων εὐσεβῆς ἔστο: ⁽¹⁴⁸⁾ Let all that behold me learn to fear God. It was therefore excellent counsel that Jehoshaphat gave his judges: "Take heed what you do, for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment. Wherefore now let the fear of the Lord our God be upon you; take heed and do it." (**2 Chronicles 19:6**) Look upon him that overlooks all your doings, saith he, and then learn to sit upon the tribunal, in as great though not in so slavish a fear of doing wrong, as Olanes in the history did upon the flayed skin of his father Sisannus, nailed by Cambyses on the judgment seat; or as a Russian judge that fears the boiling caldron or open battocking; or the Turkish senate, when they think the great Turk to stand behind the arras ⁽¹⁴⁹⁾ at the dangerous door. In fine, let the grandees and potentates of the earth know and acknowledge with Constantine, Valentinian, and Theodosius, three great emperors, as Socrates reports of them, that they are but *Christi vasalli*, Christ's vassals; and that as he is *Excelsus super excelsos*, high above all, even the highest, so he hath other high ones at hand—viz., the holy angels, who can "resist the King of Persia," as Michael the prince did; (**Daniel 10:13**) fright the Syrians with a panic terror; (**2 Kings 7:6**) smite the Assyrians with an utter destruction; (**Isaiah 37:36**) deliver Peter from the hand of Herod, and from the expectation of the Jews. (**Acts 12:11**) What a wonderful difference in the slaughter of the firstborn of Egypt! (**Exodus 12:23-32**) Tyrants shall be sure, sooner or later, to meet with their match. Look what a hand the Ephori had over the King of Sparta; the tribunes had over the Roman consuls; and the Prince Palgrave of Rhine ought, by the ancient orders, to have over the Emperor of Germany (*Palatino haec dignitatis praerogativa est, ut ipsum Caesarem iudicare et damnare possit, quoties scilicet lis ei ab aliquo ordinum imperii movetur;* ⁽¹⁵⁰⁾ the Palgrave hath power to judge and pass sentence upon the emperor himself, when any of the states of Germany do sue him at the law); the same and more hath God and his angels over the mightiest magnificoes in the world. "Lebanon shall fail

¹⁴⁵ Horat.

¹⁴⁶ Luther. in Genes.

¹⁴⁷ *Mundi flagellum.* Scourge of the world.

¹⁴⁸ Herodot.

¹⁴⁹ A hanging screen of this material formerly placed round the walls of household apartments, often at such a distance from them as to allow of people being concealed in the space between.

¹⁵⁰ Parei Hist. pros. med., 771.

by a mighty one," (*Isaiah 10:34*) *i.e.*, by an angel, as some interpret it.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 9. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 5:9]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Moreover, the profit of the earth is for all.** *viz.*, For all sorts of men, and for all kind of uses. *Alma mater, terra ferax.* "Then shall the earth yield her increase; and (therein) God, even our own God, shall bless us." (*Psalms 67:6*) "Can any of the vanities of the heathens give rain," or grain? No, neither. (*Jeremiah 14:22*) Can the earth bring forth fruit of herself? ⁽¹⁵¹⁾ So, indeed, our Saviour seems to say, "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear"; (*Mark 4:28*) but then it is after the good husbandman hath sowed it, and God by his blessing given the increase. The drift of the Preacher here is to set forth the excellence of tillage first, and then to show the vanity of it. Tillage is the life and blood of a commonwealth; it is beyond all pecuniary possessions. Jacob had money and other fruits of the earth, and yet if Egypt, the world's granary, as one calls it, had not supplied them with grain, he and his might have perished. (*Genesis 43:1-2*)

The king himself is served by the field. Not the lion, dragon, unicorn, &c. But the plough and the ship are the supporters of a crown. Some read it thus: *Rex agro servit*, The king is a servant to the field. ⁽¹⁵²⁾ It concerns him to have care of tillage, plantation of fruits, breeding of cattle, &c., or else all will soon run to wrack and ruin. King Uzziah loved husbandry, and used it much. (*2 Chronicles 26:10*) In *Amos 7:1*, we read of "the king's mowings." And Pliny hath observed that grain was never so plentiful, good and cheap at Rome as when the same men tilled the land that ruled the commonwealth, *Quasi gauderet terra laureato vomere scilicet et aratore triumphali.*{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 10. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 5:10]]{{field-on:Bible}}**He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver.** As he cannot fill his belly, nor clothe his back with it, so neither can he satisfy his inordinate appetite and desire after it, though he had heaped and hoarded it up, as the great Caliph of Babylon had—that covetous wretch, starved to death by Haalon, brother to Mango, the great Cham of Cataia, in the midst of his gold, silver, and precious stones, whereof, till then, he could never have enough. ⁽¹⁵³⁾ *Auri nempe fames parto fit maior ab auro,* ⁽¹⁵⁴⁾ A man may as soon fill a chest with grace as a heart with wealth. As a circle cannot fill a triangle, so neither can the whole world, if it could be compassed, possibly fill the heart of man. *Anima rationalis caeteris omnibus occupari potest, impleri non potest.* ⁽¹⁵⁵⁾ The reasonable soul may be busied about other things, but it cannot be filled with them. *Non plus satiatur cor auro, quam corpus aura,* As air fills not the body, so neither doth money the mind. It cannot, therefore, be man's chiefest good, as mammonists make it, since it doth not terminate his appetite, but that although he hath never so much of it, yet is he as hungry after more as if he were not worth a halfpenny. Theophrastus brings in the covetous person first wishing—

"Mille meis errent in montibus agni;"

that he had a thousand sheep in his flock. And this when he had gotten, then, *Pauperis est namerare pecus.* He would have cattle without number. The Greeks derive their word for desire ⁽¹⁵⁶⁾ from a root that signifieth to burn, Now, if one should heap never so much fuel upon a fire, it would not quench it, but kindle it the more. So here. Surely, as a ship may be overladen with silver, even unto sinking, and yet have compass and sides enough to hold ten times more, so a covetous wretch, though he hath enough to sink him, yet never hath he enough to satisfy

¹⁵¹ αὐτομάτως.

¹⁵² *Rex agro fit servus.*—Ar. Montan.

¹⁵³ Turk. Hist.

¹⁵⁴ Prudentius.

¹⁵⁵ Bernard.

¹⁵⁶ ἐπιθυμία; θυμειν, ardere. Hinc ardens appetitus.

him. Cataline was ever *alieni appetens, sui profusus*,⁽¹⁵⁷⁾ not more prodigal of his own than desirous after other men's estates.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 11. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 5:11]]{{field-on:Bible}}**When goods increase, they are increased that eat them.** Servants, friends, flatterers, trencher men, pensioners, and other hangerons that will flock to a rich man, as crows do to a dead carcase, not to defend, but to devour it. Caesar perished in the midst of his friends, whose boundless hopes and expectations he was not able to satisfy. The King of Spain, were it not for the West India fleet, were never able to subsist, though he be by far the greatest prince in Christendom, gives for his motto, *Totus non sufficit orbis*, and hath his empire so far extended that he may truly say, *Sol mihi semper lucet*, The sun ever shines upon my dominions.⁽¹⁵⁸⁾ The Duke of Bavaria's house is so pestered with friars and Jesuits that, notwithstanding the greatness of his revenue, he is very poor, as spending all his estate on those Popish flesh flies, those *inutiles et ribaldi* (Lyra's words upon this text), useless, needless, ribaldry fellows.⁽¹⁵⁹⁾

Saving the beholding of them with his eyes. To such a large retinue, such a numerous family; as Job, who had a very great household, (**Job 1:3**) and Abraham, who had a trained hand in his family, but especially as Solomon, who had thousands of servants and work folk. Whereunto I may add Cardinal Wolsey's pompous family, consisting of one earl, nine barons, knights and esquires very many, chaplains and other servants, besides retainers, at bed and board, no fewer than four hundred. Or, to see so much wealth, and to tumble in it; as Caligula the emperor was wont to do, *contrectandae pecuniae cupidine incensus*, loving to handle his money, to walk upon it with his bare feet, and to roll among it with his whole body, as Suetonius relateth.⁽¹⁶⁰⁾ The like is reported of Heliogabalus, who also, besides what he did eat, is said to have provided himself, in case he should be in danger to be surprised by his enemies, silken halters to hang himself with, ponds of sweet water to drown himself, gilded poisons to poison himself with, &c.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 12. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 5:12]]{{field-on:Bible}}**The sleep of a labouring man is sweet.** Sleep is the nurse of nature, the wages that she pays the poor man for his incessant pains. His fare is not so high, his care is not so great, but that without distemper or distraction he can hug his rest most sweetly, and feel no disturbance, until the due time of rising awakeneth him.⁽¹⁶¹⁾ These labouring men are as sound as a rock, as hungry as hunters, as weary as ever was dog of day, as they say, and therefore no sooner laid in their beds but fast asleep, their hard labour causing easy digestion, and uninterrupted rest. Whereas the restless spirit of the rich wretch rides his body day and night; care of getting, fear of keeping, grief of losing, these three vultures feed upon him continually. He rolls a Sisyphus' stone; his abundance, like a lump of lead, lies heavy upon his heart, and breaks his sleep. Much like the disease called the nightmare, or *ephaltes*, in which men in their slumber think they feel a thing as large as a mountain lying upon their breasts, which they can no way remove. His evil conscience soon lasheth and lanceth him, as it did our Richard III, after the murder of his two innocent nephews, and Charles IX of France, after the bloody massacre. God also terrifies him with dreams, throws handfuls of hell fire in his face, *interpellat cogitantem, excitat dormientem*, as Ambrose hath it, interrupts him while he is thinking, awakeneth him while he is sleeping, rings that doleful peal in his ears, that makes him start and stare, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be taken from thee." *Veni miser in iudicium*, Come, thou wretch, receive thy

¹⁵⁷ Salust.

¹⁵⁸ Camden.

¹⁵⁹ Heylin.

¹⁶⁰ *Toto corpore aliquandiu volutatus.*—Sueton.

¹⁶¹ *Somni finis est salus animantis.*—Magir.

judgment.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 13. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 5:13]]{{field-on:Bible}}**There is a sore evil.** Or, An evil disease, ⁽¹⁶²⁾ such as breaks the sleep, *hinc pallor et genae pendulae, item furiales somni et inquires nocturna*, ⁽¹⁶³⁾ causing paleness, leanness, restlessness by night. This disease is the dropsy or bulimy of covetousness, as seldom cured as heresy, frenzy, jealousy, which three are held incurable maladies.

Riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt. Worldlings sit abroad upon their wealth, and hatch to their hurt, as the silly bird doth the eggs of the cockatrice. Riches are called "goods," but it hath been well observed that he that first called them so was a better husband *husbandman* than divine. Such a husband was he in the gospel, who reckoned upon "much goods laid up for many years." But how come these "goods" to prove evil to the owners but by the evil usage of them? Riches in themselves are of an indifferent nature, and it is through men's corruption, *ut magna sit cognatio et nominis et rei divitiis et vitiis*, that riches are weapons of wickedness—engines of evil. "He that getteth riches, and not by right, shall die a poor fool." (**Jeremiah 17:11**)

"Dum peritura parat, per male parts perit."

He that keepeth his riches—having no quick silver, no current money—when God calls him to part with them for pious and charitable uses, keepeth them to his own greatest hurt. For the rust of his canker eaten gold shall rise up in judgment against him at that great day. (**James 5:3**)

*"Sic plates nimia congesta pecunia cura
Strangulat"*—Juvenal, sat. 10.

(**See Trapp on "Proverbs 1:19"**){{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 14. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 5:14]]{{field-on:Bible}}**But those riches perish by evil travail.** *i.e.*, By evil trading, trafficking, or other cross event and accident. They waste and wither either by vanity or violence. They slip out of the hand, as the punting bird or wriggling eel. There is no hold to be taken of them—no trust to be put in them. They were never true to those that trusted in them. (**See Trapp on "Proverbs 23:5"**) {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 15. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 5:15]]{{field-on:Bible}}**As he came forth of his mother's womb.** *q.d.*, If riches leave not us while we live, yet we are sure to leave them when we die. ⁽¹⁶⁴⁾ Look how a false harlot leaves her lover when arrested for debt, and follows other customers; so is it here. And as dogs, though they go along with us in company, yet at parting they run every one to his own master. So do these to the world, when we come to leave the world. Death, as a porter, stands at the gate, and strips us of all our thick clay wherewith we are laden. (**See Trapp on "Ecclesiastes 2:22"**)

To go as he came. Like an unwelcome guest, or an unprofitable servant, a cipher, and excrement. Oh live, live, live, saith a reverend man, ⁽¹⁶⁵⁾ quickly, much, long; so you are welcome to the world: else you are but hissed and kicked off this stage of the world, as Phocas was by Heraclius; nay, many (*as Job 27:23*) who were buried before half dead, &c.

And shall take nothing of hls labour. *Nehemiah obolum quo naulum Charonti solvant.* Some

¹⁶² Mala infirmitas.—Pagn.

¹⁶³ Plin.

¹⁶⁴ Haud ulla portabis opes Acherontis ad undas: Nudas ab inferna stulte vehere rate.—Propert.

¹⁶⁵ "Abner's funeral," by Dr Harris.

have had great store of gold and silver buried with them, and others would needs be buried in a monk's cowl, out of a superstitious conceit of speeding the better in another world; but it hath profited them nothing at all. (*Ecclesiastes 9:10*).^{}field-off:Bible}}

Verse 16. ^[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 5:16]^{}field-on:Bible}} **And this also is a sore evil.** *Malum dolorificum*, so it will prove; a singular vexation, a sharp corrosive, when Balaam and his bribes, Laban and his bags, Nabal and his flocks, Achan and his wedge, Belshazzar and his bulls, Herod and his harlots, Dives and his dishes, &c., shall part asunder for ever, when they shall look from their death beds, and see that terrible spectacle, death, judgment, hell, and all to be passed through by their poor souls! Oh, what a dreadful shriek gives the guilty soul at death, to see itself launching into an ocean of scalding lead, and must swim naked in it for ever! Who, therefore, unless he had rather burn with Dives than reign with Lazarus, will henceforth reach out his hand to bribery, usury, robbery, deceit, sacrilege, or any such like wickedness or worldliness, which "drown men's souls in perdition and destruction?" (**1 Timothy 6:9**) If rich men could stave off death, or stop its mouth with a bag of gold, it were somewhat like. But that cannot be, as Henry Beaufort, that rich and wretched cardinal found by experience; as the King of Persia told Constance the Emperor, who had showed him all the glory and bravery of Rome; *Mira quidem haec*, said he, *sed ut video, sicut in Persia, sic Romae heroines moriuntur*,⁽¹⁶⁶⁾—i.e., These be brave things, but yet I see that as in Persia, so at Rome also, the owners of these things must needs die. Agreeable whereunto was that speech of Nugas, the Scythian monarch, to whom, when Michael Paleologus, the emperor, sent certain rich robes for a present, he asked, *Nunquid calamitates, morbos, mortem depellere possent?*—whether they could drive away calamities, sickness, death?—for if they could not do so they were not much to be regarded,⁽¹⁶⁷⁾

What profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind? *i.e.*, For just nothing. See *Hosea 12:1; Jeremiah 22:22*. The Greeks expressed the same by hunting after and 'husbanding the wind.'⁽¹⁶⁸⁾ The apostle speaks of "beating the air," (**1 Corinthians 9:26**) as he doth that fights with his own shadow—that disquiets himself in vain. The four monarchies are called the "four winds of heaven." (*Zechariah 6:3-4*) And at the Pope's enthronisation a wad of straw is set on fire before him, and one appointed to say, *Sic transit gloria mundi*,—The glory of this world is but a blaze or blast.^{}field-off:Bible}}

Verse 17. ^[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 5:17]^{}field-on:Bible}} **All his days also he eats in darkness.** *i.e.*, He lives besides that he hath, and cannot so much as be merry at meat. Hence is much sorrow, wrath, and sickness, especially if spoiled of his goods, which he made his god; he is no less troubled than Laban was for his teraphim, or Micah for his idol. (**Judges 17:3**) He is mad almost, and ready to hang himself for woe, having much fretting, foaming, fuming, anger, languor, ready to flee at God and men. ^{}field-off:Bible}}

Verse 18. ^[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 5:18]^{}field-on:Bible}} **It is good and comely for one to eat,** &c. Niggardice and baseness is an ugly evil, making a man, though never so rich, to be vilipended and despised of all. Nabal shall not be called Nadib—the vile person liberal, the churl bountiful. (*Isaiah 32:5*) (*See Trapp on "Ecclesiastes 2:24"*) (*See Trapp on "Ecclesiastes 3:12"*) ^{}field-off:Bible}}

Verse 19. ^[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 5:19]^{}field-on:Bible}} **This is the gift of God.** A gift of his right hand, *donum throni, non scabelli*,—Godliness only hath contentedness. (**1 Timothy 6:6**) The comfort of wealth comes in by no other door than by the assurance of God's love in

¹⁶⁶ Fulgent.

¹⁶⁷ Pachymer., *Hist*, lib. v.

¹⁶⁸ Ἀνέμους γεωργεῖν.

bestowing it, and of his grace in sanctifying it. "God give thee the dew of heaven." (**Genesis 27:28**) Esau likewise had the like, but not with a "God give thee." A carnal heart cares not how, so he may have it; hence his so little comfort and enjoyment. A godly man will have God with it, or else he is *all amort*. Moses would not be put off with an angel to go along with them. Luther protested, when great gifts were offered him, that he would not be satisfied or quieted with those rattles. ⁽¹⁶⁹⁾{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 20. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 5:20]]{{field-on:Bible}}**For he shall not much remember,** &c. He vexeth not at the brevity or misery of his life, but looketh upon himself as a stranger here, and therefore if he can have a better condition, he "useth it rather," (**1 Corinthians 7:21**) as if a traveller can get a better room in an inn, he will; if not, he can be content, for, saith he, it is but for a night. {{field-off:Bible}}

¹⁶⁹ Valde protestatus sum me nolle sic satiari.—Luth.

Chapter 6

Verse 1. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 6:1]]{{field-on:Bible}}**There is an evil that I have seen under the sun.** This wretched life is so pestered with evils that the Preacher could hardly cast his eye beside one or other of them. A diligent observer he was of human miseries, that he might hang loose to life and the better press upon others the vanity of doting upon it. One would wonder, surely, that our life here being so grievously afflicted, should yet be so inordinately affected; and that even by those that are "in deaths often," that have borne God's yoke from their youth, that have suffered troubles without and terrors within, and who, if they had hope in this life only, were, by their own confession, of all men the most unhappy. (**1 Corinthians 15:19**) And yet so it is; God is forced to smoke us out of our clayey cottages, and to make life unto us to be nothing better than a lingering death, that we may grow weary of it, and breathe after a better, ⁽¹⁷⁰⁾ where are riches without rust, pleasure without pain, youth without decay, joy without sorrow, *Ubi nihil sit quod nolis, et totum sit quod velis,* ⁽¹⁷¹⁾ where is all that heart can wish, &c. The skilful surgeon mortifieth with straight binding the member that must be cut off; so doth God fit us for our cutting off, by binding us with the cords of afflictions. "He crieth not when God bindeth him," (**Job 36:13**) saith Elihu of hypocrites; a generation of men, than the which nothing is more stupid and insensible; ⁽¹⁷²⁾ till at length, God making forcible entry upon them, doth violently break that cursed covenant that they have made with death and hell, dash the very breath out of their bodies with one plague upon another, turn them out of their earthly tabernacles, with a *firma eiectio*, and send them packing to their place in hell, from which they would not be stopped by all those crosses that, for that purpose, he cast in their way.

And it is common among men. Proper to men, for beasts are not subject to this evil disease, and common to all sorts of men. One evil may well be common among many, when many evils are so commonly upon one. It happened to be a part of Mithridates' misery, that he had made himself unpoisonable. And Cato so felt this miserable life, *ut causa moriendi nactum se esse gauderet,* ⁽¹⁷³⁾ that he was glad of an occasion to go out of the world.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 2. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 6:2]]{{field-on:Bible}}**So that he wanteth nothing.** Nothing but everything, because he dare not make use of anything almost, but is tantalised by his own baseness. He famisheth at a full feast, he starveth at a fireside. And this is often repeated in this book, because it can never enough be observed and abhorred.

Yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof. *i.e.*, He withholdeth his grace from him, that he cannot use it to his comfort. Herein he is like a stag that hath great horns, but no courage to use them; or rather like an ass loaded with gold and victuals, but feeding upon thistles. Pray we, therefore, that God would together with riches, "give us all things richly to enjoy." (**1 Timothy 6:17**) *Vel mihi da clavem, vel mihi tolle feram.* Either give me the key, saith one, or take away the lock. The Greeks describe a good householder to be *κτητικον, φυλακτικον, κοσμητικον των υπαρχοντων, και χρηστικον*, a good husband, as in getting, keeping and setting out what he hath to the best, so in making good use of it, for his own and others' behoof and benefit.

But a stranger eats it. God so providing that if one will not, another shall; that if the owner will not eat, but sit piddling or sparing, a stranger, and perhaps an enemy, shall take away. That if men will not serve God with cheerfulness in the abundance of all things, they should fast another while, and be forced to serve their enemies in hunger and thirst and nakedness; and

¹⁷⁰ Aeterna vita vera vita.—August.

¹⁷¹ Bernard.

¹⁷² Hypocritis nihil stupidius.—Pareus, *Isaiah 28*.

¹⁷³ Cicero, in Tusc. quaest.

by the want of all be taught the worth of them, *carendo quam fruendo* (**Deuteronomy 28:15-68**) {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 3. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 6:3]]{{field-on:Bible}} **If a man beget an hundred children.** As Ahab did half a hundred, after that God had threatened to cut off all his house, as it were in contempt of the divine threatening. And as Proculus Caesar got twenty maids with child in fifteen days' space, as Pliny ⁽¹⁷⁴⁾ reports. Erasmus ⁽¹⁷⁵⁾ mentioneth a maid of Eubcea, called Combe, that being married to a husband, brought him a hundred children. Like enough it might be *luctuosa faecunditas*, as Jerome ⁽¹⁷⁶⁾ saith of Laeta, who buried many children.

And live many years. So that he be *trisaeclesenex*, as Nestor was of old, and *Iohannes de temporibus*, a Frenchman, not many ages since, to whom I may add that old, old, very old man, ⁽¹⁷⁷⁾ that died of late years, having been born in Henry VII's days, or Edward IV's.

And his soul be not filled with good. Though he be filled with years, and filled with children, that may survive and succeed him in his estate, yet if he be a covetous wretch, a miserable muckworm, that enjoys nothing, as in the former verse, is not master of his wealth, but is mastered by it, lives beside what he hath, and *dies to save charges*—as the bee in Camden's *Remains*.

And also that he have no burial. He leaves nothing to bring him honestly home, as they say; or if he do, yet his ungrateful, greedy heirs deny him that last honour, so that he is buried "with the burial of an ass," (**Jeremiah 22:19**) as Coniah; suffered to rot and stink above ground, as that Assyrian monarch, (**Isaiah 14:19-20**) and after him Alexander the Great, who lay unburied thirty days together. So Pompey the Great, of whom Claudian the poet sings thus,

*"Nudus pascit aves, iacet en qui possidet orbem,
Exiguæ telluris inops."*—

And a similar story about our William the Conqueror, and various other greedy engrossers of the world's good. See here the poisonous and pernicious nature of niggardliness and covetousness, that turns long life and large issue, those sweetest blessings of God, into bitter curses. And with it take notice of the just hand of God upon covetous old men, that they should want comely burial; which is usually one of their greatest cares, as Plutarch observeth. For giving the reason why old men, that are going out of the world, should be so earnestly bent upon the world, he saith, it is out of fear that they shall not have *τοὺς θρέψοντασ καὶ τοὺς θοψαντασ*, friends to keep them while they are alive, and some to bury them when they are dead.

I say that an untimely birth. I affirm it in the word of truth, and upon mature deliberation, that an untimely birth—not only a naked young child, as aforesaid, that is carried ab utero ad urnam, from the womb to the tomb, from the birth to the burial—but an abortive, that coming too soon into the world, comes not at all; and, by having no name, finds itself a name, as Pliny speaks of the herb anonymus.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 4. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 6:4]]{{field-on:Bible}} **For he cometh in with vanity,** &c. As nothing, being senseless of good or evil. "And departeth in darkness," and is buried in huggar mugger. And his "name shall be covered," &c., that is, there is no more talk of this abortive. {{field-off:Bible}}

¹⁷⁴ Lib. vii.

¹⁷⁵ Erasm. in *Chilia*.

¹⁷⁶ Jerome, Epist. 7.

¹⁷⁷ Parr.

Verse 5. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 6:5]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Moreover he hath not seen the sun.** A second privilege and prerogative of the poor abortive. None are so miserable, we see, but they may be comparatively happy. It is ever best to look at those below us, and then we shall see cause to be better contented.

This hath more rest than the other. The grain that is cropped as soon as it appeareth, or is bruised in pieces when it lies in sprout, is better than the old weed, that is hated while it standeth, and in the end is cut down for the fire. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 6. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 6:6]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Yea, though he live a thousand years.** Which yet never any man did; Methuselah wanted thirty-two of a thousand.—The reason thereof is given by Oecolampadius; "*Quia numerus iste typum habeat perfectionis, ut qui constat e centenario decies revoluto,*" because the number of a thousand types out perfection, as consisting of a hundred ten times told. But there is no perfection here, saith he.

Yet hath he seen no good. For, "all the days of the afflicted are evil," saith Solomon. (**Proverbs 15:15**) And man's days are "few and full of trouble," saith Job. (**Job 14:1**) "Few and evil are the days of my pilgrimage," saith Jacob, (**Genesis 47:9**) "and I have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers." For Abraham lived one hundred and seventy-five years, and Isaac one hundred and eighty—near upon forty years longer than Jacob, but to his small comfort, for he was blind all that time; yet nothing so blind as the rich wretch in the text, *qui privatus interno lumine, tamen in hac vita diu vult perpeti caecitatem suam*, as one speaketh, who being blind as a mole, lies rooting and poring incessantly in the bowels of the earth—as if he would that way dig himself a new and a nearer way to hell—and with his own hands addeth to the load of this miserable life. As he hath done no good, so he hath seen or enjoyed none; but goes to his place (do not all go to one place?)—the place that Adam provided for all his posterity, the house appointed for all living, as Job calls it, (**Job 30:23**) the congregation house, as one renders it. Heaven the apostle calls the congregation house (**πᾶν ἄνθρωπον**, **Hebrews 12:23**) of the firstborn, whose names also are there said to be written in heaven: but covetous persons, as they are called "the inhabitants of the earth," (**Revelation 12:12**) in opposition to those *coelicolae*, citizens of heaven, the saints; so their names are "written in the earth," (**Jeremiah 17:13**) "because they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters," and "hewed them out cisterns that can hold no water." (**Jeremiah 2:13**) What marvel, then, if they live long, and yet see no good? if they are driven to that doleful complaint that Saul made, "God hath forsaken me, and the Philistines are upon me," (**1 Samuel 28:15**)—sickness, death, hell is upon me, I am even now about to make my bed in the dark, and all the comfort I can have from God is that dismal sentence, "This shall ye have of mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow." (**Isaiah 50:11**) Lo, this is the cursed condition of the covetous churl; as he hath lived beside his goods, having jaded his body, broken his brains, and burdened his conscience, so he dies hated of God, and loathed of men; the earth groans under him, heaven is shut against him, hell gapes for him. (**1 Corinthians 6:8-9; Philippians 3:18**) Thus many a miser spins a fair thread to strangle himself, both temporally and eternally. Oh that they would seriously think of this before the cold grave hold their bodies, and hot hell torment their souls! before death come with a writ of *Habeas corpus*, Let you have the body, and the devil with a writ of *Habeas animam*, Let you have the soul, as once to that rich fool. (**Luke 12:16-21**) {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 7. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 6:7]]{{field-on:Bible}}**All the labour of man is for his mouth.** That is, For food and raiment, (*as 1 Timothy 6:8*) a little whereof will content nature, which hath therefore given us a little mouth and stomach, ⁽¹⁷⁸⁾ to teach us moderation, as Chrysostom well observeth; to the shame of those beastly belly gods, that glut themselves, and devour the creatures, as if they were of kin to that Pope that was called *Os porci*, Mouth of a pig, fattening

¹⁷⁸ *Dii boni. quantum hominum unus exercet venter!—Seneca. Deus homini angustum ventrem, &c.—Sergius PP.*

themselves like boars, till they be brawned, and having, as Eliphaz speaketh, collops in their flank. A man would think, by their greedy and great eating, that their throats were whirlpools, and their bellies bottomless; that they were like locusts, which have but one gut, the ass fish, that hath his heart in his belly, ⁽¹⁷⁹⁾ or the dolphin, that hath his mouth in his maw, as Solinus saith.

And yet the appetite is not filled. And yet what birds soever fly, what fishes soever swim, what beasts soever run about, are all buried in our bellies, saith Seneca. ⁽¹⁸⁰⁾ Heliogabalus was served at one supper with seven thousand fishes and five thousand fowls. He had also six hundred harlots following him in chariots, and yet gave great rewards to him that could invent any new pleasure. His thirst was unquenchable, his appetite like the hill Aetna, ever on fire, after more. Now, as "in water face answereth to face," (**Proverbs 27:19**) so doth the appetite of a man to man; we are all as irregular, if God suffer us to range.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 8. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 6:8]]{{field-on:Bible}}**For what hath the wise more than the fool?** Nothing at all in this vanity of human nature, that it needeth still new supply of nourishment to preserve it. When a wise man hath eaten, is he not again hungry? and must not his hunger again be satisfied as well as a fool's hunger? Indeed, as any man is more wise, he is more temperate: he eats to live, not lives to eat. He needs not much, nor is a slave to his appetite, or to his palate. He can feed upon gruel for a need, with Daniel; upon coleworts, with Elisha; upon a cake on the coals and a cruise of water, with Elijah; upon locusts and wild honey, with the Baptist; upon barley bread, with the disciples; upon a herring or two, as Luther, &c. This a fool can ill frame to. He eats as a beast with the old world—**Τρώγοντες (Matthew 24:38)**—and "feeds without fear"; (**Jude 1:12**) he "caters for the flesh" (**Romans 13:14**) and "overchargeth it with surfeiting and drunkenness"; (**Luke 21:34**) he measureth not his cheer by that which nature requireth, but that which greedy appetite desireth, as if therein consisteth his whole happiness.

What hath the poor that knoweth to walk before the living. viz., The poor wise man that lives by his wits can "serve the time," in St Paul's sense (if ever he meant it there, **Romans 12:11**), and make an honest shift to rub through the world. What hath such a one more than a simpler man in this particular? Doth not his hunger return—his stomach crave new nourishment? *Animantis cuiusque vita est fuga*, saith the philosopher: Were it not for the repair of nutrition, the natural life would be soon extinguished. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 9. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 6:9]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Better is the sight of the eyes, &c. i.e.,** As some sense it, Better it is to overlook dainty dishes than to overcharge the stomach with them; to fill the eyes than the belly; to gratify that than to pamper this: though that is a vanity too in the issue, and may prove a vexation of spirit—may breed inward inquietation; the best that can come of it is repentance and self-revenge, (**2 Corinthians 7:11**) as in Epaminondas. Symmachus reads the words thus, *Melius est providere, quam ambulare ut libet*: Better it is to provide than to walk at random. The Septuagint thus, *Melius est videre quod cupias, quam desiderare quod nescias*: Better is it to see what thou desirest, than to desire what thou knowest not. The best expositors make it an answer to an objection: for, whereas the rich man might reply, Better see wealth than be always seeking it, better have it than hawk after it: the Preacher answers that misery may be somewhat mitigated by this means but never fully cured or cashiered. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 10. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 6:10]]{{field-on:Bible}}**That which hath been is named already.** Or thus, That which is the name of it, hath been named already, (viz., **Ecclesiastes**

¹⁷⁹ Aristot.

¹⁸⁰ *Quicquid avium volitat, quicquid piscium natat, quicquid ferarum discurrit, nostris sepelitur ventribus.*

1:2-3) and it is known that it is Adam, or earthly man. The very notation of his name argues him mortal and miserable; whether he be wise or foolish, rich or poor, that alters not the case:—*Homo sum*, said one, *humanum nihil a me alienum puto*: I am a man, and therefore may not think strange of misery, whereunto I am born, as the sparks fly upward; (**Job 5:7**) he that forgets not that he is a man, will not take it ill that evil befalls him, ⁽¹⁸¹⁾ saith another. When Francis, King of France, being held prisoner by Charles V, Emperor of Germany, saw the Emperor's motto, *Plus ultra*, More yet, written on the wall of his chamber, he underwrote these words, *Hodie mihi, cras tibi*: Today is my turn to suffer, tomorrow thine. The Emperor observed it and wrote underneath that, *Fateor me esse hominem*: I confess I am a man, and therefore subject to misery. ⁽¹⁸²⁾ Metellus was by the Romans counted and called Felix, happy; so was Sulla, ⁽¹⁸³⁾ but he proved true that holy proverb, "Better is the end of a thing than the beginning," for he died miserably of the lousy disease, that dashed all his former happiness. The Delphian oracle pronounced one Aglaus, a poor contented Arcadian, the only happy man alive. Solon preferred Tellus the Athenian, and Cleobis, and Bitus also, before rich Croesus, telling him further that he might be called rich and mighty but not blessed, till he had made a happy end; and so confuting his fond conceit of an imaginary felicity. ⁽¹⁸⁴⁾ The Greeks, when they would call a man thrice miserable, they call him thrice a man. ⁽¹⁸⁵⁾ The Hebrews, whereas they name a bee from the order of her working, a grasshopper from devouring, an ant from gnawing, an adamant from strokes bearing, a serpent from curious observing, a horse from neighing, &c, they give man his name Adam, from the dust whereof he was made, and Enoch, sorry-man, sick of a deadly disease, and so no way fit to "contend with God, who is much mightier than he," to require a reason of his judgments, which are sometimes secret, always just. God hath shut up all persons and things (as it were close prisoners) under vanity, by an irresistible decree. To strive against this stream, and by heaping riches, honours, pleasures, to seek to break prison and to withstand God's will, is lost labour. Misery need not go to find such out, they run to meet their bane; which yet will—as we say of foul weather—come time enough before it is sent for.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 11. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 6:11]]{{field-on:Bible}} **Seeing there be many things that increase.** Seeing it is in vain to wrestle or wrangle with God, to seek to ward off his blow, to moat up one's self against his fire. Why should vain man contend with his Maker? Why should he beat himself to froth, as the surges of the sea do against the rock? Why should he, like the untamed heifer unaccustomed to the yoke, gall his neck by wriggling?—make his crosses heavier than God makes them, by crossness and impatience? The very heathen could tell him that,

*"Deus crudelius urit,
Quos videt invitos succubuisse sibi."
—Tibul. Eleg. 1.*

God will have the better of those that contend with him: and his own reason will tell him that it is not fit that God should cast down the bucklers first: and that the deeper a man wades, the more he shall be wet. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 12. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 6:12]]{{field-on:Bible}} **For who knoweth what is good for man.** He may think this and that to be good, but is, mostly, mistaken and disappointed. Ambrose hath well observed, that other creatures are led by the instinct of nature to that

¹⁸¹ Ὁ μνησθὲν ὅτι ἐστὸν ἄνθρωπος, &c.—*Isoc.*

¹⁸² *Joh. Man., loc. com., p. 175.*

¹⁸³ *Dictas potius est quam fuerit felix Sulla.—Solin. c. 7.*

¹⁸⁴ *Valer. Max., lib. vii., cap. 3.*

¹⁸⁵ Προσάνθρωπος. πᾶς ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος συμφορᾷ.—*Herodot.*

which is good for them. The lion, when he is sick, cures himself by devouring an ape; the bear, by devouring ants; the wounded deer, by feeding upon dittany,⁽¹⁸⁶⁾ &c.; *tu ignoras, O homo, remedia tua*, but thou, O man, knowest not what is good for thee. "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good," saith the prophet; "and what doth the Lord require of thee, but this"—instead of raking riches together—"to do justly, and to love mercy, and"—instead of contending with him—"to humble thyself to walk with thy God." (***Micah 6:8***)

For who can tell a man what shall be after him? When the worms shall be scrambling for his body, the devils, haply, for his soul, and his friends for his goods. A false Jesuit published in print, some years after Queen Elizabeth's death, that she died despairing, and that she wished she might, after her death, hang a while in the air, to see what striving would be for her kingdom.⁽¹⁸⁷⁾ I loved the man, said Ambrose of Theodosius, for this, that when he died, he was more affected with care of the Church's good, than of his own.⁽¹⁸⁸⁾ {{field-off:Bible}}

¹⁸⁶ A labiate plant, *Origanum Dictamnus*, called also *Dictamnus Creticus* or **dittany of Crete**; formerly famous for its alleged medicinal virtues.

¹⁸⁷ Camden's *Elisabeth*.

¹⁸⁸ *Dilexi virum qui cum corpore solveretur magis de Ecclesiarum statu, &c.*

Chapter 7

Verse 1. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 7:1]]{{field-on:Bible}} **A good name is better than precious ointment.** Yea, than great riches. (*See Trapp on "Proverbs 22:1"*) The initial letter ⁽¹⁸⁹⁾ of the Hebrew word for "good" here is larger than ordinary, to show the more than ordinary excellence of a good name and fame among men. (*Hebrew Text Note*) If whatsoever David doeth doth please the people, if Mary Magdalen's cost upon Christ be well spoken of in all the churches, if the Romans' faith be famous throughout the whole world, (*Romans 1:8*) if Demetrius have a good report of all good men, and St John set his seal to it, this must needs be better than precious ointments; the one being but a perfume of the nostrils, the other of the heart. Sweet ointment, *olfactum afficit, spiritum reficit, cerebrum iuvat*, affects the smell, refresheth the spirit, comforts the brain: a good name doth all this and more. For,

First, As a fragrant scent, it affects the soul, amidst the stench of evil courses and companies. It is as a fresh gale of sweet air to him that lives, as Noah did, among such as are no better than walking dunghills, and living sepulchres of themselves, stinking much more worse than Lazarus did, after he had lain four days in the grave. A good name preserveth the soul as a pomander; and refresheth it more than musk or civit doth the body.

Secondly, It comforts the conscience, and exhilarates the heart; cheers up the mind amidst all discouragements, and fatteth the bones, (*Proverbs 15:30*) doing a man good, like a medicine. And whereas sweet ointments may be corrupted by dead flies, a good name, proceeding from a good conscience, cannot be so. Fly blown it may be for a season, and somewhat obscured; but as the moon wades out of a cloud, so shall the saints' innocence break forth as the light, and their righteousness as the noonday. (*Psalms 37:6*) Buried it may be in the open sepulchres of evil throats, but it shall surely rise again: a resurrection there shall be of names, as well as of bodies, at the last day, at utmost. But usually a good name comforts a Christian at his death, and continues after it. For though the name of the wicked shall rot, his lamp shall be put out in obscurity, and leave a vile snuff behind it, yet "the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance"; they shall leave their names for a blessing. (*Isaiah 65:15*)

And the day of death, than the day of one's birth. The Greeks call a man's birthday, *γενέθλιον quasi γένεσιν ἄθλων*; the beginning of his nativity, they call the begetting of his misery. "Man that is born of a woman, is born to trouble," saith Job. (*Job 14:1*) The word there rendered *born*, signifieth also generated or conceived; to note that man is miserable, even as soon as he is "warm in the womb," as David hath it. (*Psalms 51:5*) If he lives to see the light, he comes crying into the world, a *fletu vitam auspicatur*, saith Seneca. ⁽¹⁹⁰⁾ Insomuch as the lawyers define life by crying, and a stillborn child is all one as dead in law. Only Zoroaster is said to have been born laughing, but that laughter was both monstrous and ominous. ⁽¹⁹¹⁾ For he first found out the black art which yet profited him not so far as to the vain felicity of this present life. For being king of the Bactrians, he was overcome and slain in battle by Ninus, king of the Assyrians. Augustine, who relates this story, saith of man's first entrance into the world, *Nondum loquitur, et tamen prophetat*, ere ever a child speaks, be prophesies, by his tears, of his ensuing sorrows. *Nec prius natus, quam damnatus*, no sooner is he born, but he is condemned to the mines or galleys, as it were, of sin and suffering. Hence Solomon here prefers his coffin before his cradle. And there was some truth in that saying of the heathen, *Optimum est non nasci, proximum quam celerrime mori*: For wicked men it had been best not to have been born, or being born, to die quickly; since by living long they heap up first sin, and then wrath against

¹⁸⁹ **ο** Maiusculam.

¹⁹⁰ Ad Mare., cap. 11.

¹⁹¹ Justin, lib. i.

the day of wrath. As for good men, there is no doubt but the day of death is best to them, because it is the daybreak of eternal righteousness; and after a short brightness, as that martyr said, gives them, *Malorum ademptionem, bonorum adeptionem*, freedom from all evil, fruition of all good. Hence the ancient fathers called those days wherein the martyrs suffered their birthdays, because then they began to live indeed: since here to live is but to lie dying. Eternal life is the only true life, saith Augustine.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 2. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 7:2]]{{field-on:Bible}} **It is better to go to the house of mourning.** To the *termining house*, as they term it, where a dead corpse is laid forth for burial, and in that respect weeping and wailing, which is one of the dues of the dead,⁽¹⁹²⁾ whose bodies are sown in corruption, and watered usually with tears. It is better therefore to sort with such, to mingle with mourners, to follow the hearse, to weep with those that weep, to visit the heavy hearted, this being a special means of mortification, than to go to the house of feasting, where is nothing but joy and jollity, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine, yea, therefore eating and drinking, because tomorrow they shall die. *Ede, bibe, lude, post mortem nulla voluptas.*⁽¹⁹³⁾ What good can be gotten among such swinish epicures? What sound remedy against life's vanity? It is far better therefore to go to the house of mourning, where a man may be moved with compassion, with compunction, with due and deep consideration of his doleful and dying condition; where he may hear dead Abel by a dumb eloquence preaching and pressing this necessary but much neglected lesson, that "this is the end of all men, and the living should lay it to heart"; or, as the Hebrew hath it, "lay it upon his heart," work it upon his affections; *inditurus est iliad animo suo*, so Tremelius renders it, he will so mind it as to make his best use of it, so as to say with Job, "I know that thou wilt bring me unto death"; (**Job 30:23**) and with David, "Behold, thou hast made my days as a span"; (**Psalms 39:4, 5**) and as Moses, who when he saw the people's carcasses fall so fast in the wilderness, "Lord, teach us," said he, "so to number our days, as to cause our hearts" (of themselves never a whit willing) "to come to wisdom." (**Psalms 90:12**).{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 3. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 7:3]]{{field-on:Bible}} **Sorrow is better than laughter.** Here, as likewise in the two former verses, is a collation and prelation; "Sorrow," or indignation conceived for sin, "is better than laughter," —*i.e.*, carnal and profane mirth. This is [παράδοξον ἀλλ' οὐ παράλογον](#), as Nazianzen speaks in another case, a paradox to the world, but such as may sooner and better be proven than those paradoxes of the ancient Stoics. The world is a perfect stranger to the truth of this sacred position, as being all set upon the *merry pin*, and having so far banished sadness, as that they are no less enemies to seriousness, than the old Romans were to the name of the Tarquins. These Philistines cannot see how "out of this eater can come meat, and out of this strong, sweet"; how any man should reasonably persuade them to "turn their laughter into mourning, and joy into heaviness." (**James 4:9**) A pound of grief, say they, will not pay an ounce of debt; a little mirth is worth a great deal of sorrow; there is nothing better than for a man to eat and drink and laugh himself fat: *spiritus Calvinianus, spiritus melancholicus*—a Popish proverb—to be precise and godly is to bid adieu to all mirth and jollity, and to spend his days in heaviness and horror. This is the judgment of the mad world, ever beside itself in point of salvation. But what saith our Preacher, who had the experience of both, and could best tell? Sorrow is better, for it makes the heart better; it betters the better part, and is therefore compared to fire, that purgeth out the dross of sin, to water, that washeth out the dregs of sin, yea, to eye water, sharp, but sovereign. By washing in these troubled waters the conscience is cured, and God's Naamans cleansed. By feeding upon this bitter sweet root, God's penitentiaries are fenced against the temptations of Satan, the corruption of their own hearts, and the allurements of this present evil world. These tears

¹⁹² τὰ νομιζόμενα.

¹⁹³ Sardanapali vox belluina.

drive away the devil much better than holy water, as they call it; they quench hell flames, and as April showers, they bring on in full force the May flowers both of grace (**1 Peter 5:5**) and of glory. (**Jeremiah 4:14**) What an ill match therefore make our mirthmongers, that purchase laughter many times with shame, loss, misery, beggary, rottenness of body, distress, damnation, that hunt after it to hell, and light a candle at the devil for lightsomeness of heart, by haunting ale houses, brothel houses, conventicles of good fellowship, sinful and unseasonable sports, and other vain fooleries, in the froth whereof is bred and fed that worm that never dies? A man is nearest danger when he is most merry, said Mr Greenham. And God cast not man out of paradise, saith another reverend man, that he might here build him another, but that, as that bird of paradise, he might always be upon the wing, and if at any time taken, never leave groaning and grieving till he be delivered. This will bring him a paradise of sweetest peace, and make much for the lengthening of his tranquillity and consolation. (**Daniel 4:27**) Oh, how sweet a thing is it at the feet of Jesus to stand weeping, to water them with tears, to dry them with sighs, and to kiss them with our mouths! Only those that have made their eyes a fountain to wash Christ's feet in, may look to have Christ's heart a fountain to bathe their souls in. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 4. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 7:4]]{{field-on:Bible}}**The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning.** He gladly makes use of all good means of minding his mortality, and holds it a high point of heavenly wisdom so to do. Hence he frequents funerals, mingles with mourners, hears *etiam muta clamare cadavers*, makes every tomb a teacher, every monument a monitor,⁽¹⁹⁴⁾ lays him down in his bed as in his grave, looks upon his sheets as his winding sheet. *Ut somnus mortis, sic lectus imago sepulchri*. If he hears but the clock strike, sees the glass run out, it is as a death's head to preach *memento mori* to him; he remembers the days of darkness, as Solomon bids, (**Ecclesiastes 11:8**) acts death aforehand, takes up many sad and serious thoughts of it, and makes it his continual practice so to do, as Job and David did. The wiser Jews digged their graves long before, as that old prophet; (**1 Kings 13:30**) Joseph of Arimathea had his in his garden to season his delights. John, Patriarch of Alexandria (surnamed Eleemosynarius, for his bounty to the poor), having his tomb in building, gave his people charge it should be left unfinished, and that every day one should put him in mind to perfect it, that he might remember his mortality. The Christians in some part of the primitive Church took the sacrament every day, because they looked to die every day. Augustine would not for the gain of a million of worlds be an atheist for half an hour, because he had no certainty of his life for so short a time. His mother, Monica, was heard oft to say, How is it that I am here still?⁽¹⁹⁵⁾ The women of the Isle of Man, saith Speed,⁽¹⁹⁶⁾ whensoever they go out of their doors, gird themselves about with the winding sheet that they purpose to be buried in, to show themselves mindful of their mortality. The philosopher⁽¹⁹⁷⁾ affirms that man is therefore the wisest of creatures, because he alone can number,—*Bruta non numerant*; this is an essential difference,—but especially in that divine arithmetic of so "numbering his days as to apply his heart to wisdom." (**Psalms 90:12**) This speaks him wise indeed, right in his judgment, right also in his affections. This will render him right in his practice too; as it did Waldus, the merchant of Lyons, who seeing one suddenly fall down dead before him, became a new man, and chief of those old Protestants, the poor men of Lyons,⁽¹⁹⁸⁾ called also Waldenses from this Waldus.

But the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. (*See Trapp on "Ecclesiastes 7:3"*) As the

¹⁹⁴ *Monimenta, quasi mentem momentia.*

¹⁹⁵ *Quid hic facio.—Aug.*

¹⁹⁶ *Description of the Isle of Man, abridged.*

¹⁹⁷ *Arist.*

¹⁹⁸ *Pauperes de Lugduno.*

heart of the wicked is light and little worth, so it is their trade to hunt after lying vanities (as the child doth after butterflies), to "rejoice in a thing of nothing"; (**Amos 6:13**) he wiles away his time, either in "weaving spiders' webs or hatching cockatrice' eggs"; (**Isaiah 59:5**) froth or filth (ἄφροσύνη, **Mark 7:22**) is their recreation. Sad and serious thoughts they banish, and therefore love not to be alone. They hate to hear of that terrible word death—as Louis XI of France commanded his servants not once to mention it to him, though he lay upon his deathbed. They live and laugh as if they were out of the reach of God's rod, or as if their lives were riveted upon eternity, They can see death in other men's brows and visages, not feel it in their own bowels and bosoms. When they behold any laid in their graves, they can shake their heads and say, This is what we must all come to; but after a while all is forgotten,—as water stirred with a stone cast into it hath circle upon circle on the surface for present, but by and by all is smooth as before. As chickens in a storm haste to be under the hen's wing, but when that is a little over they lie dusting themselves in the sunshine; so it is here. Good thoughts fall upon evil hearts as sparks upon wet tinder; or if they kindle there, fools bring their buckets to quench them, run into merry company to drink, or otherwise drive away those troublesome heart qualms and melancholy dumps, as they call them. This is to excel in madness, &c. (**See Trapp on "Proverbs 10:23"**).^{}field-off:Bible}}

Verse 5. ^{[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 7:5]}}^{}field-on:Bible}} **It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise.** Sharp truth takes better with an honest heart than a smooth supparasitation. Seneca compares flattery to a Song or symphony; but it is a syren's Song, and our ears must be stopped to it; for like the poison of asps, it casts one into a sleep, but that sleep is deadly. Those that had the *sudor Anglicus*, or sweating sickness, died assuredly, if allowed to sleep; those, then, were their best friends that kept them waking, though haply they had no thank for it; so are wise and merciful reprovers. "Faithful are these wounds of a friend." (**Proverbs 27:6**) (**See Trapp on "Proverbs 27:6"**) David was full glad of them; (**Psalms 141:5**) so was Gerson, who never took anything more kindly, saith he that writes his life, than to be plainly dealt with. The bee can suck sweet honey out of bitter thyme, yea, out of poisonous hemlock. So can a wise man make benefit of his friends, nay, of his enemies. It is good to have friends (as the orator said of judges), *mode audeant quae sentiunt*, so they dare deal freely. This an enemy will do for spite; and malice though it be an ill judge, yet is a good informer. Augustine, in an epistle to Jerome, approves well of him that said, There is more good to be gotten by enemies railing than friends flattering. These sing Satan's lullaby, such as casts into a dead lethargy, and should therefore be served as Alexander the Great served a certain philosopher whom he chased out of his presence, and gave this reason, Because he had lived long with him, and never reprov'd any vice in him; or as the same Alexander dealt by Aristobulus, the false historian, who had written a book of his noble acts, and had magnified them beyond truth, hoping thereby to ingratiate and curry favour: Alexander having read the book, cast it into the River Hydaspes, and told the author it were a good deed to throw him after, *Qui solus me sic pugnantes facis.*^{(199)}}^{}field-off:Bible}}

Verse 6. ^{[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 7:6]}}^{}field-on:Bible}} **For as the crackling of thorns under a pot.** Much noise, little fire; much light, little heat. So here is much mirth, little cause; a blaze it may yield, but is suddenly extinct; this blaze is also under a pot; the gallantry of it is checked with troubles and terrors; it is insincere many times; it is but the "hypocrisy of mirth," as one calls it. It is truly and trimly here compared to a handful of brushwood, or sear thorn, under the pot. *Ecquando vidisti flammam stipula exortam, claro strepitu, largo fulgore, cito incremento, sed enim materia levi, caduco incendio, nullis reliquiis*, saith Apuleius—a very dainty description of carnal joy, and agreeable to this text. And herewith also very well suits that of the Psalmist, "Before your pots can feel the thorns, he shall take them away with a

¹⁹⁹ Quint. Curt.

whirlwind, both living, and in his wrath." (*Psalm 58:9*) Fools themselves are but thorns twisted and folded together; (*Nahum 1:10*) "briars"; (*Micah 7:4*) "brambles." (*Judges 9:14*) Their laughter is also fitly compared to thorns, because it chokes good motions, scratcheth the conscience, harbours the vermin of base and baggage lusts. And as themselves, like thorns, shall be thrust away and utterly burnt with fire in the same place, (*2 Samuel 23:6, 7*) so their joy soon expireth, and proves to be rather desolation than consolation—as lightning is followed with rending and roaring, as comets outblaze the very stars, but when their exhaled matter is wasted, they vanish and fill the air with pestilent vapours. The prophet Amos telleth the wicked that "their sun shall go down at noonday." (*Amos 8:9*) Surely as metals are then nearest melting when they shine brightest in the fire, and as the fishes swim merrily down the silver streams of Jordan till they suddenly fall into the Dead Sea, where presently they perish, so it fares with these merry Greeks that flee⁽²⁰⁰⁾ when they should fear, and laugh when they should lament. "Woe to you that laugh," (*Luke 6:25*) saith Christ; how suddenly are they put out as the fire of thorns! (*Psalm 118:12*).{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 7. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 7:7]]{{field-on:Bible}} **Surely oppression maketh a wise man mad.** viz., Till such time as he hath recollected himself, and summoned the sobriety of his senses before his own judgment—till he hath reasoned himself and prayed himself out of his distemper, as David⁽²⁰¹⁾ did in *Psalm 73:16, 17*; Anger is a short madness, fury a frenzy; and who so apprehensive of an injury as the wise man? and who so wise as not sometimes to be overcarried by his passion to his cost? Oppression may express that from the meekest Moses which he may sorely repent, but knows not how to remedy. Anger displays reason in the wisest sometimes, and especially in case of calumny—for the eye and the good name will bear no jests, as the proverb hath it. A man can better bear a thong on the back than a touch on the eye. You shall find some, saith Erasmus, that if death be threatened, can despise it, but to be belied they cannot brook, nor from revenge contain themselves. How could we digest that calumny (might Erasmus well think then) that he basely casts upon our profession in his epistle to Bilibaldus? *Ubicunque regnat Lutherus, ibi literarum est interitus: duo tantum quaerunt, censum, et uxorem*: Wheresoever Luther prevails, learning goes down; wealth and wives is all they look after. How ill himself, with all his wisdom, could endure this kind of oppression, appears by his Hyperaspistes, and many other his apologies—for by his playing on both hands, *Nec evangelicorum vitavit censuras, nec apud episcopos et monachos gratiam inivit*,⁽²⁰²⁾ he was beaten on both sides, which made him little less than mad; and it was but just upon him. David's grief was that his enemies traduced and abused him without cause. Job and Jeremiah make the same complaint, and were much troubled. Defamations, they knew well, do usually leave a kind of lower estimation many times, even where they are not believed.⁽²⁰³⁾ Hence Paul's apologies and self-commendation, even to suspicion of madness almost. Hence Basil, in an epistle *ad Bosphorum Episcop: Quo putas animum meum dolore affecit fama calumniae illius quam mihi offuderunt quidam, non metuentes Iudicem perditurum omnes loquentes mendacium? Tanto videlicet ut prope totam noctem insomnem duxerim*: With what grief dost thou think, saith he, did that calumny oppress my mind, which some (not fearing the Judge that shall destroy all them that speak lies) did cast upon me? Even so much that I slept not almost all the night; so had the apprehended sadness possessed the secrets of mine heart.

And a gift destroyeth the heart. *i.e.*, Corrupts it, makes it blind, and so destroys it; as the eagle lights upon the hart's horns, flutters dust in his eyes, and so by blinding him brings him

²⁰⁰ To laugh in a coarse, impudent, or unbecoming manner.

²⁰¹ Asaph.

²⁰² Amama in *Antibarbar. Praefat.*

²⁰³ Calamniare audacter, aliquid saltem adhaerebit.

to destruction. ⁽²⁰⁴⁾ See **Deuteronomy 16:19**. (See Trapp on "Deuteronomy 16:19") Let a judge be both wise (for his understanding) and righteous (for his will), a gift will mar all, as it is there: it dazzleth the eyes, and maketh a wise man mad.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 8. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 7:8]]{{field-on:Bible}} **Better is the end of a thing than the beginning.** No right judgment can be made of anything unless we can see the end of it. God seems oft to go a contrary way to work, but by that time both ends be brought together, all is as it should be, and it appears that he doth all things in number, weight, and measure. We may learn (saith Mr Hooper, ⁽²⁰⁵⁾ martyr, in a certain letter exhorting to patience) by things that nourish and maintain us, both meat and drink, what loathsome and abhorring they come unto, before they work their perfection in us: from life they are brought to the fire, and clean altered from what they were when they were alive; from the fire to the trencher and knife, and all to be hacked; from the trencher to the mouth, and as small ground as the teeth can grind them; from the mouth into the stomach, and there so boiled and digested before they nourish, that whosoever saw the same would loathe and abhor his own nourishment, till it come to perfection. But as a man looketh for the nourishment of his meat when it is full digested, and not before, so must he look for deliverance when he hath suffered much trouble, and for salvation when he hath passed through the strait gate, &c. Let the wise man look to the end, and to the right which in the end God will do him, in the destruction of his oppressors; and this will patient his heart and heal his distemper. We "have heard of the patience of Job, and what end the Lord made with him. Be ye also patient," you shall shortly have help if ye hold out waiting. "Mark the upright man, and behold the just, for"—whatsoever his beginning or his middle be—"the end of that man is peace." (**Psalm 37:37**) Only he must hold out faith and patience, and not fall off from good beginnings; for as the evening crowneth the day, and as the grace of an interlude is in the last scene, so it is constancy that crowneth all graces, and he only that "continueth to the end that shall he saved." Laban was very kind at first, but he showed himself at parting. Saul's three first years were good. Judas carried himself fair, *usque ad loculorum officium*, saith Tertullian, till the bag was committed to him. Many set out for heaven with as much seeming resolution as Lot's wife did out of Sodom, as Orphah did out of Moab, as the young man in the Gospel came to Christ; but after a while they fall away, they stumble at the cross, and fall backwards. Now to such it may well be said, The end is better than the beginning. Better it had been for such never to have known the way of God, &c. Christ loves no lookers back. See how he thunders against them. (**Hebrews 10:26-27, 38-39**) So doth St Paul against the Galatians, because they "did run well," but, lying down in that heat, they caught a surfeit, and fell into a consumption.

And the patient in spirit is better than the proud, &c. Pride is the mother of impatience, as infidelity is of pride. "The just shall live by faith" (**Habakkuk 2:4**)—live upon promises, reversions, hopes—wait deliverance or want it, if God will have it so. "But his soul, which," for want of faith to ballast it, "is lifted up," and so presumes to set God a time wherein to come or never come, (**2 Kings 6:33**) "is not upright in him." Some things he doth, as it were a madman, not knowing or greatly caring what he doth, saith Gregory. ⁽²⁰⁶⁾ He frets at God and rails at men—lays about him on all hands, and never ceaseth, till in that distemperature he depart the world, which so oftentimes himself had distempered, as the chronicler ⁽²⁰⁷⁾ concludes the life of our Henry II.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 9. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 7:9]]{{field-on:Bible}} **Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry.**

²⁰⁴ Pliny.

²⁰⁵ Acts and Mon., fol. 1377.

²⁰⁶ Greg. Pastor.

²⁰⁷ Daniel.

The hasty man, we say, never wants woe. For wrath is an evil counsellor, and enwrappeth a man in manifold troubles, mischiefs, and miseries. It makes man like the bee, that vindictive creature, which, to be revenged, loseth her sting, and becomes a drone; or, like Tamar, who, to be even with her father-in-law, defiled him and herself with incest. "Cease, therefore, from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in anywise to do evil." (**Psalm 37:8**) Athenodorus counselled Augustus to determine nothing rashly, when he was angry, till he had repeated the Greek alphabet. Ambrose taught Theodosius, in that case, to repeat the Lord's Prayer. What a shame it is to see a Christian act like *Hercules furens*, or like Solomon's fool, that casts firebrands, or as that demoniac, (**Mark 2:3**) out of measure fierce! That demoniac was "among the tombs," but these are among the living, and molest those most that are nearest to them.

For anger resteth in the bosom of fools. Rush it may into a wise man's bosom, but not rest there, lodge there, dwell there; and only where it dwells it domineers, and that is only where a fool is master of the family. Thunder, hail, tempest, neither trouble nor hurt celestial bodies. See that the sun go not down upon this evil guest: see that the soul be not soured or impured with it, for anger corrupts the heart, as leaven doth the lump, or vinegar the vessel wherein it doth continue. ⁽²⁰⁸⁾ `{{field-off:Bible}}`

Verse 10. `[[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 7:10]]{{field-on:Bible}}`**Say not thou, What is the cause? &c.** This, saith an interpreter, ⁽²⁰⁹⁾ is the continual complaint of the wicked moody and the wicked needy. The moody Papists would murder all the godly, for they be Canaanites and Hagarens. The needy profane would murder all the rich, for they are lions in the grate. Thus he. It is the manner and humour of too many, saith another, ⁽²¹⁰⁾ who would be thought wise to condemn the times in an impatient discontentment against them, especially if themselves do not thrive, or be not favoured in the times as they desire and as they think they should be. And these malcontents are commonly great questionists. What is the cause? say they, &c. It might be answered, *In promptu causa est*,—Themselves are the cause, for the times are therefore the worse, because *they* are no better. Hard hearts make hard times. But the Preacher answers better: "Thou dost not wisely inquire concerning this"; *q.d.*, The objection is idle, and once to have recited it, is enough to have confuted it. Oh "if we had been in the days of our forefathers," said those hypocrites in **Matthew 23:30**, great business would have been done. Ay, no doubt of it, saith our Saviour, whereas you "fill up the measure of your fathers' sins," and are every whit as good at "resisting of the Holy Ghost" as they were. (**Acts 7:51**) Or if there were any good heretofore more than is now, it may be said of these wise fools, as it was anciently of Demosthenes, that he was excellent at praising the worthy acts of ancestors—not so at imitating of them. ⁽²¹¹⁾ In all ages of the world there were complaints of the times, and not altogether without cause. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, complained; so did Noah, Lot, Moses, and the prophets; Christ, the archprophet, and all his apostles; the primitive fathers and professors of the truth. The common cry ever was, *O terapora! O mores! Num Ecclesias suas dereliquit Dominus?* said Basil,—Hath the Lord utterly left his Church? Is it now the last hour? Father Latimer saw so much wickedness in his days, that he thought it could not be but that Christ must come to judgment immediately, like as Elmerius, a monk of Malmesbury, from the same ground gathered the certainty of Antichrist's present reign. What pitiful complaints made Bernard, Bradwardine, Everard, Archbishop of Canterbury (who wrote a volume called *Obiurgatorium temporis*, the rebuke of the time), Petrarch, Mantuan, Savanarola, &c.! In the time of Pope Clement V, Frederick king of Sicily was so far offended at the ill government of the church, that he called into question the truth of the Christian religion, till he was better

²⁰⁸ Aug., epist. 87.

²⁰⁹ Granger.

²¹⁰ Dr Jermin.

²¹¹ ἐπαινέσαι μὲν ἰκανώτατος ἦν μιμήσασθαι δὲ οὐ.—*Plutarch*.

resolved and settled in the point by Arnoldus de Villanova, who showed him that it was long since foretold of these last and loosest times, that iniquity should abound—that men should be proud, lewd, heady, highminded, &c. ⁽²¹²⁾ (**1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Timothy 3:1-4**) Lay aside, therefore, these frivolous inquiries and discontented cryings out against the times, which, in some sense reflect upon God, the Author of times—for "can there be evil in an age, and he hath not done it?"—and blessing God for our gospel privileges, which indeed should drown all our discontents, let every one mend one, and then let the world run its circuits—take its course. *Vadat mundus quo vult: nam vult vadere quo vult*, saith Luther bluntly,—Let the world go which way it will: for it will go which way it will. "The thing that hath been, is that which shall be," &c. (**Ecclesiastes 1:9, 10**) *Tu sic debes vivere, ut semper praesentes dies meliores tibi sint quam praeteriti*, saith a father, ⁽²¹³⁾—Thou shouldst so live that thy last days may be thy best days, and the time present better to thee than the past was to those that then lived.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 11. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 7:11]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Wisdom is good with an inheritance.**⁽²¹⁴⁾ So is it without it, but not so good, because wealth is both an ornament, an instrument, and an encouragement to wisdom. Aristides, saith Plutarch, ⁽²¹⁵⁾ slandered and made justice odious by his poverty, as if it were a thing that made men poor, and were more profitable to others than to himself that useth it. God will not have wealth always entailed to wisdom, that wisdom may be admired for itself, and that it may appear that the love and service of the saints is not mercenary and meretricious. But godliness hath the promises of both lives. And the righteous shall leave inheritance to his children's children. Or if he do not so, yet he shall leave them a better thing, for "by wisdom" (abstracted from wealth) "there is profit"; or, it is "more excellent," or "better," (as the Hebrew word signifies), as the apostle in another case, "And yet show I you a more excellent way" (**1 Corinthians 12:31**)—viz., that graces are better than gifts; so here, that wisdom is better than wealth. And if Jacob may see "his children the work of God's hands," framed and fitted by the word of God's grace ("the wisdom of God in a mystery, ") this would better preserve him from confusion, and "his face from waxing pale," than if he could make his children "princes in all lands"; (**Psalms 45:16**) yea, this will make him to sanctify God's name, yea, to 'sanctify the Holy One,' and with singular encouragement from the God of Israel. (**Isaiah 29:22-23**).{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 12. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 7:12]]{{field-on:Bible}}**For wisdom is a defence, and money,** &c. Heb., A shadow; viz., to those that have seen the sun (as in the former verse), and are scorched with the heat of it—that are under the miseries and molestations of life. Wisdom in this case is a wall of defence and a well of life. Money also is a thorn hedge, of very good use, (**Job 1:10**) so it be set without the affections, and get not into the heart, as the Pharisees' ἐνόητα did. (**Luke 11:41**) Their riches were got within them, and, by choking the seed, kept wisdom out.

Wisdom giveth life to them that have it. For "God is both a sun and a shield," or shadow. "He will give grace and glory." (**Psalms 84:11**) Life in any sense is a sweet mercy, but the life of "grace and of glory" may well challenge the precellency. No marvel, therefore, though wisdom bear away the bell from wealth, which, as it serves only to the uses of life natural, so, being misused, it "drowns many a soul in perdition and destruction," (**1 Timothy 6:9**) and proves "the root of all evil"; (**1 Timothy 6:10**) yea, it taketh away the life of the owner thereof. (**Proverbs 1:19**) (*See Trapp on "Proverbs 1:19"*) It is confessed that wealth sometimes giveth life to them that have it, as it did to those ten Jews that had treasures in the field, (**Jeremiah**

²¹² Rev., De Vit. Pont.

²¹³ Jerome.

²¹⁴ Utilior est sapientia cum divitiis: so the Septu. here.

²¹⁵ In Vita.

41:8) and doth to those condemned men that can take a lease of their lives. But Nabal's wealth had undone him, if Abigail's wisdom had not interposed. And in the other life money bears no mastery. Adam had it not in paradise, and in heaven there is no need of it.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 13. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 7:13]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Consider the work of God,** &c. *q.d.*, Stoop, since there is no standing out. See God in that thou sufferest, and submit. God by a crooked tool many times makes straight work; he avengeth the quarrel of his covenant by the Assyrian, that rod of God's wrath, though he thinks not so. (*Isaiah 10:5-7*) Job could discern God's arrows in Satan's hand, and God's hand on the arms of the Sabeen robbers. He it is that "killeth and maketh alive," saith holy Hannah; "he maketh poor and maketh rich, he bringeth low and lifteth up." (*1 Samuel 2:6-7*) All is done according to the counsel of his will; who, as he may do what he pleases, so he will be sure never to overdo; his holy hand shall never be further stretched out to smite, than to save. (*Isaiah 59:1*) This made David "dumb, for he knew it was God's doing." (*Psalms 39:2*) "It is the Lord," said Eli, "let him do," (*1 Samuel 3:18*) and I will suffer, lest I add passive disobedience to active. Aaron, his predecessor, had done the like before him upon the same consideration, in the untimely end of his untowardly children. (*Leviticus 10:3*) Jacob, likewise, in the rape of Dinah. (*Genesis 34:5*) *Agnovit haud dubie ferulam divinam*, saith Pareus on that text; he considered the work of God in it, and that it was in vain for him to seek to make that straight which God had made crooked. There is no standing before a lion, no hoisting up sail in a tempest, no contending with the Almighty. "Who ever waxed fierce against God and prospered?" (*Job 9:4*) Who ever got anything by kicking against the pricks, by biting the rod which they should rather have kissed? See *Isaiah 14:27; Job 9:12-13; 34:12-18*. Set God before your passions, when they are up in a hurry, and all will be hushed. Set down proud flesh when it bustles and bristles under God's fatherly chastisements, and say soberly to yourselves, Shall I not drink of the cup that my Father, who is also my physician, hath put into mine hands; stand under the cross that he hath laid on my shoulders; stoop unto the yoke that he hangeth on my neck? Drink down God's cup willingly, said Mr Bradford the martyr, and at first when it is full, lest if we linger we drink at length of the dregs with the wicked. *Ferre minora volo, ne graviora feram*. That was a very good saying of Demosthenes, who was ever better at praising virtue than at practising it. Good men should ever do the best, and then hope the best. But if anything happen worse than was hoped for, let that which God will have done be borne with patience. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 14. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 7:14]]{{field-on:Bible}}**In the day of prosperity be joyful.** Here we have some fair days, some foul—crosses like foul weather, come before they are sent for; for as fair weather, the more is the pity, may do hurt, so may prosperity, as it did to David, (*Psalms 30:6*) who therefore had his interchanges of a worse condition, as it was but needful; his prosperity, like checker work, was intermingled with adversity. See the circle God goes in with his people; ⁽²¹⁶⁾ in that thirtieth Psalm David was afflicted; (*Psalms 30:5*) he was delivered and grew wanton; then troubled again; (*Psalms 30:7*) cries again; (*Psalms 30:8, 9*) God turns his mourning into joy again. Thus God sets the one against the other, as it were, *in equilibrio*, in even balance, for our greatest good. Sometimes he weighs us in the balance and finds us too light, then he thinks best to make us "heavy through manifold temptations." (*1 Peter 1:6*) Sometimes he finds our water somewhat too high, and then as a physician, no less cunning than loving, he fits us with that which will reduce all to the healthsome temper of a broken spirit. But if we be but prosperity proof, there is no such danger of adversity. Some of those in Queen Mary's days who kept their garments close about them, wore them afterwards more loosely. Prosperity makes the saints rust sometimes; therefore God sets his scullions to scour them and make them bright, though they make themselves black. This scouring if they will scape, let Solomon's counsel be taken, "In the day of prosperity be joyful,"—*i.e.*, serve God

²¹⁶ *Circulus quidem est in rebus humanis. Deus nos per contraria eridit.—Naz., Orat. 7.*

with cheerfulness in the abundance of all things, and reckon upon it, the more wages the more work. Is it not good reason? Solomon's altar was four times as large as that of Moses; and Ezekiel's temple ten times larger than Solomon's; to teach that where God gives much, he expects much. Otherwise God will "curse our blessings," (*Malachi 2:2*) make us "ashamed of our revenues through his fierce anger;" (*Jeremiah 12:13*) and "destroy us after he hath done us good." (*Joshua 24:20*)

In the day of adversity consider. Sit alone, and be in meditation of the matter. (*Lamentations 3:28*) "Commune with your own consciences and be still," (*Psalms 4:4*) or make a pause. See who it is that smites thee, and for what. (*Lamentations 3:40*) Take God's part against thyself, as a physician observes which way nature works, and helps it. Consider that God "afflicts not willingly," or "from his heart"; it goes as much against the heart with him as against the hair with us. (*Lamentations 3:33*) He is forced of "very faithfulness" (*Psalms 119:75*) to afflict us, because he will be true to our souls and save them; he is forced to diet us, who have surfeited of prosperity, and keep us short. He is forced to purge us, as wise physicians do some patients, till he bring us almost to skin and bone; and to let us bleed even *ad deliquium animae*, till we swoon again, that there may be a spring of better blood and spirits. Consider all those precious passages, (*Hebrews 12:3-12*) and then lift up the languishing hands and feeble knees. For your further help herein, read my treatise called "God's Love Tokens," and "The Afflicted Man's Lessons," *passim*.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 15. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 7:15]]{{field-on:Bible}} **All things have I seen in the days of my vanity.** *i.e.*, Of my life, which is so very a vanity that no man can perfectly describe it, or directly tell what it is. He came somewhat near the matter that said it was a spot of time between two eternities.

There is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness. The first man that died, died for religion. How early did martyrdom come into the world! How valiant for the truth and violent for the kingdom have God's suffering saints been ever since, preferring affliction before sin, and choosing rather to perish in their righteousness than to part with it! Ignatius triumphed in his voyage to Rome to suffer, to think that his blood should be found among the mighty worthies, and that when the Lord makes inquisition for blood, he will recount from the blood of righteous Abel, not only to the blood of Zaccharias, son of Barachias, but also to the blood of mean Ignatius. "Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake," (*Matthew 5:10*) (*See Trapp on "Matthew 5:10"*)

And there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life. This, as the former event likewise, proves a great stumblingblock to many; to see good men perish, bad men flourish and live long in sin, with impunity, credit, and countenance, as Manasseh, that monster of men, who reigned longest of any king of Judah. Jeroboam lived to see three successions in the throne of Judah. Thus the ivy lives when the oak is dead. David George, that odious heretic, lived to a great age, and died in peace and plenty. Ann Stanhope, Duchess of Somerset, wife of the Protector, Edward Seymour, after she had raised such tragedies about precedence with Queen Catherine, and caused the ruin of her husband and his brother the admiral, died A.D. 1587, being ninety-nine years of age.⁽²¹⁷⁾ Length of days is no sure rule of God's favour. As plants last longer than sensitive creatures, and brute creatures outlive the reasonable,⁽²¹⁸⁾ so among the reasonable it is no news, neither should it trouble us, that the wickedly great do inherit these worldly glories longer than the best; it is all they are like to have, let them make them merry with it. Some wicked men live long that they may aggravate their judgment, others die sooner that they may hasten it.{{field-off:Bible}}

²¹⁷ Camden's *Elisabeth*, fol. 356.

²¹⁸ *Ut victimae ad supplicium saginantur, ut hostiae ad poenam coronantur.*—Min. Faelix.

Verse 16. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 7:16]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Be not righteous over much, neither make,** &c. Virtue consists in a mediocrity. *Omne quod est nimium vertitur in vitium.* A rigid severity may mar all. ⁽²¹⁹⁾ "Let your moderation, **Τὸ ἔπιεκες**, be known to all men"; (**Philippians 4:5**) prefer equity before extremity: utmost right may be utmost wrong. He is righteous over much that will remit nothing of his right, but exercise great censures for light offences; this is, as one said, to kill a fly upon a man's forehead with a beetle. Justice, if not mixed with mercy, degenerates into cruelty. Again, he is righteous more than is meet that maketh sins where God hath made none, as those *superstitiostdi* of old, and the Papists to this day do with their "Touch not, taste not, handle not: which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship," &c. (**Colossians 2:21, 23**) Will worshippers are usually over wise, *i.e.*, overweening, and also too well conceited of their own wisdom and worth. Hence it is that they cannot do, but they must overdo, ⁽²²⁰⁾ till "wearied in the greatness of their way," (**Isaiah 57:10**) they see and say that it had been best to have held the king's highway, chalked out unto them by the "royal law," (**James 2:8**) that "perfect law of liberty." (**James 1:25**) *Via regis temperata est, nec plus in se habens, nec minus;* ⁽²²¹⁾ the middle way is the way of God, neither having too much, nor yet too little. True it is, saith the heathen orator, ⁽²²²⁾ that *nemo pius est qui pietatem caret*, no man is godly, that is afraid of being so. But then it is no less true, and the same author speaks it, *Modum esse religionis, nimium esse superstitiosum non oportere;* ⁽²²³⁾ that there is a reason in being religious, and that men must see they be not superstitious. Solomon saith, that he that wrings his nose overhard, brings blood out of it. Pliny saith, he that tills his land too much, doth it to his loss. ⁽²²⁴⁾ Apelles said those painters were to blame, *qui non sentirent quid esset satis*, that could not see when they had done sufficient. ⁽²²⁵⁾ It is reported of the river Nile, that if it either exceed or be defective in its due overflowings of the land of Egypt, it causeth famine. ⁽²²⁶⁾ The planet Jupiter, situated between cold Saturn and hot Mars, *Ex utroque temperatus est, et saluteris*, saith Pliny, ⁽²²⁷⁾ partakes of both, and is benign and wholesome to the sublunary creatures.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 17. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 7:17]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Be not wicked over much.** viz., Because thou seest some wicked men live long, and scape scot free for the present, as **Ecclesiastes 7:15.** For God may cut thee short enough, and make thee die before thy time—*i.e.*, before thou art fit to die—and when it were better for thee to do anything rather than die, since thou diest in thy sins, which is much worse than to die in a ditch. Now they are too much wicked, and egregiously foolish, that "add rebellion to sin," (**Job 34:37**) "drunkenness to thirst," (**Deuteronomy 29:19**) "doing wickedly with both hands earnestly," (**Micah 7:3**) refusing to be reformed, hating to be healed. These take long strides toward the burning lake, which is but a little before them. The law many times lays hold of them, the gallows claims its right, they preach in a Tyburn tippet, as they say; or otherwise, God cuts them off betime, even long before, as he knows their thoughts and dispositions long before. We used to destroy hemlock even in the midst of winter, because we know what it will do if suffered to grow. "Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days." (**Psalms 55:23**) God cut off Eli's two sons in one day for their excessive wickedness; and further threatened their father, that

²¹⁹ Est modus in rebus.

²²⁰ Quisquis plus iusto non sapit, ille sapit.—Mart.

²²¹ Hieron. in cap. 57; Isa.

²²² Cic. 2, de Finib.

²²³ Cic. pro Dom. sua.

²²⁴ Nihil minus expedit, quam agrum optime colere.—Plin.

²²⁵ Cic. de Orat. Jul.

²²⁶ Polyb. c. 45.

²²⁷ Lib. ii. c. 8.

there should not be an old man left in his house for ever. (**1 Samuel 2:32**) Wicked men die *tempore non suo*, as the text is by some rendered. The saints die not till the best time, not till their work is done—and then God sends them to bed; the two witnesses could not be killed while they were doing it—not till that time, when if they were but rightly informed, they would even desire to die. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 18. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 7:18]]{{field-on:Bible}}**It is good that thou shouldst take hold of this.** *i.e.*, Of this golden mean, walking accurately by line and by rule, and continuing constant in thine integrity, not turning aside to the right hand or to the left. As for those that "turn aside unto those crooked ways" (**Psalm 125:5**) of being just too much by needless scrupulosity, or wicked excessively by detestable exorbitancy, "the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity," as cattle led to the slaughter, or malefactors to execution; whereas, "he that feareth God shall come out of them all." He shall "look forthright," (**Proverbs 4:25**) and shall have "no occasion of stumbling." (**1 John 2:10**) He shall also be freed from, or pulled as a "firebrand out of the fire." (**Zechariah 3:2**) {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 19. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 7:19]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Wisdom strengtheneth the wise,** &c. Prudence excelleth puissance, and counsel valour. This made Agamemnon set such a price upon Ulysses; Darius, upon Zopyrus; the Syracusans, upon Archimedes; the Spartans, upon Leonidas, who, with six hundred men, dispersed five hundred thousand of Xerxes his host. ⁽²²⁸⁾ Those that are wise to salvation go ever under a double guard; the peace of God within them, the power of God without them. No sultan of Babylon or Egypt (who have that title from the Hebrew word here rendered mighty men) did ever go so well guarded. (**See Trapp on "Proverbs 21:22"**).{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 20. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 7:20]]{{field-on:Bible}}**For there is not a just man upon earth.** No, this is reserved for the state of perfection in heaven, where are "the spirits of just men made perfect." (**Hebrews 12:23**) It was the cavil wherewith the Pelagians troubled St Augustine, whether it were impossible that by the absolute power of God a just man might not live on earth without sin? ⁽²²⁹⁾ But what have we to do here with the absolute power of God? His revealed will is, "That there is not a just man upon earth that doth good and sinneth not"; nay, that sinneth not, even in his doing of good. Our righteousness, while we are on earth, is mixed, as light and darkness, dimness at least, in a painted glass dyed with some obscure and dim colour; it is transparent and giveth good, but not clear and pure light. It is a witty observation of a late learned divine, ⁽²³⁰⁾ that the present tense in grammar is accompanied with the imperfect, the future with the preter-pluperfect tense; and that such is the condition of our present and future holiness. Our future is more than perfect, our present is imperfect indeed, but yet true holiness and happiness. (**See Trapp on "Proverbs 20:9"**).{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 21. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 7:21]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Also take no heed.** But be "as a deaf man that heareth not, and as a dumb man, in whose mouth there is no reproof." (**Psalm 38:13**) If thou answer anything, say as he in Tacitus did to one that railed at him, *Tu linguae, ego vero aurium dominus*, Thou mayest say what thou wilt, but I will hear as I wish; or as once a certain steward did to his passionate lord, when he called him knave, &c.:—"Your honour may speak as you please, but I believe not a word that you say, for I know myself an honest man." The language of reproachers must be read like Hebrew, backwards. Princes used to correct the indecencies of ambassadors by denying them audience. Certain it is, that he enjoys a brave composedness that sets himself above the flight of the injurious claw. Isaac's apology

²²⁸ Justin., lib. ii.

²²⁹ Aug., *De Peccator. Meritis*, lib. ii. cap. 7.

²³⁰ Dr Stoughton, on **Philippians 3:20**.

to his brother Ishmael, viz., patience and silence is the best answer to words of scorn and petulance, said learned Hooker. I care not for man's day, saith Paul. (**1 Corinthians 4:3**) *Non cum vanum calumniatorem*, I regard not a vain slanderer, saith Augustine. Wicelius and Cochleus gave out that we Lutherans betrayed the Rhodes to the Turk, saith Melanchthon. These impudent lies need no confutation, *dicant ipsi talia quoad velint*, let them tell such loud and lewd lies as many as they will. When a net is spread for a bird, saith Augustine, the manner is to throw stones at the hedge. These stones hurt not the bird, but she, hearing and fearing this vain sound, falls into the net. In like manner, saith he, men that fear and regard the vain sound of all ill words, what do they but fall into the devil's net, who thereby carries them captive into much evil, many troubles and inconvenience?

Lest thou hear thy servant curse thee. Who should in duty speak the best of thee, though frample and froward, cross and crooked. (**1 Peter 2:18**) Or by "servant" understand base, inferior people, such as were Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and those "objects" that "tare David's name, and ceased not." (**Psalms 35:15**) {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 22. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 7:22]]{{field-on:Bible}}**For oftentimes also thine own heart knows.** Conscience is God's spy, and man's overseer; and though some can make a sorry shift to muzzle her for a time, or to stop their own ears, yet *ipsa se offert, ipsa se ingerit*, saith Bernard; sooner or later she will tell a man his own to some tune, as they say; she will not go behind the door to let him know that he himself likewise hath cursed others, as now by God's just judgment others curse him. The conscience of our own evil doings, though hid from the world, should meeken us toward those that do amiss. See **Titus 3:3**. Say to yourselves,—

"Aut sumus, aut fuimus, aut possumus esse quod hic est."

Either we are, or will be, or we are able to be what this is. The wrong that David had done to Uriah helped him to bear the barkings of that dead dog Shimei. Here, then, "Take no heed unto all words," &c., as in the former verse. For, *nihil amarius quam id ipsum pati quod feceris*,⁽²³¹⁾ there is nothing more bitter than to suffer that which thou hast done to others; because those sufferings sting the conscience with unquestionable conviction and horror, as is to be seen in Adonibezek, who acknowledged with a regret, a just remuneration. (**Judges 1:7**).{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 23. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 7:23]]{{field-on:Bible}}**I said, I will be wise; but it was far from me.** Solomon here seems to say of wisdom, as Nazianzen doth of God the author of it, *Tantum recedit, quantum capitur*. Not that wisdom itself doth fly away, but because that they who have most of it do especially understand that it exceedeth the capacity of any one to be able to comprehend it (as Basil⁽²³²⁾ gives the reason), so that they that think they have got demonstrations perceive afterwards that they are no more than *topica aut sophisticae rationes*, topical or sophistical arguments, as Lyra here noteth. *Bonus quidam vir solebat esse solus, &c.*, saith Melanchthon: a certain well meaning man was wont to walk and study much alone, and lighting upon Aristotle's discourse concerning the nature of the rainbow, he fell into many odd speculations and strange conceits; and, writing to a friend of his, told him that in all other matters, though dark and obscure, he had outdone Aristotle; but in the matter of the rainbow he had outdone himself. After this he came into the public schools, and disputed of that argument, *Et tote prorsus coelo a veritate aberrabat suis phantasiis*;⁽²³³⁾ and then he came to see that he had been utterly out, and strangely miscarried by those phantasies which he had so strongly fancied.{{field-off:Bible}}

²³¹ Tertul.

²³² Basil., Tract de Fide.

²³³ Joh. Manl., *Loc. Com.*, 536.

Verse 24. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 7:24]]{{field-on:Bible}}**That which is far of and exceeding deep.** Not the minions of the muses, *Mentemque habere queis bonam, et esse corculis datum est.* ⁽²³⁴⁾ For though they should eviscerate themselves, like spiders, crack their sconces, or study themselves to death, yet can they not "understand all mysteries and all knowledge" (**1 Corinthians 13:2**) in natural things, how much less in supernatural! whereas weak sighted and sand blind persons, the more they strain their eyes to discern a thing perfectly, the less they see of it, as Vives hath observed. ⁽²³⁵⁾ It is utterly impossible for a mere naturalist, that cannot tell the form, the quintessence, that cannot enter into the depth of the flower, or the grass he treads on, to have the wit to enter into the deep things of God, "the mystery of Christ which was hid" (**Ephesians 3:9, 10**) from angels till the discovery, and since that they are still students in it. David, though he saw further than his ancients, (**Psalms 119:99**) yet he was still to seek of that which might be known. (**Psalms 119:96**) Even as those great discoverers of the newly found lands in America, at their return were wont to confess, that there was still a *plus ultra*, something more beyond yet. Not only in innumerable other things am I very ignorant, saith Augustine, but also in the very Scriptures, *multo plura nescio quam scio,* ⁽²³⁶⁾ I am ignorant of many more things by odds than I yet understand. This present life is like the vale of Sciaessa, near unto the town called Patrae, of which Solinus saith, that it is famous for nothing but for its darksomeness, as being continually overcast with the shadows of nine hills that do surround it, so that the sun can hardly cast a beam of light into it. ⁽²³⁷⁾ *Propermus ad coelestem Academiam,* Let us hasten to the university of heaven, where the least child knows a thousand times more than the deepest doctor upon earth.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 25. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 7:25]]{{field-on:Bible}}**I applied mine heart.** *Circuivi ego et cot meum,* so the original runs; I and my heart turned about, or made a circle to know, &c. He took his heart with him, and resolved, hard or not hard, to make further search into wisdom's secrets. Difficulty doth but whet on heroic spirits: it doth no whit *weaken* but *waken* their resolutions to go through with the work. When Alexander met with any hard or hazardous piece of service, he would say, *Iam periculum par anime Alexandri,* He ever achieved what he enterprised, because he never accounted anything impossible to be achieved. David was well pleased with the condition of bringing in to Saul the foreskins of a hundred Philistines. If a bowl run downhill, a rub in the way does but quicken it; as if up hill, it slows it. A man of Solomon's make, one that hath a free, noble, princely spirit, speaks to wisdom, as Laelius in Lucan did to Caesar,

"Iussa sequi tam velle mihi, quam posse, necesse."

And to know the wickedness of folly. The "sinfulness of sin." (**Romans 7:13**) Sin is so evil that it cannot have a worse epithet given it. "Mammon of unrighteousness," (**Luke 16:11**) is the next odious name to the devil.

Even the foolishness of madness. That by one contrary he might the better know the other. Folly may serve as a foil to set off wisdom; as gardeners suffer some stinking stuff to grow near their sweetest flowers. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 26. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 7:26]]{{field-on:Bible}}**And I found more bitter than death.** *Amantes amentes: Amor amarior, Plus aloes quam mellis habet.* Knowest thou not that there is bitterness in the end? *Heus scholastiae,* said the harlot to Apuleius, Hark, scholar, your sweet

²³⁴ Dousa.

²³⁵ L. Vives in *Aug. de Civ. Dei*, lib. ii. c. 8.

²³⁶ Aug., *Epist.*

²³⁷ Poly. *Hist.*, c. 12.

bits will prove bitter in the close. ⁽²³⁸⁾

"Principium dulce est, at finis amoris amarus."

The pomegranate, with its sweet kernels, but bitter rind, is an emblem of the bitter sweet pleasure of sin. It is observed of our Edward III that he had always fair weather at his passage into France, and foul upon his return. ⁽²³⁹⁾ *Laeta venire Venus, tristis abire solet.* The panther hides her head till she sees her time to make prey of those other beasts that, drawn by her sweet smell, follow her to their own destruction. ⁽²⁴⁰⁾ The poet's fable, that pleasure and pain complained one of another to Jupiter; and that, when he could not decide the controversy between them, he tied them together with chains of adamant, never to be sundered.

The woman. The wanton woman, that shame of her sex. A bitch, Moses calls her; (**Deuteronomy 23:18**) St Paul, a living ghost, a walking sepulchre of herself. (**1 Timothy 5:6**) *Cum careat pura mente, cadaver agit.* "This I find," saith Solomon, where "I" is "I" with a witness; he had found it by woeful experience, and now relates it for a warning to others. Saith he—

*"Quid facies facies veneris cum veneris ante?
Non sed eas, sed eas: ne pereas, per eas."*

Whose heart is snares and nets. *Heb., Hunters' snares; for she "hunteth for the precious life,"* (**Proverbs 6:26**) and the devil, by her, hunts for the precious soul, there being not anything that hath more enriched hell than harlots. All is good fish that comes to these nets; but they are "taken alive by the devil at his pleasure" (**2 Timothy 2:26**)

And her hands as bands. To captivate and enslave those that haunt her, as Delilah did Samson, as the harlot did the young novice, (**Proverbs 7:22**) as Solomon's Moabitish mistress did him, and as it is said of the Persian kings, that they were *captivarum suarum captivi*, ⁽²⁴¹⁾ captives to their concubines, who dared to take the crown from their heads, or do anything to them almost, when others might not come near them uncalled upon pain of death (**Esther 4:11**)

Whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her. As Joseph did, and Bellerophon, though with a difference: Joseph out of a principle of chastity, Bellerophon of continence. The continent person refrains either for love of praise, or fear of punishment, but not without grief, for inwardly he is scalded with boiling lust, as Alexander, Scipio, and Pompey were, when, tempted with the exquisiteness and variety of choicest beauties, they forbore. *Vellem, si non essem imperator.* I would if I were not a general. But now the chaste man, who is good before God—one whom he approves and takes pleasure in—is holy both in body and spirit, (**1 Corinthians 7:34**) and this with delight, out of fear of God and love of virtue. God did much for that libidinous gentleman, who, sporting with a courtesan in a house of sin, happened to ask her name, which she said was Mary; whereat he was stricken with such a remorse and reverence, that he instantly not only cast off the harlot, but amended his future life. ⁽²⁴²⁾

But the sinner shall be taken by her. (*See Trapp on "Proverbs 22:14"*) The poet's fable, that when Prometheus had discovered truth to men, that had long lain hid from them, Jupiter, or the devil, to cross that design, sent Pandora,—that is, pleasure—that should so besot them, as

²³⁸ Dulce et amarum gustulum carpis.

²³⁹ Speed, 710. Walsingham.

²⁴⁰ Solin., cap. 27.

²⁴¹ Plutarch.

²⁴² Montaigne's Essays.

that they should neither mind nor make out after truth and honesty.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 27. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 7:27]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Behold, this I have found.** Εὑρηκα, Εὑρηκα, 'I have found it, I have found it, ' said the philosopher. *Vicimus, Vicimus*, We have prevailed, we have prevailed, said Luther, when he had been praying in his closet for the good success of the consultation about religion in Germany. So the Preacher here, having by diligence set open the door of truth, ⁽²⁴³⁾ cries, *Venite, videte*, Come and see my discoveries, in the making whereof I have been very exact, "counting one by one," *ne mole obruerer*, lest I should be oppressed with many things at once.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 28. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 7:28]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Which yet my soul seeketh, but I find not.** There is a place in Wiltshire called Stonhenge, for various great stones lying and standing there together: of which stones it is said, ⁽²⁴⁴⁾ that though a man number them "one by one" never so carefully, yet that he cannot find the true number of them, but that every time he numbers them he finds a different number from that he found before. This may well show, as one well applies it, the erring of man's labour in seeking the account of wisdom and knowledge; for, though his diligence be never so great in making the reckoning, he will always be out, and not able to find it out.

One man among a thousand. *Haud facile iuvenies multis e milibus unum.* There is a very great scarcity of good people. These are as Gideon's three hundred, when the wicked, as the Midianites, lie "like grasshoppers for multitude upon the earth," (**Judges 7:7, 12**) and as those Syrians, (**1 Kings 20:27**) they fill the country, they darken the air, as the swarms did the land of Egypt; and there is plenty of such dust heaps in every corner.

But a woman among all those have I not found. *i.e.*, Among all my wives and concubines, which made him ready to sing, *Femina nulla bona est.* There is no good woman. But that there are, and ever have been, many gracious women, see, besides the Scriptures, the writings of many learned men, *De illustribus feminis.* Concerning Illustrious Women. It is easy to observe, saith one, that the New Testament affords more store of good wives than the Old. And I can say, as Jerome does, *Novi ego multas ad omne opus bonum promptas*, I know many Tabithas full of good works. But in respect of the discovery of hearts and natures, whether in good or evil, it is harder to find out thoroughly the perfect disposition of a woman than of men; and that I take to be the meaning of this text.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 29. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 7:29]]{{field-on:Bible}}**That God hath made man upright.** viz., In his own image—*i.e.*, "knowledge" in his understanding part, "rightness" in his will, and "holiness" in his affections: (**Colossians 3:10**) his heart was a lump of love, &c., when he came first out of God's mint, he shone most glorious, clad with the royal robe of righteousness, created with the imperial crown. (**Psalms 8:5**) But the devil soon stripped him of it; he cheated and robbed him of the crown, as we use to do children, with the apple, or whatsoever fruit it was that he tendered to Eve: *Porrexit pomum et surripuit paradisum.* ⁽²⁴⁵⁾ He also set his limbs in the place of God's image, so that now, *Is qui factus est homo differt ab eo quem Deus fecit*, as Philo saith, man is now of another make than God made him. *Totus homo est inversus decalogus*, Whole evil is in man, and whole man in evil. Neither can he cast the blame upon God, but must fault himself, and flee to the second Adam for repair.

But they have sought out many inventions. New tricks and devices, like those poetic fictions and fabulous relations, whereof there is neither proof nor profit. The Vulgate Latin hath it, *Et ipse se infinitis miscuit quaestionibus*; And he hath entangled himself with numberless

²⁴³ *Aperit sibi diligentia ianuam veritatis.*—Amb.

²⁴⁴ Camden.

²⁴⁵ Bernard, lib. i. *Legis Allegor.*

questions and fruitless speculations. See **1 Timothy 1:4; 6:4**, "doting about questions," or question sick. Bernard reads it thus, *Ipse autem se implicuit doloribus multis*, but he hath involved himself in many troubles, the fruit of his inventions, shifts, and shirking tricks. (see **Jeremiah 6:19**) {{field-off:Bible}}

Chapter 8

Verse 1. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 8:1]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Who is as the wise man?** *q.d.*, He is a matchless man, a peerless paragon, outshining others as much as the moon doth the lesser stars. ⁽²⁴⁶⁾ Plato could say that no gold or precious stone doth glisten so gloriously, ὡσπερ ἀγαθῶν ἀνδρῶν νόος συμφράδμων, as the prudent spirit of a good man. "Thou art a prince of God amongst us," said the Hittites to Abraham. "Can we find such a man as this Joseph, in whom the Spirit of God is?" said Pharaoh to his counsellors. (**Genesis 41:38**) "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth?" (**Job 1:8**) "My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all my house," and shall be of my cabinet council. (**Numbers 12:7**) To him God said, *Tu vero hic sta mecum*," But do thou stand here by me." (**Exodus 34:5**) *Sapiens Dei comes est*, saith Philo. Look how kings have their favourites, whom they call *comites*, their cousins and companions; so hath God. Nay, the righteous are "princes in all lands," (**Psalms 45:16**) kings in righteousness; (**Matthew 13:17; Luke 10:24**) the "excellent ones of the earth," (**Psalms 16:3**) the worthies of the world, (**Hebrews 11:5**) fitter to be set as stars in heaven, and to be continually before the throne of God. Chrysostom ⁽²⁴⁷⁾ calls some holy men of his time, ἀγγέλους, earthly angels; and speaking of Babylac the martyr, he saith of him, ⁽²⁴⁸⁾ *Magnus atque admirabilis vir*, He was an excellent and an admirable man, &c. And Tertullian, writing to some of the martyrs, says, *Non tantus sum ut vos alloquar*, I am not good enough to speak unto you. Oh that my life, and a thousand such wretches more, might go for yours! Oh, why doth God suffer me and other such caterpillars to live, saith John Careless, martyr, in a letter to that angel of God, Mr Bradford, as Dr Taylor called him, that can do nothing but consume the alms of the Church, and take away you, so worthy a workman and labourer in the Lord's vineyard. ⁽²⁴⁹⁾

And who knoweth the interpretation of a thing? Wise a man may be, and yet not so apt and able to wise others. Those wise ones that can wise others, so as to "turn them to righteousness, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, yea, as the stars"; (**Daniel 12:3**) they do so while upon earth. Wisdom makes their very faces to shine, as St Stephen's did, (**Acts 6:15**) and as holy Job's, while he was in a prosperous condition. (**Job 29:8-10**) Jobab he was then (the same, some think, that is mentioned **Genesis 36:33**), as when in distress his name was contracted into Job. And then, though himself were otherwise wise, he might want "an interpreter, one of a thousand"—for such are rare, every man cannot sell us this precious oil (**Matthew 25:9**)—"to show unto him his righteousness, "—that is, the righteousness of his own experience—how himself hath been helped and comforted in like case, or, to clear up to an afflicted Job his spiritual estate, and to show him his evangelical righteousness. Oh "how beautiful are the feet" of such an interpreter! "I have seen thy face," saith the poor soul to such, "as though I had seen the face of God." (**Genesis 33:10**)

A man's wisdom maketh his face to shine. Godliness is venerable and reverend. "Holy and reverend is his name." (**Psalms 111:9**) God's image is amiable and admirable, Natural conscience cannot but stoop and do obeisance to it, What a deal of respect did Nebuchadnezzar and Darius put upon Daniel! Alexander the Great upon Jaddus the high priest! Theodosius upon Ambrose! Constantine upon Paphnutius, kissing that eye of his that was bored out for the cause of Christ! &c. Godly men have a daunting presence, as Athanasius had, and Basil, to whom when Valens the Arian emperor came, while he was in holy exercises, it struck such a terror into him that he reeled, and had fallen had he not been upheld by those

²⁴⁶ Velut inter stellas luna minores.

²⁴⁷ Hom. 55, in Matth.

²⁴⁸ Orat. Contra Gentiles.

²⁴⁹ Acts and Mon., 1744;

that were with him. ⁽²⁵⁰⁾ Henry II of France being present at the martyrdom of a certain tailor, burnt by him for religion, was so terrified by the boldness of his countenance, and the constance of his sufferings, that he swore at his going away that he would never any more be present at such a sight. ⁽²⁵¹⁾

And the boldness of his face shall be changed. Or, Doubled; his conscience bearing him out, and making him undaunted, as it did David, (*Psalm 3*) and the Dutch martyr Colonus, who, calling to the judge that had sentenced him to death, desired him to lay his hand upon his heart, and then asked him whose heart did most beat, his or the judge's? By this boldness Jonathan and his armourbearer set upon the garrison of the Philistines, David upon Goliath their champion, The Black Prince was so called, not of his colour, but of his valour and dreaded acts in battle. ⁽²⁵²⁾ {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 2. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 8:2]]{{field-on:Bible}} **To keep the king's commandment.** Heb., Mouth—*i.e.*, the express word of command. Go not here by guess or good intention, lest you speed as that Scotch captain did, who, not expecting orders from his superiors, took an advantage offered him of taking a fort of the enemy's; for which good service he was knighted in the morning, but hanged in the afternoon of the same day for acting without orders. ⁽²⁵³⁾

And that in regard of the oath of God. Thine oath of allegiance to thy prince. This Papists make nothing of. Pascenius scoffs King James for the invention of it. They can swear with their mouths, and keep their hearts unsworn, as she in the comedy. ⁽²⁵⁴⁾ *Mercatorum est stare iuramentis*, say they at Rome. They can assoil men of their allegiance at pleasure, and slip their solemn oaths as easily as monkeys do their collars. And I would this were the sin of Papists only, and that there were not those found even amongst us that keep no oaths further than makes for their own turn, like as the Jews keep none, unless they swear upon their own Torah, brought out of their synagogues. ⁽²⁵⁵⁾ {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 3. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 8:3]]{{field-on:Bible}} **Be not hasty to go out of his sight.** Turn not thy back discontentedly, fling not away in a chafe; for this will be construed for a contempt, as it was in the Earl of Essex, A.D. 1598. Dissension occurring between the queen and him about a fit man for governor of Ireland, he, forgetting himself, and neglecting his duty, uncivilly turned his back, with a scornful countenance. She waxing impatient, gave him a cuff on the ear, bidding him be gone with a vengeance. He laid his hand upon his sword; the Lord Admiral interposing himself, he swore a great oath, that he neither could nor would swallow so great an indignity, nor would have born it at King Henry VIII's hands, and in great discontentment hasted from the court. But within a while after he became submissive, and was received again into favour by the queen, who always thought it more just to offend a man than to hate him. ⁽²⁵⁶⁾ The very Turks are said to receive humiliation with all sweetness, but to be remorseless to those that bear up. ⁽²⁵⁷⁾ {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 4. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 8:4]]{{field-on:Bible}} **Where the word of a king is, there is power.** *Ibi dominatio.* He hath long hands, and can reach thee at a great distance, as Mithridates did when with one letter he slew eighty thousand citizens of Rome that were

²⁵⁰ Greg., Orat. de Laude Basilii.

²⁵¹ Epit. Hist. Gal., 82.

²⁵² Speed, 688.

²⁵³ Speed, 688.

²⁵⁴ Ἡ γλῶτταν ωμομοχεν, φρήν ἀνώμοτος μένει.

²⁵⁵ Weems.

²⁵⁶ Camden's *Elizabeth*, fol. 494.

²⁵⁷ Blunt's *Voyage*, p. 97.

scattered up and down his kingdom for trading's sake. ⁽²⁵⁸⁾ So Selimus the great Turk, in revenge for the loss received at the battle of Lepanto, was once in a mind to have put to death all the Christians in his dominions, in number infinite. ⁽²⁵⁹⁾ Charles IX of France is reported to have been the death of thirty thousand of his Protestant subjects in one year's time, A.D. 1572. See **Daniel 5:19**.

And who may say unto him, What doest thou? viz., Without danger. What safety can there be in taking a bear by the tooth, or a lion by the beard? I dare not dispute, said the philosopher to the Emperor Adrian, with him that hath thirty legions at his command, *Neque in eum scribere, qui potest proscribere*, nor write against him that can as easily undo me as bid it to be done. ⁽²⁶⁰⁾ Howbeit Elias, Micaiah, John Baptist, and other holy prophets and ministers have dealt plainly with great princes, and God hath secured them. John, Bishop of Salisbury, reprov'd the Pope to his face; and yet the Canonists say, that although the Pope should draw millions of souls to hell with him, none may dare to say unto him, What doest thou? But Philip the Fair made bold with his Holiness when he began his letter to him with *Sciat Fatuitas Tua*, &c. So did the barons of England in King John's days, when declaring against the Pope and his conclave, by whom they were excommunicated, they cried out thus in their remonstrance, *Fie on such rascal knaves*. ⁽²⁶¹⁾ Adelmelect, Bishop of Sherborn, A.D. 705, reprov'd Pope Sergius sharply to his face for his adultery. ⁽²⁶²⁾ So did Bishop Lambert reprehend King Pepin for the same fault, A.D. 798. ⁽²⁶³⁾ And Archbishop Odo, King Edwin, burning his concubines in the forehead with a hot iron, and banishing them into Ireland. ⁽²⁶⁴⁾ Father Latimer dealt no less faithfully with King Henry VIII in his sermons at Court. And being asked by the king how he dared to be so bold to preach after that manner, he answered that duty to God and to his prince had enforced him to it; and now that he had discharged his conscience, his life was in his Majesty's hands, &c. Truth must be spoken, however it be taken. If God's messengers must be mannerly in the form, yet in the matter of their message to great ones they must be resolute. It is probable that Joseph used some kind of preface to Pharaoh's baker in reading him that hard destiny; (**Genesis 40:19**) such, likely, as was that of Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar, "My Lord, the dream be to them that hate thee," &c.; (**Daniel 4:19**) or as Philo brings him in with an *utinam tale somnium non vidisses*, &c. But for the matter, he gives him a sound, though sharp interpretation.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 5. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 8:5]]{{field-on:Bible}} **Whoso keepeth the commandment.** *scil.*, The king's commandment. He that is compliant, and goes as far as he can with a good conscience in his obedience to the commands of his superiors, "shall feel no evil," *i.e.*, he shall lack no good encouragement. (**Romans 13:3, 4**) Or if men slight him, God will see to him, (**Ephesians 6:7, 8**) as he did to the poor Israelites in Egypt, and to David under Saul. Mordecai lost nothing at length by his love and loyalty to God and the king. Sir Ralph Percy, slain upon Hedgely Moor, in Northumberland, by the Lord Montacute, general for Edward IV, would noways depart the field, though defeated, but in dying, said, I have saved the bird in my breast, meaning his oath to King Henry VI, for whom he fought. ⁽²⁶⁵⁾

And a wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment. *scil.*, When and how to obey

²⁵⁸ Val. Max., lib. ix.

²⁵⁹ Turk. Hist., fol. 885.

²⁶⁰ Praesens praesentem Pontificem redarguit, et Polyeraticon conscripsit. Jac. Rev., 145.

²⁶¹ Marcidi ribaldi.

²⁶² Walsing.

²⁶³ Epit. Hist. Gallic., p. 30.

²⁶⁴ Godw., Catal.

²⁶⁵ Speed, 869.

kings' commands, the time, the means, and manner thereof, despatching them without offence to God or man. And this "a wise man's heart discerneth," saith the Preacher; it being the opinion of the Hebrews that in the heart especially the soul did keep her court, and exercise her noble operations of the understanding, invention, judgment, &c. Aristotle saith, *Sine calore cordis anima in corpore nihil efficit*, Without the heat of the heart, the soul does nothing in the body. The Scripture also makes the heart the monarch of this Isle of Man.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 6. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 8:6]]{{field-on:Bible}} **Because to every purpose there is time.** Therefore the wise man seeketh after that nick of time, that punctilio of judgment, that he may do everything well, and order his affairs with discretion. A well chosen season is the greatest advantage of any action, which, as it is seldom found in haste, so it is too often lost in delay.

Therefore the misery of man is great upon him. Because he discerns not, apprehends not his fittest opportunity, hence he creates himself a great deal of misery. When Saul had taken upon him to sacrifice, God intimates to him by Samuel, that if he had discerned his time, he might have saved his kingdom. So might many a man his life, his livelihood—nay, his soul. "The men of Issachar" in David's days are famous for this, that they "had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do," (**1 Chronicles 12:32**) their posterity are set below stork and swallow for want of this skill, (**Jeremiah 8:7**) and deeply doomed. (**Luke 19:44**){{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 7. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 8:7]]{{field-on:Bible}} **For he knoweth not that which shall be.** Man's misery is the greater because he cannot foresee to prevent it; but he is suddenly surprised and hit many times on the blind side, as we say.

"Nescia mens hominum fati sortisque futurae."

Men are in the dark in regard to future events. God only knows them, and is thereby oft in Isaiah distinguished from the dunghill deities of the heathens. In his mercy to his people he gave them prophets to tell how long, and when these failed the Church heavily bewails it. (**Psalms 74:9**) Howbeit a prudent man "foreseeth an evil, and hideth himself." (**Proverbs 22:3**) (**See Trapp on "Proverbs 22:3"**) By the strength of his mind, saith Ambrose,⁽²⁶⁶⁾ he presageth what will follow, and can define what in such or such a case he ought to do. Sometimes he turns over two or three things in his mind together, of which conjecturing that either all may come to pass jointly, or this or that severally, or whether they fall out jointly or severally, he can by his understanding so order his actions as that they shall be profitable to him.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 8. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 8:8]]{{field-on:Bible}} **There is no man that hath power,** &c. Death man is sure to meet with, whatsoever he miss of, but when he knows not neither. Of doomsday there are signs affirmative and negative, not so of death. Every one hath his own balsam within him, say some chemists, his own bane it is sure he hath. *Ipsa suis augmentis vita ad detrimenta impellitur,*⁽²⁶⁷⁾ Every day we yield somewhat to death. *Stat sua cuique dies,*⁽²⁶⁸⁾ Our last day stands, the rest run. Death is this only king, against whom there is no rising up⁽²⁶⁹⁾ (**Proverbs 30:31**) The mortal scythe is master of the royal sceptre, and it mows down the lilies of the crown as well as the grass of the field, saith a reverend writer.⁽²⁷⁰⁾ And again, death

²⁶⁶ Amb. *De Offic.*, lib. i. cap. 38.

²⁶⁷ Greg., *Moral.*

²⁶⁸ Virg. *Aeneid.*

²⁶⁹ Nulli cedo.

²⁷⁰ Mr Ley, his *Monitor of Mortality.*

suddenly snatcheth away physicians, oft as it were in scorn and contempt of medicines when they are applying their preservatives or restoratives to others, as it is reported of Gaius Julius, a surgeon, who dressing a sore eye, as he drew the instrument over it, was struck with an instrument of death in the act and place where he did it. Besides diseases, many by mischances are taken, as a bird with a bolt while he gazeth at the bow.

There is no discharge in war. Heb., No sending either of forces to withstand death, or of messages to make peace with him. The world and we must part, and whether we be unstitched by parcels, or torn asunder at once, the difference is not great. Happy is he that after due preparation is passed through the gates of death ere he be aware, saith one. Whether my death be a burnt-offering of martyrdom, or a peace offering of a natural death, I desire it may be a freewill offering, a sweet sacrifice to the Lord, saith another.

Neither shall wickedness deliver. No; it is righteousness only that delivereth from death. The wicked may make "a covenant with death," (*Isaiah 28:15*) but God will disannul it. "Shall they escape by iniquity?" saith the Psalmist. What! have they no better mediums? No; "in thine anger cast down the people, O God." (*Psalms 56:7*) Every man should die the same day that he is born; the wages of death should be paid him presently; but Christ begs their lives for a season, he is the "Saviour of all men," (*1 Timothy 4:10*) not of eternal preservation, but of temporal reservation, that his elect might lay hold on eternal life, and reprobates may have this for a bodkin at their hearts one day: I was in a fair possibility of being delivered.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 9. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 8:9]]{{field-on:Bible}}**One man ruleth over another to his own hurt.** Not only to the hurt of his subjects, but to his own utter ruin, though after a long run haply. (*Ecclesiastes 8:12, 13*) *Ad generum Cercris*, &c. What untimely ends came the kings of Israel to, and the Roman Caesars all, almost, till Constantine? *Vespasianus unus accepto imperio melior factus est*, Vespasian was the only one among them that became better by the office. While they were private persons there seemed to be some goodness in them, but no sooner advanced to the empire than they ran riot in wickedness; listening to flatterers, and hating reproofs, they ran headlong to hell, and drew a great number with them, by the instigation of the devil, that old man slayer, whose work it was to act and agitate them for a common mischief. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 10. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 8:10]]{{field-on:Bible}}**And so I saw the wicked buried.** With pomp and great solemnity, funeral orations, statues, and epitaphs, &c., as if he had been another Josiah or Theodosius; so do men overwhelm this mouse with praises proper to the elephant, as the proverb hath it.

Who had come and gone from the place of the holy. That is, From the place of magistracy, seat of judicature, where the holy God himself sits as Chief President and Lord Paramount. (*Deuteronomy 1:17; 2 Chronicles 19:6; Psalm 82:1*)

And they were forgotten in the city where they had so done. A great benefit to a wicked man to have his memory die with him, which if it be preserved stinks in keeping, and remains as a curse and perpetual disgrace, as one very well senseth it. ⁽²⁷¹⁾{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 11. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 8:11]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Because sentence against an evil work,** &c. *Ennarrata sententia*, a published and declared sentence. So that it is only a reprieve of mercy that a wicked man hath; his preservation is but a reservation to further evil, abused mercy turning into fury. *Morae dispendium faenoris duplo pensatur*, saith Jerome ⁽²⁷²⁾ God's

²⁷¹ Pemble.

²⁷² Jerome in *Jerem.*

forbearance is no quittance; he will find a time to pay wicked men for the new and the old. "The Lord is not slow, as some men count slowness." (**2 Peter 3:9**) Or if he be slow, yet he is sure. ⁽²⁷³⁾ He hath leaden heels, but iron hands; the further he fetcheth his blow, or draweth his arrow, the deeper he will wound when he hitteth. ⁽²⁷⁴⁾ God's mill may grind soft and slow, but it grinds sure and small, said one heathen. ⁽²⁷⁵⁾ *Tarditatem supplicii gravitate compensat*, he recompenseth the delay of punishment with an eternity of extremity, saith another. He hath "vials of vengeance," (**Revelation 16:1**) which are large vessels, but narrow mouthed; they pour out slowly, but drench deeply and distil effectually. *Caveto igitur*, saith one, ⁽²⁷⁶⁾ *ne malam dilatura fiat duplicatum*. Get quickly out of God's debt, lest ye be forced to pay the charges of a suit to your pain, to your cost. *Patientia Dei quo diuturnior, eo minacior*. ⁽²⁷⁷⁾ God will not always serve men for a sinning stock. *Poena venit gravior quo magis sera venit*. Adonijah's feast ended in horror; ever after the meal is ended comes the reckoning.

Therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set. Heb., Is full. So full of wickedness that there is no room for the fear of God's wrath, till "wrath come upon them to the utmost." *Intus existens prohibet alienum*. God offers and affords them heart knocking time, (**Revelation 3:20**) but they ram up their hearts, dry their tears, as Saul, and are scalded in their own grease, stewed in their own broth. The sleeping of vengeance causeth the overflowing of sin, and the overflow of sin causeth the awakening of vengeance.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 12. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 8:12]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Though a sinner doth evil an hundred times.** Commit the same sin a hundred times over, which is no small aggravation of his sin, as numbers added to numbers are first ten times more, then a hundred, then a thousand, &c. And truly a sinner left to himself would sin *in infinitum*, which may be one reason of the infinite torments of hell; he can set no bounds to himself, till he become a brat of fathomless perdition; the devil commits that sin "unto death" every day, and oft in the day. His imps also resemble him herein. Hence their sins are mortal, saith St John, (**1 John 5:17**) rather immortal, as saith St Paul. (**Romans 2:5**)

And his days be prolonged. By the long sufferance of God, which is so great, that Jonah was displeased at it. (**Jonah 4:1-2**) Averroes turned atheist upon it. But Micah admires it, (**Micah 7:18**) and Moses makes excellent use of it, when he prays, (**Exodus 34:6-9**) "O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go along with us, for it is a stiff-necked people." As who should say, None but a god is able to endure this perverse people; my patience and meekness is far too short; and yet Moses, by God's own testimony, was the meekest man upon earth. That the vilest of men may live a long while is evident; but for no goodwill that God bears them, but that, heaping up sin, they may heap up wrath, and by abuse of Divine patience, be fitted for the hottest fire in hell, (**Romans 9:22**) as stubble laid out drying, (**Nahum 1:10**) or as grapes let hang in the sunshine, till ripe for the winepress of wrath. (**Revelation 19:15**) Surely as one day of man's life is to be preferred before the longest life of a stag or a raven; so one day spent religiously is far better than a hundred years spent wickedly. *Non refert quanta sit vitae diuturnitas, sed qualis sit administratio*, saith Vives. The business is not how long, but how well any man liveth. Jerome reads this verse thus, *Quia peccator facit malura centies, et elongat ei Deus, ex hoc cognosco ego, &c.*: Because a sinner doeth evil a hundred times, and God doth lengthen his days unto him, from hence I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, &c. And he sets this sense upon it—Inasmuch as God so long spares wretched sinners, waiting their return, he

²⁷³ *Aeripedes dictae sunt Furiae.*

²⁷⁴ *Aries quo altius erigittur, hoc figit fortius.*

²⁷⁵ *Οφε θεῶν ἀλέουσι μύλαι, ἀλέουσι δὲ λεπτόν.*

²⁷⁶ *De Utroque Dionysio. Val., lib. i. cap. 2.*

²⁷⁷ *Bucholc.*

will surely be good to pious persons. Symmachus, Aquila, and Theodotion read it thus: *Peccans enim malus mortuus est, longa aetate concessa ei*, An evil man sinning is dead, a long age being granted to him: dead he is in sin, though his days be prolonged.

Yet surely I know that it shall be well. *q.d.*, This shall not stagger me, or shake mine assurance of the Divine providence; for I know well that "yet God is good to Israel, to the pure in heart." (**Psalm 73:1**) And although they die young—as **ὠκύμοροι οἱ θεοφιλεῖς**, those whom God loves he soon takes to himself—yet it may be said of them, as Ambrose saith of Abraham, *Mortuus est in bona senectute, eo quod in bonitate propositi permansit*, He died in a good old age, because he died in a good sound mind. Or as Jerome saith of a godly young man of his time, that *in brevi vitae spacio tempora virtutum multa replevit*,⁽²⁷⁸⁾ he lived long in a little time; for some men live more in a month than others do in many years. They that die soon, but in God's fear and favour, though as grapes they be gathered before they are ripe, and as lambs slain before they be grown, yet, besides the happiness of heaven, they have this benefit, they are freed from the violence of the winepress that others fall into, and escape many storms that others live to taste of. A good man, saith a late divine,⁽²⁷⁹⁾ prolongs his days though he die young, because he is ripe before taken from the tree: he even falls into the hand of God that gathers him.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 13. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 8:13]]{{field-on:Bible}}**But it shall not be well with the wicked.** (1.) Not always well, (**Isaiah 3:12**) for "sin will be sure to find him out," (**Numbers 32:23**) and he that hath guilt in his bosom hath vengeance at his back.⁽²⁸⁰⁾ Where iniquity breaks fast, calamity will be sure to dine, and to sup where it dines, and to lodge where it sups. When iniquity is once ripe in the field, God will not let it shed to grow again, but cuts it up by a just and seasonable vengeance. (2.) Not at all well; since prosperity slayeth these fools, and as sunshine ripens their sin, and so fits them for ruin. Hence Bernard calls it, *Misericordiam omni indignatione crudeliorem*. Poison in wine works more furiously. The fatter the ox, the sooner to the slaughter.

Neither shall he prolong his days. See **Psalm 55:23; Jeremiah 17:11**. He dies *tempore non suo* (**Ecclesiastes 7:17**) though he lives long; he dies before he desires, and when it were better for him to do anything than to die; since he hath "walked in a vain show, disquieting himself in vain," (**Psalm 39:6**) tumbling his tub to no purpose, lengthening out "his days as a shadow": the longer the shade, the nearer the sun is to setting. His sun also sets in the burning lake, and it hasteneth to the descent: "An end is come, is come, is come." (**Ezekiel 7:6, 7**)

Because he feareth not before God. But in hypocrisy before men, whose laces he feareth, and would be much ashamed that they should see what he doth in secret. (**Ephesians 5:12**) But what saith the honest heathen? *Si scirem homines ignoraturos et deos ignoscituros, tamen propter peccati turpitudinem, peccare non vellem*. A good resolution surely, if as well put in execution. *Sed libertas affuit scribent; non viventi*, saith Augustine⁽²⁸¹⁾ of this author: He was a better speaker than liver. That of David was spoken from his heart, "I foresee the Lord always before my face; I set him at my right hand," &c. (**Psalm 16:8; Acts 2:25**) "Be thou in the fear of the Lord all day long." (**Proverbs 23:17**).{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 14. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 8:14]]{{field-on:Bible}}**There is a vanity which is done upon the earth.** Symmachus reads it thus: *Est difficile cognitu quod sit super terram*, There is

²⁷⁸ Jer., *Epist.*

²⁷⁹ Dr Preston.

²⁸⁰ Οὐδεὶς ἀνθρώπων ἀδίκων τισὶν οὐκ ἀποτίσει. Nemo culpam gerit in pectore qui non idem Nemesin in tergo.

²⁸¹ Aug. *De Civ. Dei*, lib. vi. c. 10.

that done upon the earth that is hard to be understood. It hath gravelled great divines—as David, Jeremiah, Habakkuk (*Psalm 73:3-9; Jeremiah 12:1-2; Habakkuk 2:4-5; Lamentations 3:33*)—to see good men suffer, bad men prosper. But it is but upon the earth that this befalls: here God must meet with his people, or nowhere, and it is *non nisi coactus*, as that emperor said of himself, that he doth anything to their grief:

"Ille dolet quoties cogitur esse ferox."

An unruly patient makes a cruel physician. ⁽²⁸²⁾ And as for the wicked, it is but "upon earth" that they live in pleasure, and lie melting in sensual and sinful delights, "nourishing their hearts as in a day of slaughter." (*James 5:5*) Once they shall hear with horror, "Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." (*Luke 16:25*) The meditation of eternity would much mitigate this vanity. What is that to the infinite? said the old Lord Brook to a friend of his, discoursing of an incident matter very considerable, but was taken off with this quick interrogation of that wise and noble person. ⁽²⁸³⁾{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 15. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 8:15]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Then I commended mirth.** A lawful lightsomeness and cheerfulness of heart, which maketh comforts to be much more comfortable, and troubles to be far less troublesome. Besides, *acceptior est Deo grata laetitia quam diuturna quasi querula tristitia.* ⁽²⁸⁴⁾ Cheerfulness is better pleasing to God than sourness and sullenness: this provokes him to anger, (*Deuteronomy 28:47*) as that which puts a man under the reign of continual unthankfulness—"Is any man merry? let him sing" (*James 5:13*)—makes him exceeding liable to temptations and perplexities, disableth him to make benefit of ordinances, indisposeth and unfitteth him for duties of active or passive obedience, takes off the wheels of the soul, and makes it as awkward as a limb out of joint, that can do nothing without deformity and pain.

Than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry. Although it be the bread of sorrow that thou eatest, and the cup of affliction that thou drinkest, eat it, and drink it merrily. The Epicures held that a man might be cheerful amidst the most exquisite torments; (1.) In consideration of his honesty and fidelity, that he suffered for; (2.) In consideration of those pleasures and delights that formerly he had enjoyed, and now cheered up himself with the remembrance of. How much better may Christians do it in consideration of those unutterable joys and delights that they expect and hope for! *Mendicatio pane hic vivamus, &c.*, saith Luther. We may well be content, nay merry, though we should beg our bread here, to think that we shall one day feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 16. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 8:16]]{{field-on:Bible}}**When I applied mine heart to know wisdom.** *i.e.*, The wisdom and other excellencies of God shining plainly and plentifully in ruling the affairs, and ordering the disorders of the world to his own glory.

For also there is that neither day nor night seeth, &c. *i.e.*, *Perdius et pernox*, by day and by night I busied myself in this search, so that a little sleep served my turn all the while. *Nullus mihi per otium exiit dies, partem etiam noctium studii vindico*, saith Seneca; I studied day and night, and followed it with all possible eagerness. Thuanus tells of a countryman of his, whom he called Franciscus Vieta Fontenejus, a very learned man, that he was so set upon his study, that for three days together sometimes he would sit close at it, *sine cibo et somno, nisi quem cubito innixus, nec se loco movens, capiebat*, without meat or sleep, more than what for mere necessity of nature he took leaning upon his elbow. Solomon seems by this text to have been

²⁸² *Crudelem medicum intemperans aeger facit.*—Mimus.

²⁸³ Dr Hall's *Remedy of Profaneness*, p. 114.

²⁸⁴ Bucholc.

as sharp set for the finding out of the way of divine administration, and the true reason of divine dispensations. But he got little further than to see that it far exceeded all human capacity and apprehension. *Maiores maiora noverunt, et Deus det vobis plus sapere quam dico*, saith a father, when he said what he could to some one of God's works of wonder—*i.e.*, They who are more learned know, and God grant you may understand more than I say. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 17. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 8:17]]{{field-on:Bible}}**That a man cannot find out the work.** No, not the wisest that is; the very best empiric in this kind cannot. Let him labour never so much to find it, he shall but be tossed in a labyrinth, or as a wayfaring man in a desert. If a man cannot define anything because the forms of things are unknown, if he know not the creatures themselves, *ab imo ad summum*, from the lowest to the highest, neither shall he know the reasons and manner of them. ⁽²⁸⁵⁾ As a man may look on a trade, and never see the mystery of it; he may look on artificial things, pictures, watches, &c., and yet not see the art whereby they are made; as a man may look on the letter, and never understand the sense; so it is here, and we must content ourselves with a learned ignorance. *Si nos non intelligimus quid quare fiat, debeamus hoc providentiae quod non fiat sine causa:* ⁽²⁸⁶⁾ If we understand not why anything is done, let us owe this duty to Providence, to be assured that it is not done without cause. {{field-off:Bible}}

²⁸⁵ Granger.

²⁸⁶ Aug. in *Psalm 148*.

Chapter 9

Verse 1. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 9:1]]{{field-on:Bible}}**For all this I considered in mine heart.** He that will rightly consider of anything, had need to consider of many things; all that do concern it, all that do give light unto it, had need to be looked into, or else we fail too short.

“Sis ideo in partes circumspectissimus omnes.”

Even to declare all this. Or, To clear up all this to myself. Symmachus rendered it, *Ut ventilarem haec universa*, that I might sift and search out all these things by much tossing and turning of the thoughts. Truth lies low and close, and must with much industry be drawn into the open light.

That the righteous and the wise. These are terms convertible. The world’s wizards shall one day cry out, *Nos insensati*, We fools counted their lives madness, &c.

And their works. Or, Their services, actions, employments, all which together with themselves are “in the hand of God,” who knows them by name, and exerciseth a singular providence over them, so that they are “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.” “The enemy shall not exact upon him, nor the son of wickedness afflict him.” (*Psalm 89:22*) What a sweet providence was it, that when all the males of Israel appeared thrice in the year before the Lord at Jerusalem, none of their neighbour nations, though professed enemies to Israel, should so much as desire their land. (*Exodus 34:24*) And again, that after the slaughter of Gedaliah, so pleasant a country—left utterly destitute of inhabitants, and compassed about with such warlike nations, as the Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites, Philistines, &c.—was not invaded nor replanted by foreigners for seventy years’ time, but the room kept empty till the return of the naturals.

No man knows either love or hatred, &c. That is, The thing he either loves or hates, say some interpreters, by reason of the fickleness of his easily alterable affections. How soon was Amnon’s heart estranged from his Tamar, and Ahasuerus from his minion Haman, the Jews from John Baptist, the Galatians from Paul, &c.! But I rather approve of those that refer this love and hatred unto God—understanding them, *ΘΕΟΤΡΕΠΩΣ*, in a divine manner—and make the meaning to be, that by the things of this life, “which come alike to all,” as the next verse hath it, no man can make judgment of God’s love or hatred towards him. The sun of prosperity shines as well upon brambles of the wilderness, as fruit trees of the orchard; the snow and hail of adversity lights upon the best gardens, as well as upon the wild waste. Ahab’s and Josiah’s ends concur in the very circumstances. Saul and Jonathan, though different in their deportments, yet “in their deaths they were not divided.” (*2 Samuel 1:23*) How far wide then is the Church of Rome, that borrows her marks from the market, plenty or cheapness, &c. And what an odd kind of reasoning was that of her champions with Marsh the martyr,⁽²⁸⁷⁾ whom they would have persuaded to leave his opinions, because all the bringers up and favourers of that religion, as the Dukes of Northumberland and Suffolk for instance, had bad luck, and were either put to death, or in prison, and in danger of life. Again, the favourers of the religion then used had wondrous good luck and prosperity in all things, &c.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 2. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 9:2]]{{field-on:Bible}}**All things come alike to all.** (*See Trapp on “Ecclesiastes 9:1”*) Health, wealth, honours, &c., are cast upon good men and bad men promiscuously. God makes a scatter of them, as it were; good men gather them, bad men scramble for them. The whole Turkish empire, saith Luther, is nothing else but a crust⁽²⁸⁸⁾ cast by heaven’s great housekeeper to his dogs.

²⁸⁷ *Acts and Mon.*, fol. 14, 21.

²⁸⁸ *Nihil est nisi mica panis.*

And he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath. No surer sign of a profane person, than common and customary swearing. Neither any so good an evidence of a gracious heart, as not only to forbear it, for so one may do by education, and civil conversation, but to "fear an oath" out of an awful regard to the Divine Majesty. Plato and other heathens shall rise up and condemn our common swearers; for they, when they would swear, said no more but *Ex animi sententia*,⁽²⁸⁹⁾ or if they would swear by their Jupiter, out of the mere dread and reverence of his name, they forbore to mention him. Clinias the Pythagorean, out of this regard, would rather undergo a mulct of three talents, than swear. The Merindolians, those ancient French Protestants, were known by this through all the country of Provence, that they would not swear, nor easily be brought to take an oath, except it were in judgment, or making some solemn covenant.⁽²⁹⁰⁾ {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 3. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 9:3]] {{field-on:Bible}} **This is an evil.** *Hoc est pessimum*—so Jerome, the Vulgate, and Tremellius render it; this is the worst evil, this is wickedness with a witness,—*scil.*, That since "there is one event to all," graceless men should thence conclude that it is a bootless business, a course of no profit to serve God. Hence they walk about the world with hearts as full as hell of lewd and lawless lusts. Hence they run a-madding after the pleasures of sin, which with a restless giddiness they earnestly pursue; yea, they live and die in so doing, saith the wise man here, noting their final impenitence, that hate of heaven, and gate to hell. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 4. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 9:4]] {{field-on:Bible}} **For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope.** These are the words of those wicked ones,⁽²⁹¹⁾ whose lives and hopes end together, whose Song is, *Post mortem nulla voluptas*, when life ends, there is an end of all. Is there not such language in some men's hearts, Who knows whether there be any such thing as a life to come? &c. Now I shall know, said that dying pope,⁽²⁹²⁾ whether the soul of man be immortal, yea or no; and whether that tale concerning Christ have any truth in it. Oh, wretch!

So a living dog is better than a dead lion. But so is not a living sinner better than a dead saint; for "the righteous hath hope in his death"; and they that "die in the Lord are blessed"; (**Revelation 14:13**) how much more if they also die for the Lord! These "love not their lives unto the death." (**Revelation 12:11**) but go as willingly to die as ever they did to dine, being as glad to leave the world (for a better especially) as men are wont to be to rise from the board, when they have eaten their fill, to take possession of a lordship.

"Cur non ut plenus vitae conviva recedis?"—Lucret.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 5. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 9:5]] {{field-on:Bible}} **For the living know that they shall die.** Hence that proverb among us, As sure as death. Howbeit, that they think little of it to any good purpose, appears by that other proverb, I thought no more of it than of my dying day.

But the dead know not anything. So it seemeth to those atheists that deny the immortality of the soul. But they shall know at death that there is another life beyond this, wherein the righteous shall be "comforted," and their knowledge perfected, but the wicked "tormented"; (**Luke 16:25**) and with nothing more than to know that such and such poor souls as they would have disdained to have "set with the dogs of their flocks." (**Job 30:1**) are now "sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God, and themselves thrust out into

²⁸⁹ Suidas.

²⁹⁰ Acts and Mon., 865.

²⁹¹ Ex primis per μίμησιν eorum sermones.—Lav. Job., 24.

²⁹² Sic Benedic. IX., Alexand. VI., Leo. X.

utter darkness," (**Luke 13:28**) *in tenebras ex tenebris infeliciter exclusi, infeliciter excludendi*,⁽²⁹³⁾

Neither have they any more a reward. What! not a "reward for the righteous?" (**Psalm 58:11**) Not a "certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation which shall devour evildoers?" (**Hebrews 10:27**) That were strange. But wicked men would fain persuade themselves so: *Ut liberius peccent, libenter ignorant*,⁽²⁹⁴⁾—"Of these things they are willingly ignorant." (**2 Peter 2:5**)

For the memory of them is forgotten. This is true in part, but not altogether. Joseph was forgotten in Egypt, (**Exodus 1**) Gideon in Israel. (**Judges 9**) Joash remembered not the kindness which Jehoiadah had done to him, but slew his son. (**2 Chronicles 24:22**) Nevertheless the "foundation of God stands firm, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his"; (**2 Timothy 2:19**) and there is "a book of remembrance written before him for them that fear the Lord"; (**Malachi 3:16**) their "names are written in heaven," (**Luke 10:20**) and "the memory of the just is blessed." (**Proverbs 10:7**; *see the note there*).{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 6. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 9:6]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Also their love and their hatred, &c.** Here is lie upon lie. The atheist, as he had denied knowledge to the dead, so here he denies affections, as love, hatred, envy, or zeal, as Jerome renders it. But it is certain that those that are dead in Jesus do very dearly love God, and hate evil with a perfect hatred. The wicked, on the other side, continue in that other world to hate God and goodness, to love such as themselves are, to stomach the happiness of those in heaven, &c. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 7. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 9:7]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy.** *Vade, iuste*, go thy way, thou righteous man; live in cheerfulness of mind, proceeding from the testimony of a good conscience: so Lyra senseth the words. God's grace and favour turned brown bread and water into manchet and wine to the martyrs in prison. "Rejoice not thou, O Israel, for joy, as other people, for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God." (**Hosea 9:1**) Thou cuttest thy bane, thou drinkest thy poison, because "to the impure all things are impure," and "without faith it is impossible to please God." "In the transgression of an evil man there is a snare (or a cord to strangle his joy with), but the righteous doth sing and rejoice." (**Proverbs 29:6**) He may do so; he must do so. What should hinder him? He hath made his peace with God, and is *rectus in curia*. Let him be merry at his meals, lightsome and spruce in his clothes, cheerful with his wife and children, &c. "Is any man merry at heart?" saith St James; (**James 5:13**) is he right set, and hath he a right frame of soul (εὐθυμεῖ)? is all well within? "Let him sing psalms"; yea, as a traveller rides on merrily, and wears out the tediousness of the way by singing sweet Song s unto himself; so should the saints. "Thy statutes have been my Song s in the house of my pilgrimage." (**Psalm 119:54**) {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 8. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 9:8]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Let thy garments be always white; . i.e.,** Neat, spruce, cleanly, comely. Or by a metaphor it may signify, Be merry in good manner, for they used to wear white clothing on festivals and at weddings, as Philo⁽²⁹⁵⁾ witnesseth. At this day also the Jews come to their synagogues in white raiment the day before the calends of September, which is their New Year's tide.⁽²⁹⁶⁾ Purple was affected by the Romans, white by the Jews. (*see James 2:2*) Hence Pilate clad Christ in purple, (**Matthew 27:28**) Herod in white. (**Luke 23:11**) Herod himself was "arrayed in royal apparel"; (**Acts 12:21**) that is, in cloth of silver; saith Josephus, which, being beaten upon by the sunbeams, dazzled the people's eyes, and drew from them that blasphemous acclamation, "The voice of God, and not of man."

²⁹³ Augustine.

²⁹⁴ Bernard.

²⁹⁵ De vita Theoretica.

²⁹⁶ Stuckius in *Antiq. Conviv.*

And let thine head lack no ointment. That thou mayest look smooth and handsome. (**Matthew 6:16-17**) Ointments were much used with those eastern people in banquetings, bathings, and at other times. (**Luke 7:46; Matthew 26:7**) By "garments" here some understand the *affections*, (as **Colossians 3:8-12**) which must "always be white," *i.e.*, cheerful, even in times of persecution, when thy garments haply are stained with thine own blood. By the "head" they understand the thoughts, which must also be kept lithe and lightsome, as anointed with the oil of gladness. *Crucem multi abominantur, crucem videntes, sed non videntes unctionem: crux enim inuncta est*, saith Bernard. Many men hate the cross because they see the cross only, but see not the ointment that is upon it, for the cross is anointed, and by the grace of God's Holy Spirit helping our infirmities, it becomes not only light, but sweet—not only not troublesome, but even desirable and delectable. *Martyr etiam in catena gaudet.* ⁽²⁹⁷⁾ Paul gloried in his sufferings. His spirit was cheered up by the thoughts of them as by some fragrant ointment.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 9. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 9:9]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest.** As Isaac, the most loving husband in Scripture, did with his Rebecca, whom he loved (**Genesis 24:67**) not only as his country woman, kinswoman, a good woman, &c., but as his woman; not with an ordinary or Christian love only, but with a conjugal love, which indeed is that which will make marriage a merry age, sweeten all crosses, season all comforts. She is called the wife of a man's bosom because she should be loved as well as the heart in his bosom. God took one of man's ribs, and, having built it into a wife, laid it again in his bosom, so that she is flesh of his flesh, yea, she is himself, as the apostle argues, and therehence enforceth this duty of love. (**Ephesians 5:28-31**) Neither doth he satisfy himself in this argument, but adds there blow to blow, so to drive this nail up to the head, the better to beat this duty into the heads and hearts of husbands.

All the days of the life of thy vanity. Love and live comfortably together, as well in age as in youth, as well in the fading as in the freshness of beauty.

Which he hath given thee. *i.e.*, The wife (not the life) which he hath given thee; for marriages are made in heaven, as the heathens also held. God, as he brought Eve to Adam at first, so still he is the paranymp that makes the match and unites their affections. "A prudent wife is of the Lord," (**Proverbs 18:22**) for a comfort, as a froward is for a scourge.

All the days of thy vanity. *i.e.*, Of thy vain, vexatious life, the miseries whereof to mitigate God hath given thee a suitable mate to compassionate and communicate with thee, and to be a principal remedy, for *Optimum solarium sodalitiara*, no comfort in misery can be comparable to good company, that will sympathise and share with us.

For that is thy portion. And a very good one too, if she prove good, as, if otherwise, Aristotle ⁽²⁹⁸⁾ saith right: He that is unhappy in a wife hath lost the one half, at least, of his happiness on earth.

And in thy labour which thou takest, &c. They that will marry shall have trouble in the flesh. (**1 Corinthians 7:28**) Let them look for it, and labour to make a virtue of necessity. As there is rejoicing in marriage, so there is a deal of labour—*i.e.*, of care, cost, and cumber. Is it not good therefore to have a partner, such a one as Sarah was to Abraham—a piece so just cut for him as answered him right in every joint?{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 10. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 9:10]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Whatsoever thy hand finds to do, do it with thy might.** We were made and set here to be doing of something that may do us good a

²⁹⁷ Augustine.

²⁹⁸ Arist. in *Rhetor*.

thousand years hence. Our time is short, our task is long, our master urgent, an austere man, &c.; work, therefore, while the day lasteth, yea, work hard, as afraid to be taken with your task undone. The night of death comes when none can work. That is a time not of doing work, but of receiving wages. Up, therefore, and be doing, that the Lord may be with you.

“Praecipita tempus; mors atra impendet agenti.”
—Silius

Castigemus ergo mores et moras. The devil is therefore more mischievous because he knows "he hath but a short time," (**Revelation 12:12**) and makes all the haste he can to outwork the children of light, in a quick despatch of deeds of darkness. Oh, learn for shame of the devil, as Latimer said once in another case, therefore to do your utmost, because "the time is short," or "rolled up,"⁽²⁹⁹⁾ as sails use to be when the ship draws nigh to the harbour. This argument prevailed much with St Peter to bestir him in stirring up those he wrote unto, because he knew that he must "shortly put off his tabernacle." (**2 Peter 1:13-14**) The life of man is the lamp of God, saith Solomon. God hath set up our lives, as Alexander, when he sat down before a city, did use to set up a light, to give those within to understand that if they came forth to him while that light lasted they might have quarter, as if otherwise, no mercy was to be expected.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 11. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 9:11]]{{field-on:Bible}}**That the race is not to the swift.** Here the Preacher proverb—what he had found true by experience—by the event of men's endeavours, often frustrated, that nothing is in our power, but all carried on by a Providence, which oft crosseth our likeliest projects, that God may have the honour of all. Let a man be as swift as Asahel or Atalanta, yet he may not get the goal or escape the danger. The battle of Terwin, in France, fought by our Henry VIII, was called the 'Battle of Spurs,' because many fled for their lives, who yet fell (as the men of Ai did) into the midst of their enemies.⁽³⁰⁰⁾ At Musselburgh Field, many of the Scots running away, so strained themselves in their race, that they fell down breathless and dead, whereby they seemed in running from their deaths to run to it, whereas two thousand of them that lay all day as dead, got away safely in the night.⁽³⁰¹⁾

Nor the battle to the strong. As we see in the examples of Gideon, Jonathan and his armourbearer, David in his encounter with Goliath, Leonidas, who with six hundred men worsted five hundred thousand of Xerxes' host. "They shall be holpen with a little help." (**Daniel 11:34**) And why a little? That through weaker means we may see God's greater strength. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." (**Zechariah 4:6**) This Rabshakeh knew not, and therefore derided Hezekiah for trusting to his prayers. (**Isaiah 36:5**) What can Hezekiah say to embolden him to stand out? What? I say, saith Hezekiah, "I have words of my lips"—that is, prayer. Prayer! saith Rabshakeh, those are empty words, an airy thing; for "counsel and strength are for the war"; so some read the words, and not in a parenthesis, as our translation hath it.

Neither yet bread to the wise. To the worldlywise. Those "young lions do lack and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." (**Psalms 34:10**) Their daily bread day by day, *panem demensi*, "food convenient for them," (**Proverbs 30:8**) they shall be sure of. "Dwell in the land, and do good, and verily thou shalt be fed," (**Psalms 37:5**) by virtue of a promise, and not by a providence only, as the young ravens are.

Nor yet riches to men of understanding. Plutus is said by the poets to be blind, and fortune to favour fools. Of Pope Clement V the French chronicler saith, *Papa hic ditior fuit quam*

²⁹⁹ Συνεσταλμένος. (**1 Corinthians 7:29**)

³⁰⁰ Speed.

³⁰¹ Life of Edward VI, by Sir John Heywood.

sapientior, This pope was rather rich than wise. ⁽³⁰²⁾ Aristides was so poor, that he brought a slur upon Justice, saith Plutarch, as if she were not able to maintain her followers. Phocian also, Pelopidas, Lamachus, Ephialtes, Socrates, those Greek sages, were very poor. ⁽³⁰³⁾ Epaminondas had but one garment, and that a sorry one too. ⁽³⁰⁴⁾ Lactantius had scarce a subsistence. Many wise men have been hard put to it. *Paupertas est philosophiae vernacula*, saith Apuleius.

Nor yet favour to men of skill. *Rara ingeniorum praemia, rara item est merces*, saith one, ⁽³⁰⁵⁾ Wit and skill is little set by, small regard or reward is given to it; whereas popular men should esteem it as silver, said Aeneas Sylvius, noblemen as gold, princes as pearls.

But time and chance happeneth to them all. *i.e.*, Everything is done in its own time, and as God by his providence ordereth it, not as men will; much less by haphazard, for that which to us is casual and contingent, is by God Almighty foreappointed and effected, who must therefore be seen and sought unto in the use of means and second causes. And if things succeed not to our minds, but that we "labour in the fire," yet we must "glorify God in the fire," and live by faith.

"Vivere spe vidi qui moriturus erat." {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 12. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 9:12]]{{field-on:Bible}} **For man also knoweth not his time.** His end, say the Septuagint and Vulgate; what may befall him in after time, say others.

*"Flebile principium melior fortuna sequatur,
Accidit in puncto quod non speratur in anno."*

So are the sons of men snared in an evil time. This is the reddition of the former proposition. As the fishes are taken, &c., so are graceless men snared, &c. Security ushers in their calamity: "When they say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction breaks in upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape." (**1 Thessalonians 5:3**) God made fair weather before Pharaoh till he was in the heart of the Red Sea. The old world, Sodom, Amnon, Belshazzar, Herod, the rich fool, were all suddenly surprised in the ruff of their jollity. Jerusalem had three years of extraordinary great plenty before her last utter destruction. ⁽³⁰⁶⁾ Philosophers tell us that before a snow the weather will be warmish; when the wind lies, the great rain falls; and the air is most quiet when suddenly there will be an earthquake. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 13. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 9:13]]{{field-on:Bible}} **This wisdom also have I seen.** *i.e.*, This fruit and effect of wisdom have I observed, that through the iniquity of the times, it is slighted and left unrewarded if joined with a mean condition.

And it seemed great unto me. Though not unto the many, who value not wisdom, if meanly habited, according to its worth, consider not that

"Saepe sub attrita latitat sapientia veste,"

that within that leathern purse may be a pearl of great price, and in those earthen pots abundance of golden treasure. "I know thy poverty, but thou art rich" (**Revelation 2:9**) The cock on the dunghill understands not this: That which seems great to a Solomon, *Multis pro vili*

³⁰² Epit. Hist. Gallic.

³⁰³ *Aelian.*, lib. ii.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, lib. v.

³⁰⁵ Rhodigin, lib. xxix. cap. 10.

³⁰⁶ Josephus.

sub pedibusque iacet. Stultorum enim plena sunt omnia. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 14. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 9:14]]{{field-on:Bible}} **There was a little city.** Such as was Lampsacum, besieged by Alexander, and saved by Anaximenes; Rhodes, besieged by the great Turk; Rochelle, by the French king; Geneva, by the Duke of Savoy. This last, a little city, a small people surrounded with enemies, and barred out from all aid of neighbour cities and churches, yet is strangely upheld. ⁽³⁰⁷⁾ Well may they write as they do on the one side of their coin, *Deus noster pugnat pro nobis*, Our God fights for us. ⁽³⁰⁸⁾ {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 15. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 9:15]]{{field-on:Bible}} **Now there was found in it a poor wise man.** Such as was Anaximenes at Lampsacum, ⁽³⁰⁹⁾ and Archimedes at Syracuse, of whose wisdom Plutarch testifieth, that it was above the ordinary possibility of a man, it was divine. ⁽³¹⁰⁾ And of whose poverty Silius assures us, that he was

“Nadus opum, sed cui coelum terraeque paterent.”

By his warlike devices and engines he so defended his city against Marcellus, the Roman general, that the soldiers called him Briareus and Centimanus, a giant invincible; there was no taking of the town, as Livy relates it. The city of Abel was delivered by a wise woman that was in it. **(2 Samuel 20:16-22)** The city of Coecinum in the isle of Lemnos, by Marulla, a maiden of that city. ⁽³¹¹⁾ Hippo could not be taken while Augustine was in it; nor Heidelberg, while Pareus lived. Elisha preserved Samaria from the Syrians; and the prophet Isaiah, Jerusalem from the Assyrians. "They shall not shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it," saith the Lord. **(Isaiah 37:33)** Jeremiah had preserved it longer, but that his counsel was slighted. Indeed he was a physician to a dying state,

“Tunc etenim docta plus valet arte malum.”

Yet no man remembered that same poor man. Had he been some Demetrius Phalereus, or suchlike magnifico, he should have had a hundred statues set up in honour of his good service. He should have heard, Saviour, saviour, as Flaminius the Roman general did, or, Father, father, as Huniades, after he had defeated Mesites the Turk. But being poor, he is soon set aside, and neither succoured nor honoured. This is *merces mundi*, the world's wages. The Dutch have a proverb, that a man should bow to the tree that hath sheltered him in a storm. But many well deserving persons have cause to complain, as Elijah did when he sat under the juniper; or as Themistocles did when he compared himself to a plane tree, whereunto his countrymen, in a tempest, would run for refuge; but when once took up, they would not only leave him, but pull the leaves from him. ⁽³¹²⁾ Are you weary, said he once to them, of receiving so many good turns from one man?{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 16. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 9:16]]{{field-on:Bible}} **Then said I, Wisdom is better, &c.** This he had said before, **(Ecclesiastes 7:19; Proverbs 21:22)** **(See Trapp on “Ecclesiastes 7:19”)** **(See Trapp on “Proverbs 21:22”)** but now upon this new occasion. *Nunquam satis dicitur, quod nunquam satis discitur.* ⁽³¹³⁾

Nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised. Jerome reads it thus, *Et sapientia*

³⁰⁷ Brightman.

³⁰⁸ Scultet.

³⁰⁹ Val. Max.

³¹⁰ Ὀνομα ἔχει, δαμονίου τινος, συνέσεως.—*Plut.*, lib: xiv.

³¹¹ Turkish History, 413.

³¹² Sed restituta serenitate abeuntes vellicarent.

³¹³ Seneca.

pauperis quae despecta est, et verba eius quae non sunt audita; that is, And the wisdom of the poor man which is despised, and his words which are not heard. According to which reading, the sense is, wisdom is better than strength, yea, even the despised wisdom of the poor man, &c. The Septuagint and Vulgate read it, *Quomodo ergo sapientia pauperis contempta est et verba eius non audita!* How therefore is the wisdom of the wise man despised, and his words not heard! As making a wonder and a strange thing of it. Too often it befalls God's poor ministers, either to be rejected with scorn, or if heard, yet not regarded, much less rewarded, unless it be as Micaiah was by Ahab, and Jeremiah by his countrymen of Anathoth, Jesus Christ by the proud Pharisees, (**John 7:14-15, 27**) St Paul by the ungrateful Corinthians; (**1 Corinthians 4:7**) "His bodily presence," said they, "is weak," his sermons without philosophy and rhetoric. (**2 Corinthians 10:10**).^{}field-off:Bible}}

Verse 17. [^{@Bible:Ecclesiastes 9:17}]^{}field-on:Bible}} **The words of wise men are heard in quiet.** The submissive words of a poor man speaking with good understanding, are rather heard than the big and boisterous words of proud fools. *Fuit Nestorius homo indoctus, superbus, audax et magnae loquentiae*, saith Zanchy.⁽³¹⁴⁾ Nestorius, the heretic, was an ignorant, proud, bold, big spoken man, and prevailed very much thereby with some silly simples. How much better Chrysostom, of whom it is said that he was *graviter suavis, et suaviter gravis*, gravely sweet, and sweetly grave, and he was much admired for it! Gentle showers and dews that distil leisurely, comfort the earth; when dashing storms drown the seed. The words of wise men are by one well compared to the river Indus, which is said both to sow the East, and to water it; for so it may be said of the words of the wise, that they are both *semina et flumina*, both seeds and rivers: seeds, because they sow goodness in their hearers; rivers, because they water that which is sown to make it to grow in them.⁽³¹⁵⁾ But the cry of fools is like a violent torrent, which washeth away that which it soweth, and doth not suffer it to continue in the ground.

More than the cry of him that ruleth among fools. Tremellius reads it, *cum stolidis suis*, with his fools; *i.e., cum suo stulto senatu*, with his foolish counsellors, who do commonly comply with him, to obtrude, with great authority, his unreasonable and tyrannical edicts and mandates.^{}field-off:Bible}}

Verse 18. [^{@Bible:Ecclesiastes 9:18}]^{}field-on:Bible}} **Wisdom is better than weapons of war.** As David found it in his encounter with Goliath, Gideon in his stratagem against the Midianites, and our renowned Drake in dissipating that Invincible Armada, which being three years in preparing with incredible cost, was by his wisdom within a month overthrown and confounded, with the loss of one English ship only, and not a hundred persons. *Romani sedendo vincunt*. This was the glory of the Romans, that they conquered the world by wisdom, not by weapons.

"Unus homo nobis cunctando restituit rem."

Not Achilles, but Ulysses is termed **πολιοπορθος**, the sacker of cities;⁽³¹⁶⁾ Cyneas took mere towns by his policy than Pyrrhus by his prowess.

But one sinner destroyeth much good. He may be as an Achan in the army, as a *Jonah* in the ship, a trouble-town, a common mischief, a traitor to the state; especially if he be an eminent man, as Jeroboam, that ringleader of rebellion, and Manasseh, who "made Judah also to sin," (**2 Kings 21:11**) and so brought such evil upon them, that whosoever heard of it, "both his ears tingled." (**Ecclesiastes 9:12**) Great men's sins do more hurt (1.) By imitation; for *Regis ad*

³¹⁴ Zanch., *Miscel.*

³¹⁵ *Indus fluvius, et serere Orientem, dicitur, et rigare.*—Minut. *Felix in Octav.*

³¹⁶ Plutarch.

exemplum, &c.; (2.) By imputation, for *plectuntur Achivi*; the poor people pay for such men's faults, as they did for David's. (**2 Samuel 24:15-17**) I shall close up this Chapter with that memorable passage of a reverend writer, yet alive: If England's fears were greater, thy reformation may save it. (**Jeremiah 5:1**) If our hopes were greater, thy sin and security might undo it. (**Ecclesiastes 9:18**) One sinner destroys much good. I only add, how much more a rabble of rebels, conspiring to provoke God. Sure I am, we have great cause to wish for our country, as Ferus did for the Romish synagogue; I would we had some Moses, said he, to take away the evils, *Non enim unum tantum vitulum, sed multos habemus*, for we have not only one golden calf, but many among us. {{field-off:Bible}}

Chapter 10

Verse 1. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 10:1]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Dead flies cause the ointment, &c.** The Preacher had said that "one sinner destroys much good"; (*Ecclesiastes 9:18*) here he affirms the same of "one sin"; be it but a small sin, a peccadillo, no bigger than a few "dead flies" fallen into a pot of sweet odours, it is of that stinking nature, that it stains a good man's esteem, and blows his reputation. A great many flies may fall into a tarbox, and no hurt done. A small spot is soon seen in a swan, not so in a swine. Fine lawn is sooner and deeper stained than coarse canvas. A city upon a hill cannot be hid; the least eclipse or aberration in the heavenly bodies is quickly noted and noticed. If Jacob, a plain man,⁽³¹⁷⁾ deal deceitfully, the banks of blasphemy will be broken down in a profane Esau thereby. If his unruly sons falsify with the Shechemites, he shall have cause to complain, "Ye have made me to stink among the inhabitants of the land." (*Genesis 34:30*) If Moses marry an Ethiopian woman, it shall be laid in his dish by his dearest friends. (*Numbers 12:1*) If Samson go down to Timnah, the Philistines will soon have it by the end, "told" it will be "in Gath, published in the streets of Askelon." If David do otherwise than well at home, the name of God will soon stink abroad, (*2 Samuel 12:14*) if Josiah go up unadvisedly against Pharaohnecho, and fall by his own folly, this "shall be his derision in the land of Egypt." (*Hosea 7:16*) The enemies of God will soon compose comedies out of the Church's tragedies, and make themselves merry in her misery. She is said to be "fair as the moon," (*Solomon's Song 6:10*) which, though it be a beautiful creature and full of light, yet is she not without her black spots and blemishes; (Galileo used his telescope to discover mountains on her). These the Church malignant is ever eyeing and aggravating, passing by or depraving the better practices of God's people. As vultures they hunt after carcasses,⁽³¹⁸⁾ as swine they musk in the muck hill, as beetles they would live and die in horse dung. It must be our care as much as may be to maintain our reputation, to cut off all occasion of obloquy, to be "blameless and harmless," (*Philippians 2:15*) fair to the eye and sweet to the taste as that tree in paradise; without blemish from head to foot, as Absalom was; *Non aliunde noscibiles quam de emendatione vitiorum pristinorum*,⁽³¹⁹⁾ as Tertullian saith of the Christians of his time, known from all others by their innocence and patience. That was a good choice, for this purpose, that he himself made, *Malo miserandum quam erubescendum*,⁽³²⁰⁾ I had rather be pitied than justly reproached. Strive we should to be as Paul was, a "good savour," (*2 Corinthians 2:14*) and not to go out, as they say the devil doth, in a stench.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 2. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 10:2]]{{field-on:Bible}}**A wise man's heart is at his right hand.** He doth his business discreetly and dexterously, he is handy and happy at it. And as he "ordereth his affairs with discretion," (*Psalms 112:5*) so he doth his affections too, reining them in with his right hand, and not suffering them to run riot, as the fool doth oft to his utter ruin. As the wise man's "eyes are in his head," (*Ecclesiastes 2:14*) so his "heart is at his right hand"; he hath it at command, to think of what he will when he will; it is as a hawk brought to the falconer's lure; or as a horse that is taught his postures. Hence he keeps his credit untainted, he retains the reputation of a wise man, he rightly owns that honour that the Italians arrogate to themselves, in that proverbial speech of theirs; *Italus sapit ante factum, Hispanus in facto, Germanus post factum*—*i.e.*, The Italian is well advised before the deed done, the Spaniard in, the German after it.

But a fool's heart at his left. At his left side, so it may be rendered, where nature placed it; he

³¹⁷ ἄπλαστος.—Sept.

³¹⁸ Vultures ad malevolentia feruntur.—Basil.

³¹⁹ Tertul. *Ad Scapul.*

³²⁰ Tertul. *De Fuga Pers.*

never yet sorrowed as those Corinthians did, (**2 Corinthians 7:9**) to a transmentation,⁽³²¹⁾ to a thorough change both of mind and manners; his heart is yet still in the old place, he follows the course of depraved nature, he is a perfect stranger to the life of God.

Or his heart is at his left hand. *i.e.*, He rashly rusheth upon business without due deliberation, and doth it awkwardly, as with the left hand, and like a bungler, *invita Minerva, et collachrymantibus Muis*, he brings it to no good upshot. See an instance of this in Hanun and his counsellors; (**2 Samuel 10:2-4**) Ahab and his clawbacks; (**1 Kings 22:6**) Antichrist and his adherers. Bellarmine bewails it in these words: *Ab eo tempore, quo per vos Papa Antichristus esse coepit, non modo non crevit eius imperium, sed semper magis ae magis decrevit* (Lib. iii. de Pap. Rom. c. 2, 3): Ever since you Protestants have made the Pope to be Antichrist, his authority hath not only not increased, but still more and more decreased. Or thus, His "heart is at his left hand"; that is, he puts away reason and wisdom from himself—as, for the most part, those things which men dislike are put away with the left hand.⁽³²²⁾ Thus Junius expounds it.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 3. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 10:3]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Yea, also when he that is a fool walketh,** &c. In his very gait, gestures, looks, laughings, &c., he bewrays his witlessness, as Jehu did his furiousness, by the manner of his marches. (**2 Kings 9:20**) "He winketh with his eyes, speaketh with his feet, teacheth with his fingers, frowardness is in his heart," &c. (**Proverbs 6:13, 14**) (*See Trapp on "Proverbs 6:13"*) (*See Trapp on "Proverbs 6:14"*) Such a froward fool was Julian the apostate, as Nazianzen describes him, with his *colli crebrae conversiones, oculi vagi, pedes instabiles, &c.*, frequent turning of his neck, tossing up his head, wild eyes, wandering feet, &c. And such were those "haughty daughters of Sion, that walked with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, mincing and making a tinkling as they went"; (**Isaiah 3:16**) their haughtiness and haughtiness spake them little better than harlots.

And he saith to every one that he is a fool. Upon the matter he saith it, though he say nothing. It is said that a fool, while he holds his tongue is held a wise man; (**Proverbs 17:28**) that is, if neither by his tongue nor any other part of his body he discover himself: but that can hardly be, since folly flows from man as excrements do from sick folk, and they feel it not, will hardly be persuaded of it. Symmachus, Jerome, and others, refer the last he in this sentence not to the fool himself, but to every one else whom he looks upon as so many fools like himself;⁽³²³⁾ *ex suo ingenio universos iudicans*, judging of others according to his own disposition. For as the philosopher saith, *Qualis quisque est tales existimat alios*⁽³²⁴⁾ such as any one is, the same he thinks others to be, and as men muse so they use, whether it be for the better or the worse. Jacob could not imagine that his sons were so base as to make away their brother Joseph, but said, "Surely some evil beast hath devoured him." (**Genesis 37:32**) **Joshua** never suspected the false Gibeonites, nor the rest of the disciples Judas, when our Saviour said, "What thou dost, do quickly"; and again when he said, "One of you shall betray me." On the other side, fools conceit the whole world to be made up of folly; as the Lacedemonians once, *neminem bonum fieri publicis literis columna incisus sanxerunt*,⁽³²⁵⁾ scored it upon their public posts that there was none good, no, not one; as Claudius and Caligula, being themselves notorious whoremongers, would not be persuaded that there was any chaste person upon earth;⁽³²⁶⁾ as the devil charged God with envy, which is his own proper disease. (**Genesis 3:5**)

³²¹ εἰς μετάνοιαν.

³²² *Ut quae aversantur homines fere sinistra depelluntur.*

³²³ *Dicit de omnibus, stultus est.*

³²⁴ *Arist. Polit., lib. iii. cap. 6.*

³²⁵ *Plut. in Quaest. Graec.*

³²⁶ *Dio.*

The old proverb saith, The mother seeks the daughter in the oven, as having been there some time herself. I daresay, quoth Bonner, that Cranmer would recant if he might have his living,⁽³²⁷⁾ so judging of another by himself.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 4. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 10:4]]{{field-on:Bible}}**If the spirit of thy ruler rise up, &c., leave not thy place.** Thine office, duty, and obedience; a metaphor from military matters. A soldier must not start from his station, but keep to the place assigned him by his captain;⁽³²⁸⁾ so here,

“Perdidit arma, locum virtutis descruit, &c.”—Horat.

Others render it, "Do not persist in thy place," do not stand to affront anger, but go aside a little out of sight, as Jonathan, when his father had thrown a javelin at him, went forth shooting. (See Trapp on "Ecclesiastes 8:3") (See Trapp on "Proverbs 15:1")

For yielding pacifieth great offences. Thus by yielding David pacified Saul; Abigail, David. See **Proverbs 25:15.** (See Trapp on "Proverbs 25:15") Salve the wound and save thyself. The weak reed, by bending in a rough wind, receiveth no hurt, when the sturdy oak is turned up by the roots.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 5. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 10:5]]{{field-on:Bible}}**As an error which proceedeth from the ruler.** Or, An ignorance, as Jerome renders it; **ὡς ἀκούσιον**—so the Septuagint—as a thing unwillingly done. An error, an infirmity it must be called, because committed by great ones; but in true account it is a gross evil, the very pest of virtue and cause of confusion—viz., the advancement of most unworthy and incapable persons, and that for the prince's pleasure sake, because he will seem absolute. An earl of Kildare was complained of to our Henry VIII, and when his adversary concluded his invective with, Finally, all Ireland cannot rule this earl, the king replied, Then shall this earl rule all Ireland; and so, for his jest sake, made him deputy.⁽³²⁹⁾{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 6. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 10:6]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Folly is set in great dignity.** *Sedes prima et vita ima,*⁽³³⁰⁾ these suit not. *Dignitas in indigno est ornamentum in luto.* Royalty itself, without righteousness, is but eminent dishonour. When a fool is set in dignity, it is, saith one,⁽³³¹⁾ as when a handful of hay is set up to give light, which with smoke and smell offendeth all that are near. When as the worthy sit in low place, it is as when a goodly candle (that on a table would give a comfortable and comely light) is put under a bushel.

And the rich in low place. *i.e.*, The wise, as appears by the opposition, who, in true account, are the only rich, (**James 2:5**) "rich in faith," (**1 Timothy 6:18**) "rich in good works," (**Luke 12:21**) rich to Godward, who hath highly honoured and advanced them, though vilipended and underrated by men; *digni etiam qui ditentur*, worthy they are also to be set in highest places, as being drained from the dregs, and sifted from the brans of the common sort of people. Dignity should wait upon desert, as it did here in England, in King Edward VI's days, that *aureum saeculum, in quo honores melioribus dabantur*, as Seneca⁽³³²⁾ hath it, that golden age in which honours were bestowed on those that best deserved them. But in case it prove otherwise, as it often doth—the golden bishopric of Carthage fell to the lot of leaden Aurelius, and little Hippo to great St Augustine; Damasus, the scholar, was advanced to the see of Rome

³²⁷ Acts and Mon.

³²⁸ Nehemiah **ΛΕΙΠΟΠΑΚΤΕΣ** *audiat*.

³²⁹ Heyl. *Geog.*, p. 506.

³³⁰ Salvian.

³³¹ Cartwright.

³³² Sen. *Epist.*, 91.

when Jerome, his master, ended his days in his cell at Bethlehem—yet virtue is its own competent encouragement, and will rather choose to lie in the dust than to rise by wickedness. Cato said he had rather men should question why he had no statue or monument erected in honour of him, than why he had. The wise historian observed that the statues of Brutus and Cassius, *eo praefergebant quod non visebantur*,⁽³³³⁾ were the more glorious and illustrious, because they were not brought out with other images in a solemn procession at the funeral of Germanicus. God pleaseth himself, saith Basil, in beholding a hidden pearl in a disrespected body.⁽³³⁴⁾ A rich stone is of no less worth when locked up in a wicker casket, than when it is set in a royal diadem.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 7. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 10:7]]{{field-on:Bible}} **I have seen servants upon horses.** *i.e.*, Servile souls, base spirited abjects, slaves to their lusts, *homines ad servitum paratos*, as Tiberius said of his Romans, natural slaves born to be so, as the Cappadocians,⁽³³⁵⁾ "brute beasts made and taken to be destroyed." (**2 Peter 2:12**) *Hi perfricant frontem et digniores se dicunt quam Catonem, qui praetores fierent*, as Vatinius did. These set a good face upon it many times, and leap into the saddle of authority, ride on strong and shining palfreys,⁽³³⁶⁾ ride without reins in the prosecution of their ambitious ends, till, unhorsed, with Haman, they that were erst a terror become a scorn. (*See Trapp on "Proverbs 30:22"*)

And princes walking as servants upon the earth. In Persia at this day the difference between the gentleman and the slave is, that the slave never rides, the gentleman never goes on foot; they buy, sell, confer, fight, do all on horseback. When Doeg, Saul's herdsman, the Edomite, and Tobiah, the servant, the Ammonite, were got on cock horse, there was no ho! with them, but they would needs ride to the devil. When Justinian II was emperor, Stephen the Persian being made Lord High Chamberlain, grew to that height of insolence that he presumed to chastise with rods the emperor's own mother, as if she had been some base slave. In the year of grace 1522 the boors of Germany rose up against their rulers, and would lay all level, that servants might ride cheek by jowl, as they say, with princes.⁽³³⁷⁾ *Sed miserabilis et lamentabilis tandem huius stultitiae exitus fuit*,⁽³³⁸⁾ saith Lavater: But these fools paid dear for their proud attempt; and after a miserable slaughter of many thousands of them, were sent home by the weeping cross, *ad beatos rastros, benedictum aratrum, sanctamque stivam*,⁽³³⁹⁾ as Bucholcerus phraseth it, to handle again (instead of guns and swords) their blessed rakes, plough staves, and horse whips. Their general, Muncer, was tortured to death, being so mated and amazed that he was not able to repeat his creed, &c.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 8. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 10:8]]{{field-on:Bible}} **He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it.** As heedless huntsmen do. He that being of base beginning, and unmeet for government, seeks to set up himself upon better men's ruins, and where he finds not a way to make it, shall fall from his high hopes into remediless misery; as he hath made a match with mischief, so he shall have his belly full of it. As he hath conceived with guile, so (though he grow never so big) he shall bring forth nothing but vanity, and worse. (**Job 15:35**)

And whoso breaketh an hedge. The hedge of God's commandments, as our first parents did, to come to the forbidden fruit. A serpent bites such, (**Proverbs 23:32**) and the poison cannot

³³³ Tacit. *Annal.*

³³⁴ *Abstrusum in despecto corpore margaritum conspicatus.*

³³⁵ Muscovites are noted to be slaves by nature, destitute of all gifts to rule or govern.—*Quint.*, lib. ix. c. 2.

³³⁶ *Subita a diabolo dignitate perflati vias publicas mannisterunt.*—Jerome.

³³⁷ Func. *Chron.*

³³⁸ Lavat. in *hunc. loc.*

³³⁹ Bucholc. *Ind. Chron.*

be gotten out. Others sense it thus (and I rather incline): He that seeks to overthrow the fundamental laws and established government of a commonwealth, and to break down the fences and mounds of sovereignty and subjection, shall no less (but much more) imperil himself than he that pulls up an old hedge, wherein serpents, snakes, and adders do usually lurk and lie in wait to do mischief. Wat Tyler the rebel dared to say that all the laws of England should come out of his mouth. ⁽³⁴⁰⁾ Stratford uttered somewhat to the like sense in Ireland. Our good laws are our hedges; so our oaths—*ὄρκος quasi ἔρκος*. Let us look to both, or we are lost people. *Det Deus ut admonitio haec adeo sit nobis omnibus commoda quam sit accommoda.* {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 9. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 10:9]]{{field-on:Bible}} **Whoso removeth stones shall be hurt therewith.** So he that attempteth to loose and remove the joints and pieces of a settled government, there is danger that, like Samson, he will be crushed in the ruin. So one ⁽³⁴¹⁾ gives the sense of it: He that goeth about to remove a ruler out of his place, and to divide a settled government that is at unity in itself, undertaketh a dangerous piece of business. As he undertaketh a desperate work, such shall his reward be. It is evil meddling with edged tools, &c., saith another interpreter. ⁽³⁴²⁾ Some by "stones" here understand landmarks, which to remove was counted sacrilege among the Romans, and worthy of death. ⁽³⁴³⁾ What are they guilty and worthy of, then, that abrogate the good old laws of a land, or the good old ways of God, that have given rest to so many souls? (*Jeremiah 6:16*) (*See Trapp on "Proverbs 26:27"*)

And he that cleaveth wood shall be in danger thereby. viz., Of breaking his tools, if not his shins, especially if he be a bungler at it. This is to the same sense with the three former similitudes. Cyprian makes use of this text against schismatics, reading it thus: *Scindens ligna periclitabitur in eo si exciderit ferrum*, ⁽³⁴⁴⁾ He that cleaveth wood shall be endangered thereby, if that the iron fall off. Jerome by "wood" here understands heretics, as being unfruitful and unfit for God's building, and makes this note upon it, *Quamvis sit prudens et doctus vir*, ⁽³⁴⁵⁾ &c. Although he be a wise and a learned man, who with the sword of his discourse cutteth this knotty wood, he will be endangered by it, unless he be very careful. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 10. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 10:10]]{{field-on:Bible}} **If the iron be blunt.** Pliny ⁽³⁴⁶⁾ calls iron the best and worst instrument of man's life, and shows the many uses of it, as in ploughing, planting, pruning, planing, &c., but abominates the use of it in war and murdering weapons. Porsena enjoined the Romans, *Nehemiah ferro nisi in agricultura uterentur*, saith he, that they should not use iron but only about their husbandry. The Philistines took the like order with the disarmed Israelites, (*1 Samuel 13:19*) among whom swords and spears were geasen; shares and coulter they allowed them, but so as that they must go down to the Philistines for sharpening. Gregory compares the devil to these Philistines, blinding and blunting men's wits and understandings, "lest the light of saving truth should shine unto them." (*2 Corinthians 4:4*) These edge tools, therefore, must be whetted by the use of holy ordinances, and much strength put to, great pains taken, *virtutibus corroborabitur* (so the old translation hath it). But when all is done, he must needs be *obtuse acutus*, which seeth not that wisdom is profitable to direct; that is, that (whether the iron be blunt or sharp, whetted or not whetted, more strength added or not added) it is wisdom that rectifies all, or the benefit of

³⁴⁰ Speed.

³⁴¹ Pemble.

³⁴² Granger.

³⁴³ Dion. Halic.

³⁴⁴ Test. ad Quirinum., lib.

³⁴⁵ Jerome, *in loc.*

³⁴⁶ Lib. xxxiv, cap. 14.

rectifying is wisdom. "There is none to that," as David said of Goliath's sword.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 11. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 10:11]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Surely the serpent will bite without enchantment.** It is for want of wisdom that the babbler, or tongue master (as the original hath it), is nothing better than the most poisonous serpent; nay, in some respects, worse; for one serpent stings not another, as backbiters do their best friends. And whereas serpents may be charmed, or their poison kept from the vitals, *contra sycophantae morsum non est remedium*, as the proverb hath it, there is no help to be had for the biting of a sycophant: his tongue is "full of deadly poison," saith St James. (**James 3:8**) Again, serpents usually hiss and give warning (though the Septuagint here read *non in sibilo*, the Vulgate, *in silentio*, in silence and without hissing, for without enchantment), so doth not the slanderer and detractor. He is a silent serpent, and like the dogs of Congo, which bite, but bark not. ⁽³⁴⁷⁾ And therefore, as all men hate a serpent and flee from the sight of it, so will wise men shun the society of a slanderer. And as any one abhors to be like to that old serpent the devil, so let him eschew this evil.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 12. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 10:12]]{{field-on:Bible}}**The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious.** Heb., Are grace; they are nothing but grace, so the French translator hath it; ⁽³⁴⁸⁾ such as render him gracious with God and men, so Lyra glosseth it, as being usually "seasoned with salt, and ministering grace to the hearers." (**Colossians 4:6**)

But the lips of a fool swallow up himself. Suddenly, utterly, unavoidably, as the whale did Jonah, as the devouring sword doth those that fall under it, as the grave doth all the living. How many of all sorts in all ages have perished by their unruly tongues, blabbing or belching out words *Quae reditura per iugulum*, as Pliny phraseth it that were driven down their throats again by the wronged and aggrieved parties! Take heed, saith the Arabic proverb, lest thy tongue cut thy throat; it is compared to "a sharp razor working deceitfully," (**Psalms 52:3**) which, instead of cutting the hair, cuts the throat. ⁽³⁴⁹⁾{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 13. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 10:13]]{{field-on:Bible}}**The beginning of his words are folly.** He is an inconsiderate idiot, utters incoherences, pours forth a flood of follies, his whole discourse is frivolous, futile. To begin foolishly may befall a wise man: but when he sees it, or hath it shoven unto him, he will not persist: "Once have I spoken," saith holy Job, "but I will not answer again: yea, twice, but I will proceed no further." (**Job 40:4-5**) Much otherwise the fool, and because he will be *dicti sui dominus* (as **Ecclesiastes 10:11**) having lashed out at first, he launcheth further out into the deep, as it were, of idle and evil prattle. And if you offer to interrupt or admonish him, the end of his talk is mischievous madness, he blusters and lets fly on all hands, laying about him like a madman. And so we have here, as one ⁽³⁵⁰⁾ saith, the serpent, the babbler (spoken of in the eleventh verse), wreathed into a circle, his two ends, head and tail, meeting together. And as at the one end he is a serpent, having his sting in his head; so at the other end he is a scorpion, having his sting in his tail.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 14. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 10:14]]{{field-on:Bible}}**A fool also is full of words.** A very wordy man he is, and a great deal of small talk he has: *Voces susque deque effutit inanes*, as Thuanus hath it, he lays on more words than the matter will well bear. ⁽³⁵¹⁾ And this custom of his is graphically expressed by an imitation of his vain tautologies. "A man cannot tell," saith he, "what shall be after him; and what shall be after him, who can tell?" He hath got this

³⁴⁷ Purchas's *Pilgrim*.

³⁴⁸ Nehemiah sont que grace.

³⁴⁹ *Cave ne feriat lingua tua collum tuum.*—Scal. Ar. Prov.

³⁵⁰ Dr Jermin.

³⁵¹ *Boni oratoris est sermonem habere rebus parem.*—Plut.

sentence (that may well become a wise man, *Ecclesiastes 6:12; 8:7*) by the end, and he wears it threadbare; he hath never done with it, misapplying and abusing it to the defence of his wilful and witless enterprises. Thus the ass in the fable would needs imitate the dog, leaping and fawning in like manner on his master, but with ill success. "The lip of excellence becomes not a fool" (*Proverbs 17:7*) (See Trapp on "Proverbs 17:7") (*Proverbs 10:19; 17:27; Ecclesiastes 5:3, 7*) (See Trapp on "Ecclesiastes 5:3") (See Trapp on "Ecclesiastes 5:7") But empty casks, we know, sound loudest, and baser metals ring shrillest; things of little worth are ever most plentiful. History and experience tell us that some kind of mouse breedeth one hundred and twenty young ones in one nest, ἀλλὰ λέοντα, whereas the lion and elephant bears but one at once; so the least wit yields the most words, and as any one is more wise, he is more sparing of his speeches. Hesiod saith that words, as a precious treasure, should be thriftily husbanded, and warily wasted. Christians know, that for every wasted word account must be given at the great day. (*Matthew 12:37*) (See Trapp on "Matthew 12:37").{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 15. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 10:15]]{{field-on:Bible}}**The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them.** While he laboureth in vain, and maketh much ado to little purpose. He meddleth in many things, and so createth himself many crosses; he will needs be full of business, and so must needs be full of trouble, since he wants wit to manage the one and improve the other. "Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way." (*Isaiah 57:10*) And again, "Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels," (*Isaiah 47:13*) saith God to such as had "wearied him also with their iniquities, and made him to serve with their sins." (*Isaiah 43:24*) Yea, even then, when they think they have done him very good service. Thus Paul, before his conversion, persecuted the saints so eagerly, and was so mad upon it, as himself speaketh, (*Acts 26:11*) that, like a tired wolf, wearied in worrying the flock, he lay panting as it were for breath; and when he could do no more, yet "breathed out threatenings." (*Acts 9:1*) Thus Bonner would work himself windless almost in buffeting the martyrs, and whipping them with rods, as he did Mr Bartlet Green, Mr Rough, and many others.⁽³⁵²⁾ So the philosophers wearied themselves and their followers in their wild disquisitions after, and discourses of tile chief happiness; which, because it lay not in their walk, therefore *ab itinere regio deviantes ad illam metropolim non potuerunt pervenire*, saith Cassian; wandering from the King of heaven's highway, they could never be able to get to that metropolitan city, called Jehovahshammah, or "the Lord is there." (*Ezekiel 48:35*) "They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in." (*Psalms 107:4*) Fools many times beat their wings much, as if they would fly far and high, but with the bustard,⁽³⁵³⁾ they cannot rise above the earth; or if they do, they are soon pulled down again by the devil to feed upon the worst of excrements, as the lapwing doth, though it hath a coronet on the head, and is therefore fifty made a hieroglyphic of infelicity.⁽³⁵⁴⁾{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 16. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 10:16]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child.** s.c., In understanding, though not in years, such as was Shechem, (*Genesis 34:19, Neque distulit puer*) and Rehoboam. (*1 Kings 14:21; 2 Chronicles 13:7*) Solomon was a child king; so was Josiah, Uzziah, our Edward VI; and yet it was well with the land in their days.

*"Hic regum decus et iuvenum flos, spesque honorum,
Deliciae saeculi, et gloria gentis erat."*

³⁵² Acts and Mon. 1684, 1843.

³⁵³ A genus of birds (*Otis*) presenting affinities both to the *Cursores* and the *Grallatores* or waders; remarkable for their great size and running powers. The great bustard (*Otis tarda*) is the largest European bird, and was formerly common in England, though now extinct, or found only as a rare visitant.

³⁵⁴ Pierius.

As Cardan sings of King Edward in his epitaph, ⁽³⁵⁵⁾ As he was the highest, so I verily believe he was the holiest in the whole kingdom, saith Mr Ridley, martyr. And whilst things were carried on by himself, in his health time, all went very well here; and *si per leges fas illi fuisset omnia proprio nutu et voluntate regere*, if by the laws of the land he might have done all himself without officers, all should have been far better done, saith Mr Cartwright upon this text. By "child" is here therefore meant a weak or wicked king, that lets loose the golden reins of government, is carried by his passions, lieth heavy upon his subjects. See **Isaiah 3:6**, compared with **Ecclesiastes 10:13**. Such princes are threatened as a plague to a people, (**Leviticus 26:17**) and they prove no less. This childhood of theirs is the maturity of their subjects' misery; *the land itself is woe*, and *woe itself the land*, as one expositor observed from the word, **ⲛ**, here used, which signifieth both *woe* and *land*. See **Job 34:30**.

And the princes eat in the morning. As children use to call for food as soon as they have rubbed sleep out of their eyes. If the king is a child, the state officers will be loose and luxurious; yea, like morning wolves, will devour the prey, and "nourish themselves as in a day of slaughter." (**James 5:5**) The morning is a time to seek God, and search for wisdom, (**Proverbs 8:17**) to sit in counsel, and despatch business, as was the manner of Moses, (**Exodus 18:13**) and of the ancient Romans. Scipio Africanus was wont before day to go iuto the capitol, *in cellam Iovis* into Jupiter's chapel, and there to stay a great while *quasi consultans de republica cum Iove*, saith Gellius, ⁽³⁵⁶⁾ as if he were consulting with Jupiter, concerning the public welfare; whence his deeds were *pleraque admiranda* admirable for the most part, saith that heathen author.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 17. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 10:17]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Blessed art thou, O land,** &c. *Ita nati estis ut bona malaque vestra ad Remp. pertineant.* You governors are of such condition as that your good or evil deeds are of public concernment, saith he in Tacitus. ⁽³⁵⁷⁾ It is either wealth or woe with the land, as it is well or ill governed.

When thy king is the son of nobles. Well born and yet better bred; for else they will be *noti magis quam nobiles*, notable or notorious, but not noble ⁽³⁵⁸⁾ Our Henry I (surnamed Beauclerc) was often heard to say that an unlearned king was no better than a crowned ass. ⁽³⁵⁹⁾ Sure it is that royalty without righteousness is but eminent dishonour, gilded rottenness, golden damnation. Godly men are the excellent ones of the earth, (**Psalms 16**) the Bereans were more noble, ⁽³⁶⁰⁾ or better gentlemen, than those of Thessalonica, *non per civilem dignitatem, sed per spiritualem dignationem*, not by civil, but by spiritual dignity; without which riches, revenue, retinue, high birth, &c., are but shadows and shapes of nobleness. "Since thou hast been precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable," saith God, (**Isaiah 43:4**) who is the top of good men's kin, as religion is the root. But for want of this it was that Jehoiakim, though royally descended, is likened to an ass; (**Jeremiah 22:19**) and Antiochus, though a mighty monarch, is called a "vile person." (**Daniel 11:21**)

And thy princes eat in due season for strength, &c. Being modest and moderate, not diffident and debauched. Great men should not "cater for the flesh," (**Romans 13:11-14**) but so serve the body that the body politic may be served by it, and the Lord by both. Did ever any

³⁵⁵ Acts and Mon.

³⁵⁶ Lib. vii. cap. 1.

³⁵⁷ Annal., lib. iv.

³⁵⁸ Princeps bonis moribus et liberaliter institutus.—Jerome, in loc.

³⁵⁹ Speed.

³⁶⁰ εὐγενέστεροι. (**Acts 17:11**).

one see King Dejotarus dancing or drunken? saith Cicero, ⁽³⁶¹⁾ and this he holds to be a singular commendation. See **Proverbs 31:3, 4.** (See Trapp on “Proverbs 31:3”) (See Trapp on “Proverbs 31:3”) See my Common Place of Abstinence.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 18. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 10:18]]{{field-on:Bible}}**By much slothfulness the building decayeth.** So doth the commonwealth not sheltered with good government; for, as the householder is in his house, so is the magistrate in the city, and the king in his dominions. In his palace he may see a pattern of his kingdom, a draught of his city. Especially if it be, as George Prince of Anhalt’s was, *ecclesia, academia, curia*, a church, a university, and a court. For the better despatch of civil businesses, there was daily praying, reading, writing, yea, and preaching too, as Melanchthon and Scultetus report. ⁽³⁶²⁾ Here was no place for sloth and sluggishness within this most pious prince’s territories. His house was built of cedar beams, (**Solomon’s Song 1:17**) of living stones; (**1 Peter 2:5**) his polity a *theocracy*, as Josephus saith of the Jewish Government; and of his people it might be said, as Polydor Virgil saith of the English, *Regnum Anglica regnum Dei*. Oh, the blessednesses of such a country!

And through idleness of the hands the house droppeth, &c. *Stillicidia praecedunt ruinam, de poenas gravissimas, leviores*, saith Jerome. If course be not timely taken, the house will run to ruiu for want of people or reparation; so will that person that takes not warning by lighter punishments. Surely, as one cloud follows another, till the sun disperseth them, so do judgments—greater succeed lesser, till men, meeting God by repentance, disarm his wrath.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 19. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 10:19]]{{field-on:Bible}}**A feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh merry.** Slothful governors, *Regni dilapidatores* (so our Henry III was called for his pride and prodigality), ⁽³⁶³⁾ are all for feasting and frolicking. See **Proverbs 31:4; Daniel 5:3, 4.** This cannot be maintained without money, for the getting and gathering in whereof the poor people are peeled and polled, and rich men’s gifts are received, to the perverting of justice by those corrupt rulers, *qui vili precio nihil non humile et vile parati sunt facere*, as Gregory Thaumaturgus speaketh in his note upon this verse.

But money answereth all things. It gives a satisfactory answer to whatsoever is desired or demanded. Seneca saith, *circa pecuniam multum vociferationis est*, that about money there is much noise, great crying; but though never so nmch, never so great, money answereth all—it effects all. ⁽³⁶⁴⁾ What great designs did Philip bring to pass in Greece by his golds the very oracles were said, *φιλιππιξειν*, to say as Philip would have them: *Antipater non tenuis fuit pecuniae, et ideo praevalidae potentiae*, saith Egesippus; ⁽³⁶⁵⁾ he was a well moneyed man, and therefore a very mighty man. The Hebrew, or rather Chaldee, word ⁽³⁶⁶⁾ used for money (**1 Chronicles 29:7; Ezra 8:27**) signifies *to do some great work*, because money is the monarch of the world, and therein bears most mastery. Among suitors (in love and in law especially) money drives the bargain and business to an upshot.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 20. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 10:20]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Curse not the king, no not in thy thought.** Or, In thy conscience; but in this or any other kind,

“*Turpe quid acturus, te sine teste time.*”—Auson.

³⁶¹ Orat. pro Rege Deiotaro.

³⁶² Melch. Adam in *Vit. Melanch.*

³⁶³ Daniel.

³⁶⁴ ανευηε χαλκοῦ Φοῖβος μη μαντεύεται.

³⁶⁵ Lib. i., *Excid. Hierosol.*, cap. 14.

³⁶⁶ חַבְדָּא of חַבְדָּא strong, and חַבְדָּא to prepare.

The present government is ever grievous, and nothing more usual than to grudge against it; ⁽³⁶⁷⁾ but take heed of wishing hurt to rulers (thought is not free), much more of uttering it, though in hugger mugger. Kings have long ears, heavy hands; walls also and hedges have ears. Some may overhear thee, as Mordecai did the two traitors, (***Esther 2:22***) or thou mayest unwittingly and unwillingly betray thyself, as our gunpowder plotters.

That which hath wing, &c. It was a quill, a piece of a wing, that discovered that hellish plot. Wilful murder and treason will out by one means or other. Those two traitors sent by Mohammed to kill Scanderbeg, falling out between themselves, let fall something that brought all to light and themselves to punishment. ⁽³⁶⁸⁾ The like befell that gentleman of Normandy that confessed to a priest his intent to have killed King Francis. ⁽³⁶⁹⁾ `{{field-off:Bible}}`

³⁶⁷ [Ἄει τὸ παρὸν , βαπτῦ](#)—*Thucyd.*

³⁶⁸ *Turkish History*, fol. 460.

³⁶⁹ *French History*.

Chapter 11

Verse 1. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 11:1]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Cast thy bread.** Thine own well gotten goods. Alms must not be given, said a martyr, ⁽³⁷⁰⁾ until it have sweat in a man's hand. "Let him labour, working with his hands," saith the apostle, "that he may have to give to him that needeth." (**Ephesians 4:28**) And the bountiful man giveth of his bread to the poor, saith Solomon. (**Proverbs 22:9**) God hateth to have *ex rapina holocaustum*, a sacrifice of things got by rapine and robbery; (**Amos 2:8**) "With such sacrifices God is not well pleased." Wherefore, if thou hast of thine own, give; if not, better for thee to *gratify* none than to *grate* upon any, saith Augustine. When our Henry III (an oppressing prince) had sent a load of frieze ⁽³⁷¹⁾ to the friar minors to clothe them, they returned the same with this message, that he ought not to give alms of what he had rent from the poor, neither would they accept of that abominable gift. ⁽³⁷²⁾ The Hebrew word signifying alms signifies properly justice, to intimate that the matter of our alms should be goods justly gotten. ⁽³⁷³⁾ Hence also the Jews call their alms box *Kuphashel tzedaka*, the chest of justice. Into this box or basket, if thou cast but bread (so it be *thy bread*), brown bread, such as thou hast, and then wait for the Lord, when he will return from the wedding with a full hand, thou shalt be fed *supernae mensae copiosis deliciis*, as one saith, with the abundant dainties of the heavenly table.

Upon the waters. Heb., Upon the face of the waters, where it may seem clearly cast away; as seed sown upon the sea, ⁽³⁷⁴⁾ or a thing thrown down Avon, as we say, no profit or praise to be had by it. Or upon the waters, *i.e.*, upon strangers (if necessary) whom we never saw, and are never likely to see again. Or, "upon the waters," *i.e.*, upon such as being hunger bitten, or hardly bestead, do water their plants, being fed "with bread of tears." (*as Psalm 80:5*) To this sense Munster renders the words thus, *Mitte panem tuum super facies aquas, sc., emittentes*, Cast thy bread upon faces watered with tears; or, "upon the waters," upon the surface of the waters, that it may be carried into the ocean, where the multitude of waters is gathered together; so shall thine alms, carried into heaven, be found in the ocean of eternity, where there is a confluence of all comforts and contentments. Or, lastly, "upon the waters," *i.e., in loca irrigua*, upon grounds well watered—moist and fertile soil, such as is that by the river Nile, where they do but throw in the seed, and they have four rich harvests in less than four months; ⁽³⁷⁵⁾ or as that in the land of Shinar (where Babel was founded, **Genesis 11:1-9**), that returns, if Herodotus and Pliny may be believed, the seed beyond credulity. ⁽³⁷⁶⁾

For thou shalt find it after many days. Thou shalt "reap in due time, if thou faint not": slack not, withdraw not thy hand, as **Ecclesiastes 11:6**. *Mitte panem, &c., et in verbo Domini promitto tibi, &c.*, saith one; Cast thy bread confidently, without fear, and freely, without compulsion; cast it, though thou seem to cast it away; and I dare promise thee, in the name and word of the Lord, *Nequaquam infrugifera apparebit beneficentia*, ⁽³⁷⁷⁾ that thy bounty shall be abundantly recompensed into thy bosom. "The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered himself." (**Proverbs 11:25**) (*See Trapp on "Proverbs 11:25"*) See also my Common Place of Alms. *Non pereunt sed parturiunt pauperibus impensa*, That which is given to the poor

³⁷⁰ Acts and Mon., fol. 765.

³⁷¹ A kind of coarse woollen cloth, with a nap, usually on one side only; now esp. of Irish manufacture.

³⁷² Daniel's *Hist.*, 168.

³⁷³ זקדצ.—Buxtorf.

³⁷⁴ Εἰς ὕδαρ σπαιειν.

³⁷⁵ Blunt's *Voyage*, p. 37.

³⁷⁶ Herod., lib. i. c. 193; Plin., lib. vi. c. 26.

³⁷⁷ Greg. Thaum.

is not lost, but laid up. Not getting, but giving, is the way to wealth. (**Proverbs 19:17**) Abigail, for a small present bestowed on David, became a queen, whereas churlish Nabal was sent to his place.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 2. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 11:2]]{{field-on:Bible}} **Give a portion to seven, and also to eight.** A portion—*i.e.*, a good deal, a fair proportion—to a good many; as B. Hooper did to his board of beggars, whom he fed every day by course, serving them by four at a mess, with whole and wholesome food.⁽³⁷⁸⁾ Or give a portion, *i.e.*, a part, such as thou canst well part with, not stretching beyond the staple, lest ye mar all, while "others are eased, and you burdened, but by an equality," &c. (**2 Corinthians 8:13, 14**) Give to him that asketh, saith our Saviour (**Luke 6:30**)—*scil.*, according to his necessity, and thine ability. Give with discretion. (**Psalms 112:5**) Have a special respect to the family of faith, (**Galatians 6:10**) those "excellent ones of the earth," in whom was David's "delight." (**Psalms 16:3**) The Jews, from this text, grounded a custom of giving alms to seven poor people every day, or to eight at utmost, if they saw cause. But here is a finite number put for an infinite, as when Christ bade Peter forgive his brother "seventy times seven times," and as (**Micah 5:5**) "seven shepherds and eight principal men" signify so many shepherds, both teachers and rulers, as shall sufficiently feed the flock of Christ, and defend it from enemies.

For thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth. Therefore lay in lustily; or rather, lay out liberally, and so lay up for a rainy day. Thou mayest be soon shred of thy goods, and as much need other men's mercy as they now need thine. Sow, therefore, while thou hast it, that thou mayest "reap again in due season." "Water, that thou mayest be watered again." (**Proverbs 11:25**) "Lay up for thyself a good foundation against the time to come." (**1 Timothy 6:18**) Lay out thy talent; work while the tool is in thine hand. Make friends with thy mammon. Say not, as one rich churl did, when requested to do somewhat toward his minister's maintenance, The more I give, the less I have. Another answered that he knew how to bestow his money better. A third old man said, I see the beginning of my life, but I see not my latter; I may come to want that which I now give. Thou mayest do so, saith Solomon here, and by thy tenacity thou art very likely to do so; but wilt thou know, O man! how thou mayest prevent this misery, and not feel what thou fearest "Give a portion to seven," &c. Part, therefore, freely with that which thou art not sure to keep, that thou mayest gain that which thou art sure never to Lose."he that giveth to the poor shall not lack." (**Proverbs 28:27**).{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 3. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 11:3]]{{field-on:Bible}} **If the clouds be full of rain.** As the sun draws up vapours into the air, not to retain them there, but to return them to the earth, for its relief, and the creatures' comfort, so those that have attracted to themselves much riches should plentifully pour them out for the benefit of their poorer brethren. Clouds, when full of great and strong rain, as the word here signifies, pour down amain; and the spouts run, and the eaves shed, and the presses overflow, and the aromatic trees sweat out their precious oils; so should rich men be ready to distribute, willing to share. But it happens otherwise, for commonly the richer the harder; and those that should be as clouds to water the earth, as a common blessing, are either "waterless clouds," as St Jude hath it, or at best they are but as waterpots, that water a few spots of ground only in a small garden. The earth is God's purse,⁽³⁷⁹⁾ as one saith, and rich men's houses are his storehouses. This the righteous rich man knoweth, and therefore he "disperseth," as a steward for God; "he giveth to the poor; his righteousness," and his riches too, "endureth for ever." (**Psalms 112:9**) Whereas the wicked rich man retaineth his fulness to rot with him; he feedeth upon earth like a serpent, and striveth, like a toad, to die with much mould in his mouth, and is therefore bidden by St James to "weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon him," for his cursed hoard of

³⁷⁸ Acts and Mon., fol. 1368.

³⁷⁹ Domini marsupium.

evil gotten and worse kept goods. The rottenness of his riches, the canker of his cash, the moth of his garments, "shall be a witness against him, and eat up his flesh as fire." (**James 5:1-3**) He shall be sure to be arraigned as an arrant thief, as a cursed cheat; for that, having a better thing by him, he brings a worse; (**Malachi 1:14**) and being a rich man, he makes himself poor, lest he should do good to the poor. As Pope Alexander V said of himself that when he was a bishop he was rich, when a cardinal he was poor, and when he was pope he was a beggar. I should sooner have believed him if he had said as his successor, Pius Quintus, did, *Cum essem religiosus, sperabam bene de salute animae meae; cardinalis factus extimui; pontifex creatus pene despero.*⁽³⁸⁰⁾ When I was first in orders, without any farther ecclesiastical dignity, I had good hopes of my salvation; when a cardinal, I feared myself; but now that I am pope, I am almost out of hope.

And if the tree fall toward the south. *i.e.*, Which way soever it groweth, it bears fruit; so should rich men be rich in good works, (**1 Timothy 6:18**) and being fat olive trees, they should be, as David, (**Psalms 52:8**) green olive trees, full of good fruits. Or thus: Trees must down, and men must die; and as trees fall southward or northward, so shall men be set either at the right hand of the judge, or at the left, according as they have carried themselves towards Christ's poor members. (**Matthew 25:31-46**) Up, therefore, and be doing while life lasteth, and so lay hold upon eternal life. *Mors atra impendit agenti.* Where the boughs of holy desires and good deeds are most and greatest, on that side, no doubt, the tree will fall; but being fallen, it can bear no fruit for ever.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 4. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 11:4]]{{field-on:Bible}}**He that observeth the wind shall not sow.** In sowing of mercy, he that sticks in such objections and doubts as carnal men use to frame out of their covetous and distrustful hearts, neglects his seedtime, by looking at winds and clouds, which is the guise of a lewd and lazy seedsman. A word in season, saith Solomon, so a charitable deed in season, "how good is it!" He that defers to do good in hope of better times, or fitter objects, or fewer obstacles, or greater abilities, &c., it will be long enough ere he will do anything to purpose. When God sets us up an altar, we must offer a sacrifice; when he affords us an opportunity, we must lay hold on it, and not stand scrupling and casting perils, lest we lose the sowing of much seed, and reaping of much fruit; lest we come with our talent tied up in a napkin, and hear, Thou idle, and therefore evil servant. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 5. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 11:5]]{{field-on:Bible}}**As thou knowest not what is the way of the Spirit.** Or, Of the wind, as some render it, grounding upon the former verse—*q.d.*, Why should any so observe the wind, the nature whereof he so little understands, (**John 3:8**) and the inconstancy whereof is grown to, and known by, a common proverb? But by *spirit* I rather think is meant the *soul*, as by *bones* the *body*. Who can tell when and how the body is formed, the soul infused? The body is the "soul's sheath," (**Daniel 7:15; marg.**) an abridgment of the visible world, as the soul is of the invisible. The members of the body were made all by book, (**Psalms 139:16**) "and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth," that is, in the womb: as curious workmen, when they have some choice piece in hand, they perfect it in private, and then bring it forth to light for men to gaze at. What an admirable piece of work is man's head piece!—God's masterpiece in this little world—the chief seat of the soul, that *cura divini ingenii*, as one calls it!⁽³⁸¹⁾ There is nothing great on earth but man, nothing in man but his mind, said the philosopher.⁽³⁸²⁾ Many locks and keys argue the price of the jewel that they keep; and many papers wrapping the token within them, the worth of the token. The tables of the testament—*First*, Laid up in the ark; *secondly*, The ark bound about with pure gold; *thirdly*,

³⁸⁰ Corn. a Lap. in **Numbers 11:11**.

³⁸¹ Homo est σοφοῦ τέκτονος καλλὸν ποικίλμα.—*Eurip.*

³⁸² Favorin.

Overshadowed with cherubims' wings; *fourthly*, Enclosed with the veil of the tabernacle; *fifthly*, With the compass of the tabernacle; *sixthly*, With a court about all; *seventhly*, With a treble covering of goats', rams', and badgers' skins above all—must needs be precious tables. So when the Almighty made man's head, the seat of the reasonable soul, and overlaid it with hair, skin, and flesh, like the threefold covering of the tabernacle, and then encompassed it with a skull of bones, like boards of cedar, and afterwards with various skins, like silken curtains, and, lastly, enclosed it with the yellow skin that covers the brain, like the purple veil, which Solomon calls the "golden ewer," (*Ecclesiastes 12:6*) he would doubtless have us to know it was made for some great treasure to be put therein. How and when the reasonable soul is put into this curious cabinet, philosophers dispute many things, but can affirm nothing of a certainty: as neither "how the bones do grow in the womb," how of the same substance the several parts—as bones, nerves, arteries, veins, gristles, flesh, and blood—are fashioned there, and receive daily increase. This David looks at as a just wonder. (*Psalms 139:14, 15*) *Mirificatus sum mirabilibus operis tuis*, ⁽³⁸³⁾ saith he, I am fearfully and wonderfully made: and Galen, a profane philosopher, could not but hereupon sing a hymn to man's most wise Creator, whom yet he knew not.

Even so thou knowest not the work of God. *i.e.*, The rest of his works of creation and providence, which are very various, and to us no less unknown than uncertain. Do thou that which God commandeth, and let things occur as they will, there is an overruling hand in all for the good of those that love God. "Trust therefore in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding." (*Proverbs 3:5*) "Hide not thine eyes from thine own flesh." (*Isaiah 58:7*) He that doeth so shall have many a curse. The apostle useth a word for liberality, ⁽³⁸⁴⁾ which properly signifieth simplicity; and this he doth in opposition to that crafty and witty wiliness of the covetous, to defend themselves from the danger, as they take it, of liberality.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 6. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 11:6]]{{field-on:Bible}}**In the morning sow thy seed, &c.** At all times be ready to every good work, (*Titus 3:1*) as the bee is abroad as soon as ever the sun breaks forth. Sow mercy in the morning, sow it likewise in the evening, as those bountiful Macedonians did, to the shame of those richer but harder Corinthians, sending once and again to Paul's necessities. (*2 Corinthians 8:3; Philippians 4:16*) Oh, sow much and oft of this unfailable seed into God's blessed bosom, the fruit whereof you are sure to reap at your greatest need. Men may be thankful, or they may not, *Perraro grati reperiuntur*, saith Cicero: it is ten to one if any cured leper turn again to give thanks. But "God is not unrighteous to forget your labour of love in ministering to his saints." (*Hebrews 6:10*) Haply you may not sow and reap the same day, as the widow of Sarepta did: haply the seed may lie underground some while, and not be quickened except it die; but have patience, nothing so sure as a crop of comfort to those that are duly merciful. Up therefore and be doing, lose no time, slip no season; it is but a morning and an evening, one short day of life wherein we have to work, and to advance your blessedness. Sow therefore continually: blessed is he that "soweth beside all waters." Blessed Bradford held that hour lost wherein he had not done some good with his hand, tongue, or pen. ⁽³⁸⁵⁾ Titus remembering one day that he had done no good to any one, cried out, *Amici, diem perdidit*. Friends, I have wasted a day. And again, *Hodie non regnavimus*. Today we were not the master. We have lost a day, &c. This was that Titus that never sent any suitor away with a sad heart, and was therefore counted and called *Humani generis deliciae*, the darling of mankind, the people's sweetheart. The senate loaded him with more praises when he was dead than ever they did living and present.{{field-off:Bible}}

³⁸³ Montanus.

³⁸⁴ ἀπλότης. (*2 Corinthians 8:2*)

³⁸⁵ Acts and Mon.

Verse 7. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 11:7]]{{field-on:Bible}} **Truly the light is sweet.** The light of life, of a lightsome life especially. Any life is sweet; which made the Gibeonites make such a hard shift to live, though it were but to be hewers of wood and drawers of water. "I pray thee let me live," live upon any terms, said Benhadad, in his submissive message to that merciful nonsuch. (**1 Kings 20:32**) "If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition," said that καλή και σοφή, that paragon of her time, Queen Esther. (**Ecclesiastes 7:3**)⁽³⁸⁶⁾ Ebedmelech is promised "his life for a prey"; (**Jeremiah 39:18**) and so is Barak, as a sufficient reward of that good service he had done in reading the roll, for the which he expected some great preferment. (**Jeremiah 45:5; 36:1, 2**) The prophet chides him, and tells him he might be glad of his life in those dear years of time, when the arrows of death had so oft come whisking by him, and he had so oft straddled over the grave, as it were, and yet was not fallen into it. To maintain our radical humour, that feeds the lamp of life, is as great a miracle, saith one, as the oil in the widow's cruse, that failed her not. To deliver us from so many deaths and dangers as we are daily and hourly subject unto, is a mercy that calls for continual praises to the Preserver of mankind. But more, when men do not only live, but live prosperously, as Nabal did. (**1 Samuel 25:6**) "Thus," said David to his messengers, "shall ye say to him that liveth," viz., in prosperity; which such a man as Nabal reckons the only life. The Irish use to ask what such a man meant to die? And some good interpreters are of the opinion, that the Preacher in this verse brings in the carnal churl objecting, or replying for himself against the former persuasions to acts of charity. Ah! saith he; but, for all that, to live at the full; to have a goodly inheritance in a fertile soil, in a wholesome air, near to the river, not far from the town; to be free from all troubles and cares that poverty bringeth; to live in a constant sunshine of prosperity, abundance, honour, and delight; to have all that heart can wish or need require—what a heavenly life is this! what a lovely and desirable condition! &c. "What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days that he may see good?" saith David. (**Psalms 34:12**) I do, saith one; and I, saith another; and I, a third, &c., as St Augustine frames the answer. It is that which all worldlings covet, and hold it no policy to part with what they have to the poor for uncertainties in another world. In answer to whom, and for a cooler to their inordinate love of life, the Preacher subjoins—{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 8. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 11:8]]{{field-on:Bible}} **But if a man live many years and rejoice, &c..** *q.d.*, Say he live *pancratice et basilice*, and sit many years in the world's warm sunshine, yet he must not build upon a perpetuity, as good Job did, but was deceived, when he said, "I shall die in my nest," (**Job 29:18**) and holy David, when he concluded, "I shall never be moved." (**Psalms 30:6**) For as sure as the night follows the day, a change will come, a storm will rise, and such a storm as to wicked worldlings will never be blown over. Look for it, therefore, and be wise in time. "Remember the days of darkness," that is, of adversity, but especially of death and the grave. The hottest season hath lightning and thunder. The sea is never so smooth but it may be troubled; the mountain not so firm but it may be shaken with an earthquake. Light will be one day turned into darkness, pleasure into pain, delights into wearisomeness, and the dark days of old age and death far exceed in number the lightsome days of life, which are but a warm gleam, a momentary glance. Let this be seriously pondered, and it will much rebate the edge of our desires after earthly vanities. "Dearly beloved," saith St Peter, "I beseech you, as pilgrims and strangers abstain from fleshy lust," &c., (**1 Peter 2:12**) *q.d.*, The sad and sober apprehension of this, that you are here but sojourners for a season, and must away to your long home, will lay your lusts a-bleeding and a-dying at your feet. It is an observation of a commentator upon this text, that when Samuel had anointed Saul to be king, to confirm unto him the truth of the joy, and by it to teach him how to be careful in governing his joy, he gave him this sign, "When thou art departed from me today, thou shalt find two men

³⁸⁶ Sic de Aspasia Milesia, Cyri concubina.—Aelian, Var. Hist. lib. xii. cap. 1.

at Rachel's sepulchre." (**1 Samuel 10:2**) For he that findeth in his mind a remembrance of his grave and sepulchre, will not easily be found exorbitant in his delights and joys; for this it was, belike, that Joseph of Arimathea had his sepulchre ready hewn out in his garden. The Egyptians carried about the table a death's head at their feasts;⁽³⁸⁷⁾ and the emperors of Constantinople, on their coronation day, had a mason appointed to present unto them certain marble stones, using these ensuing words—

*"Elige ab his saxis ex quo, invictissime Caesar,
Ipse tibi tumulum me fabricare velis."*

"Choose, mighty sir, under which of these stones,
Your pleasure is, ere long, to lay your bones."{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 9. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 11:9]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth.** *i.e.*, Do if thou darest; like as God said to Balaam, "Rise up and go to Balak" (**Numbers 22:20**)—that is, go if thou thinkest it good; go since thou wilt need to go; but thou goest upon thy death. Let no man imagine that it ever came into the Preacher's heart here, *oleum camino addere*, to add fuel to the fire of youthful lusts, to excite young people, unruly enough of themselves, to take their full swing in sinful pleasures. Thus to do might better befit a Protagoras, of whom Plato⁽³⁸⁸⁾ reports, that he many times boasted, that whereas he had lived sixty years, forty of those sixty he had spent in corrupting those young men that had been his pupils; or that old dotterel in Terence, that said, *Non est mihi, crede, flagitium adolescentem helluari, potare, scortari, fores effringere*: I hold it no fault for young men to swagger, drink, drab, revel, &c. Solomon in this text, either by a *mimesis* brings in the wild younker thus bespeaking himself, Rejoice, my soul, in thy youth, &c., and then nips him on the crown again with that stinging "but" in the end of the verse; or else, which I rather think, by an ironic concession he bids him "rejoice," &c., yields him what he would have, by way of mockage and bitter scoff; like as Elijah jeered the Baalites, bidding them cry aloud unto their drowsy or busy god; or as Micaiah bade Ahab, by a holy scoff, go up against Ramothgilead and prosper; or as our Saviour bade his drowsy disciples, "Sleep on now, and take your rest," (**Mark 14:41**) viz., if you can at least, or have any mind to it, with so many bills and halberds about your ears.

And let thine heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth. *In diebus electionum tuarum*, so Arias Montanus reads it; In the days of thy choosings—that is, when thou followest the choice and the chase of thine own desires, and doest what thou wilt without control. (**Luke 12:45**)

Walk in the way of thine heart. Which bids thee eat, drink, and be merry, and had as lief be knocked on the head as do otherwise. Hence fasting is called an "afflicting of the soul"; and the best find it no less grievous to go about holy duties, than it is to children to be called from their sports, and set to their books.

And in the sight of thine eyes. Those windows of wickedness, and loop holes of lust.

But know. Here is that which mars all the mirth, here is a cooler for the younker's courage, sour sauce to his deserts, for fear he should surfeit. *Verba haec Solomonis valde ernphatica sunt*, saith Lavater. There is a great deal of emphasis in these words of Solomon. Let me tell thee this as a preacher, saith he; and oh that I could get words to gore the very soul with smarting pain, that this doctrine might be written in thy flesh!

That for all these things. These *tricae*, as the world accounts them; these trifles and tricks of youth, which Job and David bitterly bewailed as sore businesses.

God will bring thee to judgment. Either in this life, as he did Absalom and Adonijah, Hophni

³⁸⁷ Isidor.

³⁸⁸ Plato in *Meneu*.

and Phinehas, Nadab and Abihu, or infallibly at thy death's day, which indeed is thy dooms day; then God will bring thee perforce, be thou never so loath to come to it; he will hail thee to his tribunal, be it never so much against thy heart, and against the hair with thee. And as for the judgment what it shall be, God himself shows it in *Isaiah 28:17*, "Judgment will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place." Where, what is the hail, saith one, but the multitude of accusations which shall sweep away the vain hope that men have, that the infinite mercy of God will save them, howsoever they live? And what is the hiding place, but the multitude of excuses which men are ready to make for themselves, and which the waters of God's justice shall quite destroy and overthrow? Young men, of all men, are apt to make a covenant with death, and to put far away from them the thought of judgment. But it moves them not so to do; for *Senibus mors in ianuis, adolescentibus in insidiis*, saith Bernard. Death doth not always knock at the door, but comes often like a lightning or thunderbolt; it blasteth the green grain, and consumeth the new and strong building. Now at death it will fare nothing better with the wild and wicked youngster, than with that thief, that having stolen a gelding, rideth away bravely mounted, till such time as being overtaken by hue and cry, he is soon afterwards sentenced and put to death.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 10. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 11:10]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Therefore remove sorrow from thine heart.** One would have thought that he should have said rather, considering the premises, remove joy from thy heart, "Let thy laughter be turned to mourning, and thy joy into heaviness," (*James 4:9*) turn all the streams into that channel that may drive that mill that may grind the heart. But by *sorrow* here, or *indignation*, as Tremellius renders it, the Preacher means *sin*, the cause of sorrow; and so he interprets himself in the next words, "Put away evil from thy flesh,"—*i.e.*, mortify thy lusts.

For childhood and youth are vanity. The Septuagint and Vulgate render it, Youth and pleasure are vain things. They both will soon be at an end. {{field-off:Bible}}

Chapter 12

Verse 1. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 12:1]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Remember now thy Creator.** Heb., Creators—*scil.*, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, called by Elihu, *Eloa Gnosia*, "God my makers," (**Job 35:10**) and by David, the "Makers of Israel." (**Psalm 149:2**) So **Isaiah 54:5**, "Thy makers is thine husbands." "Let us make man"; (**Genesis 1:26**) and, (**Genesis 1:1**) *Dii creavit*. Those three in one, and one in three, made all things; but man he made "fearfully and wonderfully"; (**Psalm 139:14**) the Father did it; (**Ephesians 3:9**) the Son; (**Hebrews 1:8, 10; Colossians 1:16**) the Holy Ghost. (**Psalm 33:6, 104:30; Job 36:13; 33:4**) To the making of man a council was called. (**Genesis 1:29**) Sun, moon, and stars are but the "work of his fingers"; (**Psalm 8:3**) but man is the "work of his hands." (**Psalm 139:14**) "Thine hands have made me," or took special pains about me, "and fashioned me," saith Job. (**Job 10:8**) Thou hast formed me by the book, saith David. (**Psalm 139:16**) Hence the whole Church so celebrates this great work with crowns cast down at the Creator's feet. (**Revelation 4:10, 11**) And hence young men also, who are mostly most mindless of anything serious, for childhood and youth are vanity, are here charged to remember their Creator—that is, as dying David taught his young son Solomon, to know, love, and "serve him, with a perfect heart, and a willing mind," (**1 Chronicles 28:9**) for words of knowledge in Scripture imply affection and practice. *Tam Dei meminisse opus est quam respirare*, To remember God is every whit as needful as to draw breath, since it is he that gave us being at first, and that still gives us ζῶην καὶ πνοήν, "life and breath." (**Acts 17:25**) "Let everything therefore that hath breath, praise the Lord," even so long as it hath breath; yea, let it spend and exhale itself in continual sallies, as it were, and egressions of affection unto God, till it hath gotten, not only a union, but a unity with him. Of all things, God cannot endure to be forgotten.

In the days of thy youth. Augustus began his speech to his mutinous soldiers with *Audite senem, iuvenes, quem iuvenem senes audierunt*, You that are young hear me that am old, whom old men were content to hear when I was but young. And Augustine beginneth one of his sermons thus, *Ad vos mihi sermo, O iuvenes, flos aetatis, periculum mentis*, To you is my speech, O young men, the flower of age, the danger of the mind. To keep them from danger, and direct them to their duty, it is that the Preacher here exhorts them to remember God betimes, to gather manna in the morning of their lives, to present the firstfruits to God, whose "soul hath desired the first ripe fruits," (**Micah 7:1**) and who will "remember the kindness of their youth, the love of their espousals." (**Jeremiah 2:2**) God of old would be honoured with the firstlings of men and cattle, by the firstfruits of trees, and of the earth, in the sheaf, in the threshingfloor, in the dough, in the loaves. He called for ears of corn dried by the fire, and wheat beaten out of the green ears, (**Leviticus 2:14**) to teach men to serve him with the primrose of their childhood. Three sorts there were of firstfruits: *First*, Of the ears of grain offered about the passover; *secondly*, Of the loaves offered about pentecost; *lastly*, About the end of the year, in autumn. Now of the first two God had a part, but not of the last. He made choice of the almond tree, (**Jeremiah 1:11**) because it blossometh first; so of Jeremiah from his infancy, Timothy from his mother's breasts, &c. He likes not of those *arbores autumnales* autumnal trees (**Jude 1:13**) which bud at latter end of harvest. He cares not for such loiterers as come halting in at last cast to serve God, when they can serve their lusts no longer. The Circassians, a kind of mongrel Christians, are said ⁽³⁸⁹⁾ to divide their life between sin and devotion—dedicating their youth to rapine, and their old age to repentance. "But cursed be that deceiver," saith the prophet, "that hath a male in his flock, and yet offereth to the Lord a corrupt thing." (**Malachi 1:14**) Wilt thou give God the dregs, the bottom, the snuffs, the very last sands, thy dotage, which thyself and friends are weary of? Shall thine oil, which should have been fuel for thy thankfulness, increase the fire of thy lusts, and thy lusts consume all? (**James 4:3**) How much

³⁸⁹ Breerwood's *Inquiry*, 135.

better were it to sacrifice early, with Abraham, the young Isaacs of thine age? to bring as he did young rams unto the Lord, and even, while thou art yet a lad, a stripling, to "take heed to thy ways according to God's Word." (*Psalm 119:9*) Ye shall not see my face, saith Christ, as once Joseph, except you bring your younger brother with you.

While the evil days come not. viz., Of old age and misery; for these are seldom separated. *Senectus, ut Africa, semper aliquid novi adportat*, As Africa is never without some monster, so neither is old age ever without some ailment. *Multa senem circumveniunt incommoda*,⁽³⁹⁰⁾ Many are the inconveniences that do encompass an old man. *Solet senectus esse deformis, infirma, obliviosa, edentula, lucrosa, indocilis, et molesta*, saith Cato in Plutarch,⁽³⁹¹⁾ Old age useth to be deformed, weak, forgetful, toothless, covetous, unteachable, unquiet. Now shall any man be so besotted and bewitched as to make that the task of his old age which should be the trade of his whole life? and to settle his everlasting only surest making or marrying upon so sinking and sandy a foundation? A ship, the longer it leaks, the harder it is to be emptied; a land, the longer it lies, the harder it is to be ploughed; a nail, the further it is driven in, with the greater difficulty it is pulled out. And shall any man think that the trembling joints, the dazzled eyes, the fainting heart, the failing hands, the feeble legs of strengthless, drooping, untractable, wayward, froward old age can break up the fallow ground, can ever empty and pluck out the leaks and nails of so many years flowing and fastening?{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 2. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 12:2]]{{field-on:Bible}} **While the sun, or the light, or the moon, &c.** *i.e.*, While greater and lesser comforts fail not; or before the sight of thine eyes grow dim, and as unfit to let in light as an old dusty window. The air to aged eyes seemeth dusty and misty, and the sun wadeth as the moon in a foggy evening, and the stars are out of sight; they "see through a glass darkly," as the apostle speaks in another case, (*1 Corinthians 13:12*) they can know no kin without spectacles; the defluxion of rheum,⁽³⁹²⁾ which trickleth down the nose and cheeks, being as it were the rain, the gathering of new matter, which continually distilleth, being as it were the returning of the clouds after the rain in a moist season, and waters into an emptied fountain. Some, with relation to the former verse, interpret the words thus: Let thy Creator be remembered while the "sun is not darkened"—that is, while youth continueth; or if not so, while "the light of the sun" is not gone—that is, while thy manhood lasteth; or if not so, while the "moon is not darkened,"—that is, while thine elder years are not spent; or if not so, while the "stars are not shut up," while the worst of old age hath not seized upon thee; for then "the clouds will return after the rain,"—that is, one grief comes upon the neck of another, "as deep calleth upon deep at the noise of the waterspouts." (*Psalm 42:7*) One affliction followeth and occasioneth another, without intermission of trouble, as one billow comes wallowing and tumbling upon another; or, as in April weather, one shower is unburdened, another is brewed. Hence some of the ancient patriarchs are said to have died old men, and full of years,—they had enough of this world, and desired to depart, as Abraham, Simeon, others. Hence the poets feign that Tithonus, when he might have had immortality here, he would not. And Cato protested, that if when old he might be made young again, he would seriously refuse it.⁽³⁹³⁾{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 3. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 12:3]]{{field-on:Bible}} **In the day when the keepers of the house, &c.** *i.e.*, The hands and arms, wherewith we defend the head and whole body—called a house also by St Paul—from harm and danger; and maintain our lives; which are therefore

³⁹⁰ Horat.

³⁹¹ Plut. in *Apoph. Rom.*

³⁹² Watery matter secreted by the mucous glands or membranes, such as collects in or drops from the nose, eyes, and mouth, etc., and which, when abnormal, was supposed to cause disease; hence, an excessive or morbid 'defluxion' of any kind.

³⁹³ Cic. de *Senectute*.

called the "lives of our hands," because upheld with the labour of our hands. (*Isaiah 57:10*) These are fitly called keepers or guardians for their usefulness, and for their faithfulness too. Numa Pompilius consecrated the hands to faith; his successor, Tallus Hostilius, being a profane, perfidious person, and a condemner of all religion, as that which did but emasculate men's minds, and make them idle, brought in and worshipped two new gods, viz., Paver and Pallor—Fear and Paleness. ⁽³⁹⁴⁾ Like another Cain, "Sighing and trembling he was upon the earth," so the Septuagint renders that, (*Genesis 4:12*) Not his hands only trembled, which is thought to be Cain's mark, (*Genesis 4:15*) but his heart too. (*Isaiah 7:2*) Not with old age either, as here, but with the terrors of an evil conscience. But to return to the text. Old men are full of the palsy for the most part, and many other infirmities, which here are most elegantly described by a continued allegory. Men draw forth as lively as they can the pictures of their young age, that in old age they may see their youth before their eyes. This is but a vanity, yet may good use be made thereof. So contrarily the Preacher here draws out to the life the picture of old age, ⁽³⁹⁵⁾ that young men may see and consider it together with death that follows it, and "after death, judgment."

And the strong men shall bow themselves. *Nutabunt*: the legs and thighs shall stagger and falter, cripple and crinkle under them, as not able to bear the body's burden. The thigh in Latin is called *femur, a ferendo*, because it beareth and holdeth up the creature, and hath the longest and strongest bone in the whole body. The leg hath a shinbone and a shankbone, aptly fitted for the better moving. The foot is the base, the ground and pedestal which sustaineth the whole building. These are Solomen's "strong men"; but as strong as they are, yet in old age they buckle under their burden, ⁽³⁹⁶⁾ and are ready to overthrow themselves and the whole body. Hence old men are glad to betake them to their third leg, a staff or crutch; *Membra levant baculis tardique senilibus annis*. Hence Hesiod calls them *τριποδας*. Let them learn to lean upon the Lord, as the spouse did "upon her beloved," (*Solomon's Song 8:5*) and he will stir up some good Job to be "eyes to them when blind, and feet to them when lame," (*Job 29:15*) Let them also pray with David, "Cast me not off in the time of old age, forsake me not when my strength faileth." (*Psalms 71:9*)

And the grinders cease, because they are few. The teeth, through age, fall out, or rot out, or are drawn out, or hang loose in the gums, and so cannot grind and masticate the meat that is to be transmitted into the stomach, for the preservation of the whole. Now the teeth are the hardest of the bones, if that they be bones, ⁽³⁹⁷⁾ whereof Aristotle makes question. They are as hard as stones, in the edges of them especially, and are here fitly compared to millstones, from their chewing office. The seat of the teeth are the jaws, where they have their several sockets, into which they are mortised. But in old men they stand wetshod in slimy humour, or are hollow and stumpy, falling out one after another, as the cogs of a mill, so that

"*Fragendus misero gingiva panis inermi.*"—Juvenal.

And those that look out at the windows. The eyes are dim, as they were in old Isaac and Jacob, A heavy affliction surely, but especially to those that have had "eyes full of adultery," (*2 Peter 2:14*) "evil eyes," windows of wickedness, for the conscience of this puts a sting into the affliction, is a thorn to their blind eyes, and becomes a greater torment than ever Regulus the Roman was put to, ⁽³⁹⁸⁾ when his eyelids were cut off, and he set full opposite to the sun

³⁹⁴ Plutarch. Lactantius.

³⁹⁵ *Ecquem vero mihi dabis rhetorem tam magnifice et exquisite disserentem, et in non obscura sententia tot lumina, imo flumina orationis exserentem!*

³⁹⁶ *Genua labant.*—Virg.

³⁹⁷ Lactant., *De Opif. Dei*.

³⁹⁸ Plut.

shining in his strength; ⁽³⁹⁹⁾ or than that Greek prince that had his eyes put out with hot burning basins, held near unto them. ⁽⁴⁰⁰⁾{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 4. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 12:4]]{{field-on:Bible}}**And the doors shall be shut in the streets.** The ears shall grow deaf, the hearing weak, which hearing is caused by two bones within the inside of the ear, whereof one stands still and the other moves, like the two stones of a mill.

And he shall rise up at the voice of the bird. Being awakened by every small noise; and this proceeds not from the quickness of the hearing, but from the badness of sleeping. For as Jerome speaketh, *Frigescente iam sanguine, &c.* ⁽⁴⁰¹⁾ The blood now growing cold, and the moisture being dried up, by which matters sleep should be nourished. The old man awakeneth with a little sound, and at midnight, when the cock croweth, he riseth speedily, ⁽⁴⁰²⁾ being not able often to turn his members in his bed. Thus he. Cocks crowing, saith another, unto old men is the scholar's bell, that calls them to think of the things that are in God's book every morning.

And all the daughters of music shall be brought low. Old men, as they cannot sing tunably, but creak or scream (whence Homer compares them to grasshoppers, *propter raucam vocem*, for their unpleasant voice), so they can take no delight in the melodious notes of others, as old Barzillai confesseth; (**2 Samuel 19:35**) they discern not the harmony or distinction of sounds, neither are affected with music. ⁽⁴⁰³⁾ They must therefore labour to become temples of the Holy Ghost (in whose temple there never wants music), and sing psalms "with grace in their hearts," for, *Non vex, sed votum; non musica chordula, nen cor; non clamans, non amans, psallit in aure Dei.*{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 5. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 12:5]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high.** Hillocks or little stones standing up, whereat they may stumble, as being unsteady and unwieldy. High ascents also they shun, as being short winded; neither can they look down without danger of falling, their heads being as weak as their hams. Let them therefore pray for a guard of angels, putting that promise into suit. (**Psalm 91:11**) Let them also keep within God's *precincts*, as ever they expect his *protection*; and then, though old Eli fell, and never rose again, yet when they fall they shall arise, for the Lord puts under his hand. (**Psalm 37:24**) Contrition may be in their way, but attrition shall not. Let them fear God, and they need not fear any other person or thing whatsoever.

And the almond tree shall flourish. The hair shall grow hoary, those church yard flowers shall put forth. The almond tree blossoms in January, while it is yet winter, and the fruit is ripe in March. ⁽⁴⁰⁴⁾ Old age shall snow white hairs upon their heads. Let them see that they be "found in the way of righteousness."

And the grasshopper shall be a burden. Every light matter shall oppress them, who are already a burden to themselves, being full of gout, and other swellings of the legs, which the Septuagint and Vulgate point at here, when they render it, *impinguabiter locusta*,—The locusts shall be made fat. Let them wait upon the Lord, as that "old disciple Mnason" (**Acts 21:16**) did, and then they shall "renew their strength, mount up as eagles, run, and not be weary, walk, and not faint," even then, when "the youth shall faint and be weary, and the young men utterly

³⁹⁹ *Oculus ab occulendo.*

⁴⁰⁰ *Turkish History.*

⁴⁰¹ *Jerome, on this verse.*

⁴⁰² *Ἀλέκτωρ dicitur, quia nos a lecto exsuscitat.*

⁴⁰³ *Nam quae cantante voluptas?—Juvenal.*

⁴⁰⁴ *Plin., lib. xvi. cap. 25.*

fall." (*Isaiah 40:30, 31*)

And desire shall fail. "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." (*1 John 2:15*) And this Cicero reckons among the commodities and benefits of old age, *quod hominem a libidinis estu, velut a tyranno quodam liberet*,—that it frees a man from the fire of lust.⁽⁴⁰⁵⁾ It should be so doubtless, an old lecher being little less than a monster. What so monstrous as to behold green apples on a tree in winter? and what so indecent as to see the sins of youth prevailing in times of age among old decrepit goats? that they should be *capering* after *capparis* (κάππαρις), the fruit of capers, as the Septuagint and Vulgate render it here.

Because man goeth to his long home. Heb., To his old home—*scil.*, to the dust from whence he was taken; or to "the house of his eternity"—that is, the grave (that house of all living), where he shall lie long, till the resurrection. Tremellius renders it, *in domum saeculi sui*—to the house of his generation, where he and all his contemporaries meet. Cajetan, *in demure mundi sui*—into the house of his world; that which the world provides for him, as nature at first provided for him the house of the womb. Toward this home of his the old man is now on gait, having one foot in the grave already. He sits and sings with Job, "My spirit is spent, my days are extinct, the graves are ready for me." (*Job 17:1*)

And the mourners go about the streets. The proverb is, *Senex bos non lugetur*,—An old man dies unlamented. But not so the good old man. Great moaning was made for old Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Samuel. The Romans took the death of old Augustus so heavily, that they wished he had either never been born or never died. Those, indeed, that live wickedly die wishedly. But godly men are worthily lamented, and ought to be so. (*Isaiah 57:1*) This is one of the dues of the dead, so it be done aright. But they were hard bestead that were fain to hire mourners; that as midwives brought their friends into the world, so those widows should carry them out of it. See *Job 3:8; Jeremiah 9:17*.
{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 6. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 12:6]]
{{field-on:Bible}}**Or ever the silver cord be loosed.** Or, Lengthened—*i.e.*, before the marrow of the back (which is of a silver colour) be consumed. From this cord many sinews are derived, which, when they are loosened, the back bendeth, motion is slow, and feeling faileth.

Or the golden bowl be broken. *i.e.*, The heart, say some, or the *pericardium*; the brain pan, say others, or the *pia mater*, compassing the brain like a swathing cloth, or inner rind of a tree.

Or the pitcher be broken at the fountain. That is, The veins at the liver (which is the place of sanguification, or blood making, as one calls it), but especially *Vena porta* and *Vena cava*. Read the anatomists.

Or the wheel be broken at the cistern. *i.e.*, The head, which draws the power of life from the heart, to the which the blood runs back in any great fright, as to the fountain of life.
{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 7. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 12:7]]
{{field-on:Bible}}**Then shall the dust return to the earth,** &c. What is man, saith Nazianzen, but *Noūs kaī choūs*, soul and soil, breath and body; a puff of wind the one, a pile of dust the other; no solidity in either. Zoroaster and some other ancient heathens imagined that the soul had wings, that, having broken these wings, she fell headlong into the body, and that, recovering her wings again, she flies up to heaven, her original habitation. That of Epicharmus is better to be liked, and comes nearer to the truth here delivered by the Preacher, *Coneretur fuit, et discretum est, rediitque unde venerat; terra deorsum, spiritus sursum*,—It was together, but is now by death set asunder, and returned to the place whence it came, the earth downward, the spirit upward. See *Genesis 2:7*, "God made

⁴⁰⁵ πρεσβύτης ἂ πῦρ καὶ σβέω.

man of the dust of the earth," to note our frailty, vility, and impurity. *Lutum enim conspurcat omnia, sic et caro*, saith one,—Dirt defiles all things; so doth the flesh. It should seem so, truly, by man's soul, which, coming pure out of God's hands, soon becomes

"Mens oblita Dei, vitiorumque oblita caeno."

Bernard complains, not without just cause, that our souls, by commerce with the flesh, are become fleshly. Sure it is, that by their mutual defilement, corruption is so far rooted in us now, that it is not cleansed out of us by mere death (as is to be seen in Lazarus, and others that died), but by cinerification, or turning of the body to dust and ashes.

The spirit returns to God that gave it. For it is *divinae particula aerae*, an immaterial, immortal substance, that after death returns to God, the Fountain of life. The soul moves and guides the body, saith a worthy divine,⁽⁴⁰⁶⁾ as the pilot doth the ship. Now the pilot may be safe, though the ship be split on the rock. And as in a chicken, it grows still, and so the shell breaks and falls off. So it is with the soul; the body hangs on it but as a shell, and when the soul is grown to perfection, it falls away, and the soul returns to the "Father of spirits." Augustine (after Origen) held a long while that the soul was begotten by the parents, as was the body. At length he began to doubt this point, and afterward altered his opinion, confessing *inter caetera testimonia hoc esse praecipuum*, that among other testimonies this to be the chief, to prove the contrary to that which he had formerly held.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 8. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 12:8]]{{field-on:Bible}} **Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher.** Who chose for his text this argument of the vanity of human things, which having fully proved and improved, he here resumes and concludes. See previous verses. {{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 9. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 12:9]]{{field-on:Bible}} **And moreover, because the Preacher was wise.** He well knew how hard it was to work men to a belief of what he had affirmed concerning earthly vanities, and therefore heaps up here many forcible and cogent arguments; as, first, that himself was no baby, but wise above all men in the world, by God's own testimony; therefore his words should be well regarded. *Οἱ σοφοὶ ἡμῶν δευτέρωσι*, Our wise men expound today (said the Jews one to another), "Come, let us go up to the house of the Lord," &c. Cicero had that high opinion of Plato for his wisdom, that he professed that he would rather go wrong with him than go right with others. Averroes overly admired Aristotle, as if he had been infallible. But this is a praise proper to the holy penman, guided by the spirit of truth, and filled with wisdom from on high for the purpose. To them, therefore, and to the word of prophecy by them, must men "give heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place," &c. (**2 Peter 1:19**)

He still taught the people knowledge. He hid not his talent in a napkin, but used it to the instruction of his people. "Have not I written for thee excellent things" (or three various types of books—viz., proverbial, penitential, nuptial) "in counsels and knowledge?" (**Proverbs 22:20**) Synesius speaks of some that, having great worth in them, will as soon part with their hearts⁽⁴⁰⁷⁾ as with their conceptions. And Gregory observeth,⁽⁴⁰⁸⁾ that there are not a few who, being enriched with spiritual gifts and abilities to do good, *dum solis contemplationis studiis inardescunt, parere utilitati proximorum praedicatione refugiunt*, while they burn in the studies of contemplation only, do shun to seek by preaching to profit their neighbours. Solomon was none of these.

⁴⁰⁶ Dr Preston.

⁴⁰⁷ *Θαρρον μὲν τὴν καρδίαν.*—Synes.

⁴⁰⁸ *Past. Cur.*, p. i. c. 5.

Yea, he gave good heed. Or, He made them to take good heed; ⁽⁴⁰⁹⁾ he called upon them ever and anon, as our Saviour did upon his hearers, "Let him that hath an ear to hear, hear." Or as the deacons in Chrysostom's and Basil's time used to call upon the people, in these words, *Oremus, attendamus*, Let us pray, let us give heed.

And sought out. By diligent scrutiny and hard study, beating his brains, as the fowl beats the shell to get out the fish, with great vehemence. The staves were always in the ark, to show, saith Gregory, that preachers should always meditate in their hearts upon the sacred Scriptures, that if need require they may without delay take up the ark, teach the people.

And set in order many proverbs. Marshalled them in a fit method, and set others awork for to do the like. For, *Regis ad exemplum*, &c. Our Henry I, surnamed Beauclerc, had in his youth some taste of learning; and this put many of his subjects into the fashion of the book, so that various learned men flourished in his time, ⁽⁴¹⁰⁾ as Ethan, Heman, Chalcola as Agur, and other compilers of proverbs did in Solomon's.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 10. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 12:10]]{{field-on:Bible}}**The Preacher sought**, &c. He sought and sought, by pains and prayer. He knew the rule, *Bene orasse, est bene studuisse*, ⁽⁴¹¹⁾ To have prayed well is to have studied well. By prayer and tears St John got the book opened. (**Revelation 5:4**) Luther got much of his insight into God's matters by the same means.

To find out acceptable words. *Verba desiderata*; so Cajetan renders it. *Verba delectabilia*; so Tremellius. *Verba expetibilia*; so Vatablus. Delectable and desirable words, dainty expressions, that might both please and profit, tickle the ear, and with it take the heart. Such a master of speech was Paul, (**Acts 14:12**) who thundered and lightened ⁽⁴¹²⁾ in his discourses like another Pericles. Such a one was Apollos, that eloquent preacher, "mighty in the Scriptures," εἰπεῖν **ΘΕΙΝÓΤΑΤΟΣ**, like another Phocion, a weighty speaker; such were many of the Greek and Latin fathers. Ambrose for one, whom when Augustine heard preach, *Veniebant*, saith he, *in animum meum simul cum verbis quae deligebam, etiam res quas negligebam*, There came into my mind, together with the words which I chiefly looked after, the matter which till then I made no reckoning of. *Et res et verba*. Both deeds and words. Philip Melanchthon could dress his doctrine in dainty terms, and so slide insensibly into the hearts of his hearers. *Egit vir eloquens ut intelligenter ut obedienter audiretur*, as Augustine ⁽⁴¹³⁾ hath it; This eloquent man took pains that he might be heard with understanding, with obedience. The like might be said of Calvin, famous for the purity of his style and the holiness of his matter. *Viret*, in whose sermons *singularem eloquentiam et in commovendis affectibus efficacitatem admirabar*, saith Zanchy, ⁽⁴¹⁴⁾ greatly admired at his singular eloquence and skill to work upon the affections by his elaborate discourses.

And that which was written was upright. *A corde ad cor*, void of all insincerity and falsehood. (**Proverbs 8:8**) Seducers come for the most part with *pithanology*—"by good words and fair speeches they deceive the hearts of the simple." (**Romans 16:18**) But our Preacher's words are of another alloy, not more delicious and toothsome, than sound and wholesome, (**2 Timothy 3:16**) proceeding from a right heart, and tending to make men upright, transforming them into the same image, and transfusing them into the divine nature.{{field-off:Bible}}

⁴⁰⁹ Auscultare fecit.—Pag. Ar. Montan.

⁴¹⁰ Daniel's *History*. 68.

⁴¹¹ Luther.

⁴¹² *Intonabat. fulgurabat Cicero*.—Plutarch.

⁴¹³ *De Doct. Christ.*, lib. iv. cap. 14.

⁴¹⁴ Zanch. *Miscell.*, Ep. Dedic.

Verse 11. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 12:11]]{{field-on:Bible}}**The words of the wise are like goads.** To rouse up men's drowsy and drossy spirits; to drive them, as the eagle doth her young ones with her talons, out of the nest of carnal security; to awaken them out of the snare of the devil, who hath cast many into such a dead lethargy, such a dedolent disposition, that, like Dionysius the Heracleot, they can hardly feel sharpest goads, or needles thrust into their fat hearts—"fat as grease." (*Psalm 119:70*) St Peter so preached that his hearers were "pricked at heart." (*Acts 2:37*) St Stephen so galled his adversaries that they were "cut to the heart." (*Acts 7:54*) And before them both, how barely and boldly dealt John Baptist and our Saviour Christ with those enemies of all righteousness, the Pharisees, *qui toties puncti ac repuncti, nunquam tamen ad resipiscentiam compuncti*, as one saith of them (who like those bears in Pliny, or asses of Tuscany, that have fed on hemlock), were so stupified that no sharp words would work upon them or take impression in their hearts, so brawny were their breasts, so horny their heart strings!

And as nails. Such as shepherds fastened their tents to the ground with. Jael drove one of these tent nails through Sisera's temples, and laid his body as it were listening what was become of the soul. (*Judges 4:21*) Now, as nails driven into pales do fasten them to their rails, so the godly and grave sentences of teachers—those "masters of assemblies"—do pierce into men's hearts, to unite them unto God by faith, and one to another in love. Our exhortations truly should be strong and well pointed, not only to wound as arrows, but to stick by the people as forked arrows, that they may prove, as those of Joash, "the arrows of the Lord's deliverance." And surely it were to be wished, in these unsettled and giddy times especially, that people would suffer such words of exhortation, as, like goads, might prick them on to pious practice, and, like nails, might fix their wild conceits, that they might be steadfast and immoveable, stablished in the truth, and not whiffed about with every wind of doctrine. But we can look for no better, so long as they have so mean an esteem of the ministers, those "masters of the assemblies" (whose office it is to congregate the people, and to preside in the congregations), which are given from one shepherd, the arch-shepherd (*1 Peter 2:25*) of his sheep, Jesus Christ, who in the days of his solemn inauguration into his kingdom, "gave these gifts unto men"—viz., "some to be apostles, some evangelists, some pastors, some teachers," &c. (*Ephesians 4:11*) What a mouth of blasphemy then opens that schismatical pamphleteer, ⁽⁴¹⁵⁾ that makes this precious gift of Christ to his spouse, this sacred and tremendous function of the ministry, to be as mere an imposture, as very a mystery of iniquity, as arrant a juggle as the Papacy itself!{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 12. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 12:12]]{{field-on:Bible}}**And further, by these, my son, be admonished.** By these divine directions and documents, contained in this short book, wherein thou shalt find fulness of matter in fewness of words Or "by these," that is, by the Holy Scriptures, which, according to some interpreters, are called in the former verse "lords of collections," because they are as lords paramount above all other words and writings of men that ever were collected into volumes. *Odi ego meos libros*, saith Luther, ⁽⁴¹⁶⁾ I do even hate the books set forth by myself, and could wish them utterly abolished, because I fear that by reading them some are hindered from spending their time in reading the sacred Scriptures. Of these it is that the Psalmist saith, "Moreover by them is thy servant warned"—or clearly admonished, as the word signifies—"and in doing thereof there is great reward." (*Psalm 19:11*)

Of making many books there is no end. Ambition and covetousness sets many authors awork in this scribbling age, *Scribimus indocti doctique*, &c. Presses are greatly oppressed, and "every fool will be meddling," that he may be a fool in print. *Multi mei similes hoc morbo*

⁴¹⁵ The Compas. Samarit.

⁴¹⁶ Luth. in Gen.

laborant, ut cum scribere nesciant, tamen a scribendo temperare non possunt: Many are sick of my very disease, saith Erasmus; that though they can do nothing worthy of the public, yet they must be publishing; hence the world so abounds with books, even to satiety and surfeit, many of them being no better than the scurf of scald and scabby heads.

And much study is a weariness to the flesh. Jerome renders it *Labor carnis*, a work of the flesh. They will find it so one day to their sorrow, that are better read in Sir Philip than in St Peter, in Monsieur Balsac's Letters than St Paul's Epistles. The Holy Bible is to be chiefly studied, and herein we are to labour even to being exhausted; to read till, being overcome with sleep, we bow down as it were to salute the leaves with a kiss, as Jerome exhorted some good women of his time. ⁽⁴¹⁷⁾ All other books, in comparison of this, we are to account as waste paper, and not to read them further than they some way conduce to the better understanding or practising of the things herein contained and commended unto our care.{{field-off:Bible}}

Verse 13. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 12:13]]{{field-on:Bible}}**Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter.** *scil.*, Touching the attainment of true happiness. Let us see (for a perclose of all) where and how it may be had. Shall I tell you in two words, saith the Preacher? I will so, and see that ye mark it. In the original, the word rendered conclusion here hath the first letter bigger than the rest, to stir up the greater attention to that which follows, since in this short sentence is contained the sum of all divinity. (*Hebrew Text Note*)

Fear God and keep his commandments. Bear an awful respect to the Divine Majesty, a reverential fear; and from this principle obey God in every part and point of duty. Do this, and live for ever. Do it in an evangelical way, I mean; for we can do it now no otherwise. Wish well to exact obedience, as David doth in *Psalms 119:4, 5*, "Oh that I could keep thy commandments accurately"; and woe is me that I cannot! And then be doing as thou canst; for affection without endeavour is like Rachel, beautiful but barren. Be doing, I say, at everything, as well as at anything; for thou must not be *funambulus virtutum*, as Tertullian phraseth it, one that goeth in a narrow tract of obedience. No; thine obedience must be universal, extending to the compass of the whole law (which is but one copulative, as the schools speak). And then, *beati sunt qui praecepta faciunt, etiam si non perficiunt*, ⁽⁴¹⁸⁾ they are blessed that do what they can, though they cannot but underdo. And, *in libro tuo scribuntur omnes qui quod possunt faciunt, et si quod debent, non possunt*. ⁽⁴¹⁹⁾ They are surely written all in God's book that do what they can, though they cannot do as they ought. I cannot let slip a note given by one that was once a famous preacher in this kingdom, and still lives in his printed sermons. The Book of Ecclesiastes, saith he, begins with "All is vanity," and ends with "Fear God and keep his commandments." Now, if that sentence were knit to this, which Solomon keepeth to the end, as the haven of rest after the turmoils of vanity, it is like that which Christ said to Martha, "Thou art troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary." That which "troubleth" us Solomon calls vanity; that which is "necessary" he calls the fear of God. From that to this should be every man's pilgrimage in this world. We begin at Vanity, and never know perfectly that we are vain till we come to fear God and keep his commandments.

For this is the whole duty of man. Heb., This is the whole man—*q.d.*, He is not a complete man; he loses all his other praises that fears not God. It is the very nature and essence of man to be a reasonable creature. Now, what more reasonable than that God should be feared and served? What more irrational than irreligion? See **2 Thessalonians 3:2**. And what is man without true grace but *praestantissimum brutum*, as one saith, a very fair beast?{{field-off:Bible}}

⁴¹⁷ Jerome ad Eust.

⁴¹⁸ Augustine.

⁴¹⁹ Bernard.

Verse 14. [[@Bible:Ecclesiastes 12:14]]{{field-on:Bible}}**For God shall bring every work into judgment.** Full loath is sinful flesh to come to judgment; but (will they, nill they), come they must, "God will bring them." Angels will hale them out of their hiding holes. Rocks and mountains will then prove a sorry shelter, since rocks shall rend and mountains melt at the presence of the Judge. Let us therefore judge ourselves, if he shall not judge us, and take unto us words against our sins, if we will not have him to take unto him words against our souls. (*Hosea 14:2*) And then, *Ira vivamus, ut rationem nobis reddendam arbitretur*, saith the heathen orator, Let us so live as those that must shortly be called to an account. For who can tell but that he may suddenly hear as that Pope did, and was soon after found dead, *Veni, miser, in iudicium*, Come, thou wretch, receive thy judgment. Let this be firmly believed and thoroughly digested, and it will notably incite us to the fear and service of God. This some heathens knew. Zaleucus Locrensis, in the preface to his laws, hath these words: *Hoc inculcatum sit, esse Deos, et venturum esse summum et fatalem illum diem*: Remember to press often upon the people these two things; first, That there are gods; next, To these gods an account of all must be given. The Areopagites at their council were wont diligently to inquire what every one of the Athenians did, and how he lived, that men knowing and remembering that once they must give an account of their lives, though but to earthly judges, might embrace honesty.⁽⁴²⁰⁾

With every secret thing. For at that day of "Revelation," as it is called, *we must all appear*—or be made transparent, translucent, and dear, like a perfectly transparent body, as the word there signifies—before the judgment seat of Christ; (**2 Corinthians 5:10**) all shall be laid naked and open, the books of God's omniscience and man's conscience also shall be then opened, and secret sins shall be as legible in thy forehead as if written with the brightest stars or the most glittering sunbeams upon a wall of crystal. Men's actions are all in print in heaven, and God will at that day read them aloud in the ears of all the world.

Whether it be good or evil. Then it shall appear what it is, which before was not so clear; like as in April both wholesome roots and poisonous reveal themselves, which in winter were not seen. Then men shall give an account—(1.) *De bonis commissis*, of good things committed unto them; (2.) *De bonis dimissis*, of good things neglected by them; (3.) *De malis commissis*, of evils committed by them; (4.) Lastly, *De malis permissis*, of evils done by others, suffered by them when they might have hindered it.

Here (as also at the end of Lamentations, Isaiah, and Malachi) many of the Hebrew Bibles repeat the foregoing verse, Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, &c., yet without points, lest anything should seem added thereby to the holy Scriptures. (*Hebrew Text Note*) The reason hereof read in the end of the prophecy of Isaiah. (**See Trapp on "Isaiah 66:24"**).

Laus Deo {{field-off:Bible}}