

gates that were closed at night. All communications with other cities of a diplomatic nature were conducted at these gates. For this reason it was that it was very significant to be known at those places, especially when one was admitted among the group of elders or seniors of the country. Had a man been connected with a family of questionable character he probably would not have been allowed to sit with these elders.

Verse 24. *Fine linen* is from CADIYN, which Strong defines, "from an unused root meaning to envelop; a wrapper, i. e., a shirt." *Girdles* is another name for belts which were worn as accessories of these wrappers. These garments were not for the use of her family especially, for it says she delivered them to the merchant, which means she put them on the market for a price as an income for the support of her children.

Verse 25. *Clothing* is from LEBUSH and Strong's definition is, "a garment, literal or figurative." *Strength* means security and praise, and *honor* means magnificent beauty. The verse means this good woman is adorned with all these qualities.

Verse 26. A woman who can accomplish the things accredited to this one would certainly be a wise person, and when she would speak it would be with wisdom. Her instructions for the guidance of others would be prompted by kindly motives.

Verse 27. *Bread of idleness* would be that produced by another while she was idling her own time away. She did not do this but rather was busy looking after the welfare of her family and producing bread for them by her own hands.

Verse 28. *Her children* would not be restricted to the offspring of her body, but all who became acquainted with her would regard her as having been a great blessing to the world. *Husband praiseth her* means he acknowledges her to have been a true wife and mother who had devoted her days to the welfare of her loved ones.

Verse 29. It is no great honor to be classed above ordinary people. But this woman is made to appear equal to the best; yea, to be above the best. The ones to which reference is made are those who had done *virtuously* which means they had acted with force and strength of character and in a beneficial manner for others.

Verse 30. *Favor* is used in the sense of outward kindness. Such demonstrations are often on the outside only and are deceitful. *Beauty* is derived from a word that means "to be bright" which is the reason it is here used as something vain. "All is not gold that glitters" is an old saying and similar in thought to the clause now being considered. In contrast with these uncertain and deceptive appearances, the writer mentions a woman who fears the Lord. There is something in the life of such a character that speaks for itself and leaves no doubt in the minds of witnesses, and hence they give her the praise due her as credit for her good deeds.

Verse 31. "Honor to whom honor is due" could properly be applied here. *Give her* is a phrase that is not complete without the word "credit" or its equivalent. The call is made to give this woman credit for the good things she has done with her hands. In other words, since "actions speak louder than words," the works which this woman performed while with the people will speak well for her and entitle her to the commendations of those who knew her and many of whom had profited by the things she did. All people coming and going should be told of the righteousness of this wife.

ECCLESIASTES 1

Verse 1. *Preacher* is the title of this book recognized in the text of the King James translation, which is a meaning of the original word for the title commonly placed at the head of the book. The word "preacher" is from GOMELETH and Strong defines it, "a (female) assembler (i. e., lecturer); abstractly preaching." We should not be confused by the word "female" in the definition, for in grammar that form does not always signify the sex of the person being considered. On this point the Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia says, "though feminine in form, it is masculine in meaning." In order to understand many of the statements in this book we need to remember that Solomon is presenting the folly of living for this life of flesh only. He seems to advocate the claims of certain people whom we term materialists who teach that man is wholly mortal and will not exist after this earth life is over. The motive of such a theory is to gratify oneself in the indulgence of fleshly desire. Why not go on and have a good time, they ask, since all will be ended

at death. But let the reader bear in mind that Solomon actually was a believer in another life and expected a day of judgment. But he put out the arguments of the materialists in this way so the reader could realize the falsity of their position. The purpose of the book as a whole is to arouse the reader to a sense of his responsibility to God, and therefore of the importance of living the higher life while here on the earth, getting ready for the perfect life beyond the grave. Relative to the thought just offered, I will quote an excellent statement from the encyclopaedia referred to above: "It will be probably best to consider it a unique exhibition of Hebrew scepticism, subdued and checked by the Hebrew fear of God, and reaping lessons on wisdom from the follies of life." Another thing to be remembered is that Solomon uses his own experiences, both favorable and unfavorable, as a basis for his many words of advice. However, although these were his personal experiences, the record of them and his conclusions and lessons drawn therefrom are made with the same inspiration by which he wrote the Proverbs and by which he gave his people their instructions for religious practices.

Verse 2. In this verse and in all other places of this book the words *vain*, *vanity* and *vanities* are from HEBEL and Strong's definition is as follows: "Emptiness or vanity; figuratively something transitory and unsatisfactory; often used as an adverb." Since the things of this world are to pass away with it, they are said to be transitory which means they are temporary.

Verse 3. *Profit* is from YITHROWN, Strong defines, "preeminence, gain." Inasmuch as the things of the earth will cease to be when the earth is destroyed (2 Pe. 3: 10), nothing a man labors for will be left afterwards, hence no man can get any more out of life than he puts into it. This means that if a man lives for temporal purposes only, he will have nothing left in the end because all such will be destroyed.

Verse 4. The preceding verse sets forth the idea that the earth is to be destroyed, but in this it abideth *for ever*. The explanation is in the full meaning of the term *for ever*. The literal definition of it is "age-lasting." In any place where the term is authorized at all this definition will be

correct. However, the specific extent of the thing or idea to which it is applied must be determined by the nature of that thing itself. In the present verse the writer speaks of the generations of men, that they come and go. In contrast with this, the earth remains after a generation of men has gone and another has come to take its place. In other words, as long as the age lasts in which the generations of men are produced one after another, just that long will the earth abide.

Verse 5. The unchanging routine of things is the subject of this verse and also of a number following.

Verse 6. The passing of the winds from one place to another according to the regular course is independent of man. Even the replacing of one generation by another does not affect these movements of nature.

Verse 7. This verse is a statement that agrees with what is taught in the primary grades of geography. Vapor rises from the sea, it is condensed and falls in the form of rain, and the rain swells the rivers which run back into the sea. The wonderful fact is the continuous flowing of the rivers into the sea *and yet the sea is not full*. This would be unexplainable were it not for the action of evaporation. Incidentally, this is one of the many indications that the Bible is a scientific book, although many people do not realize it or will not admit it.

Verse 8. *Labor* is from a word that is defined "tiresome," and the things of nature are so great that it would be too tiresome for man to describe them fully. After a man's *eye* and *ear* have reached out unto the works of the Creator, there is still much left that has not been seen or heard, and so he is still unsatisfied.

Verse 9. *No new thing* refers to the line of thought carried through verses 4-7. Solomon would not go into the face of known facts and say that no man was learning or could learn anything new. That would contradict his own statement in ch. 7: 29. However, the last word in that passage does not mean that man can bring into existence any material thing for that is the exclusive work of the Creator. What are commonly called "inventions" are discoveries only. God made the earth then told man to subdue it. Every so-called invention is only a discovery of a way to use what God has placed in the earth. The only thing that is new is what man has discovered in

the materials of God's creation and the laws He has made to govern them. As to the materials themselves we will note our verse says "there is no new thing under the sun."

Verse 10. I will comment on this verse by supposing that some man answered the question of Solomon as follows: "Yes, I know of something of which it may be said that it is new and that is the airplane. It was never heard of a few decades ago." With his inspiration Solomon could reply to this by saying, "No, that is not new, except the discoveries man has made. The law of gravitation acting upon a vacuum which holds the plane up was in existence when God said that fowl would fly in the air." The thing that is new only is man's knowledge of these existing laws. Every discovery and use that man makes of the elements in the earth is in fulfillment of the order given him in Gen. 1: 28. God intended that man should enjoy these things and thus advance himself in a scientific study and development of these great blessings. But knowing the danger that might come to the human creature of going too far, the apostle has warned against such abuses in 1 Cor. 7: 31.

Verse 11. The original for *remembrance* means "a memento." The thought is that things in the general routine of this world just go on from day to day and year to year, and nature has nothing by which to mark the actions of man.

Verse 12. See the comments at v. 1 on the meaning of *preacher*. This verse is in the first person and confirms the belief that Solomon is the author of the book.

Verse 13. *This sore travail* is a key to the meaning of this verse. The phrase means "a wearisome task." When God made the earth and put man on it the command was given for the human creature to cover the earth with his kind and to subdue the earth. Thus the task of finding out the many laws of nature was imposed upon him by the One who made him and knew just what would be for his welfare. See comments at v. 9.

Verse 14. See the comments at v. 2 on *vanity*. *Vexation* is from a Hebrew word that means a constant but unsatisfied seeking after something. The urge for man to be always wanting to go further after knowledge of earthly things has been made a part of his nature by the Lord, and the vexation

or strain that it places on him was divinely regarded as necessary for his welfare while living upon the earth.

Verse 15. *Crooked and wanting* are used with reference to the things in nature that require some labor and adjustment by man before he can enjoy it fully. Such inconveniences are part of the "sore travail" that God placed upon man which was intended for his good. Hence there is no use to worry over it and try to expect it to be different for it will not. As long as the earth stands these *crooked and wanting* conditions will be unavoidable.

Verse 16. *Communed with mine own heart* means Solomon took an inventory of all his blessings; "counted them one by one." The result showed his account to be far to the good, even excelling all of his predecessors in Jerusalem.

Verse 17. Being urged on by his many advantages, Solomon decided to employ them in determining to what extent man could go and had gone in his madness and folly. The conclusion was that which is expressed in v. 14.

Verse 18. All good things may be abused and in most cases they are. The greater the opportunities the more will be the grief and sorrow of those who do not make a wise use of them; the greater the expectations, the greater the disappointment.

ECCLESIASTES 2

Verse 1. The attention of the reader will frequently be called to the remarks made on the first verse of this book concerning the purpose of the book. *Go to now* is a peculiar expression that means, "listen to what I am about to say." Solomon concluded to try out the pleasures of this world and found them disappointing.

Verse 2. *Laughter . . . mad* means that it is foolish to think one can remove the stern realities of the universe by any kind of forced or make-believe joy.

Verse 3. In the words of popular language, Solomon (representing the average man) determined to "see what he could get out of life and have a good time." *Acquainting* means "to proceed or guide." Solomon represents a man trying to think he could indulge in wine and do so with wisdom. He would "go the limit" of folly just to see what a good time he could have. If any man could make a complete success in his seeking for worldly happiness, Solomon should have. He

possessed super knowledge by which he could devise various plans. He had great wealth so that the financial subject did not have to be considered, and he was in complete control or authority over the nation so that no one could say him nay. Yet with all of these advantages he finally realized and announced that worldly pleasures were vanity and vexation of spirit.

Verse 4. This verse specifies some of the items referred to above. *Houses* and *vineyards* are what is meant by *great works*. Such activities would tend to make a man great in the eyes of others, and also gratify his own desire for worldly glory.

Verse 5. The original for *orchards* is *PARDES* and Strong defines it "a park." We may better understand why Solomon wished the use of these parks if we read a few words from ancient history. "Among the Persians, a grand enclosure or preserve, hunting ground, shady and well-watered, in which wild animals were kept for the hunt; it was enclosed by walls and furnished with towers for the hunters."—Xenophon, *Cyropedia*, 1-3-14. And so it passed into the Hebrew language according to Josephus. Incidentally, I will state that the word "paradise" came from this Persian word *PARDES*.

Verse 6. We know that all trees are *wood*, but that word here means a forest or grove. The pools were for the storing of water to supply the trees with moisture.

Verse 7. *Maidens* is from *SHIPCHAH*, which Strong defines, "a female slave as a member of the household." *Servants* is about the same in meaning as the maidens except that they were male and were used for the coarser work outside of the houses. *Cattle* is defined in the lexicon as "live stock," and it would include horses concerning which Solomon made one of his mistakes. (Deut. 17: 16; 2 Chr. 1: 16.)

Verse 8. *Peculiar treasure* both are from *CEQULLAH*, which Strong defines, "Participle of an unused root meaning to shut up; wealth (as closely shut up)." The thought is he collected such articles as were expected only to be possessed by kings in the various provinces. Solomon was able to obtain a complete assortment of musical instruments and also to employ vocal musicians to sing with these accompaniments.

Verse 9. We should be careful in our criticism of Solomon about these activities. God had promised that he

was to have "riches and honor, so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days" (1 Ki. 3: 13). Our present verse as well as several others in the chapter is a statement in harmony with God's promise. The mistake Solomon made was in letting those things lead him astray. The Lord considered the danger of that and warned him to "walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments." (1 Ki. 3: 14.)

Verse 10. Solomon meant that he could take to himself anything he saw and wanted. That was because of his wealth and authority. The original for *labor* is defined, "toil, i. e., wearing effort; hence worry, whether of body or mind." We do not think of Solomon as performing bodily labor, but he did worry and concern himself in obtaining all of these things. *My portion* means the reward for his efforts was the enjoyment he got out of the things collected. Let us not overlook the important conclusion that Solomon states in this verse. *This was my portion of all my labor*. All that he got out of his labor and worry in collecting the wealth and other objects was his personal enjoyment or satisfaction.

Verse 11. After coming to the conclusion stated in the last of the preceding paragraph, Solomon expressed himself according to this verse. He repeated his familiar saying that it was all *vanity and vexation of spirit*. (See the comments on this phrase in ch. 1: 14.) *Profit* means "preeminence, gain." The man who spends his energies in these things *under the sun* (earthly things) will finally realize that he is no better or more prominent than others.

Verse 12. Then the author did some meditating over these matters. He compared wisdom and folly and observed that the man who came after the king and "labored" in the same way would not be able to accomplish any more than did his predecessor.

Verse 13. The grand conclusion was that wisdom was to be preferred, even as much as light is preferable to darkness.

Verse 14. The first clause may sound strange or unnecessary. The complete thought is as if it said, "the eyes in the head of a wise man are for the use that a man of wisdom is expected to make of them." This idea is borne out by the next clause that says a fool walks in darkness. Evidently the fool has eyes in his head the same as the

wise man, but he does not make the same use of them as does the wise man. *One event . . . them all* means that as far as any permanent profit in the end of life of pleasure is concerned, there is no difference between a wise and a foolish man.

Verse 15. This verse is a continuation in thought of the preceding one. As far as any advantage or profit in the end is concerned, even Solomon would be no better than the foolish ones of earth. He then makes a sort of questioning criticism as to why he had been giving so much attention to the pleasures prompted by his wisdom. He answers his own question as if he said, "O well, it is just some more of the vanity to which the human race is inclined."

Verse 16. This verse may be considered a summing up of the reasoning and conclusions that have been offered in several preceding verses. When the time of death comes there will be no difference between a wise man and a fool.

Verse 17. Upon observing how empty was a life devoted to the passing pleasures of the flesh, Solomon was filled with disgust over it. Again he described it with his familiar phrase, *vanity and vexation of spirit*.

Verse 18. One particular reason for Solomon's attitude was the truth that he had to leave his works to the next generation.

Verse 19. The point that concerned him most was the uncertainty as to the kind of man who would have control over the things left to him. This thought caused him again to apply his term *vanity* which means emptiness or uselessness.

Verse 20. When the full realization of the subject loomed up before him, Solomon was filled with despair.

Verse 21. Regardless of how wisely a man plans his work and accumulates the things of value, yet he must leave it and perhaps a man who "never turned a hand" to accomplish a thing will inherit them. His conclusion was that it was all emptiness.

Verse 22. There is nothing new in this verse, just a general statement of the unprofitableness of this worldly life and its apparent gains.

Verse 23. Even while in the midst of the supposed enjoyment of the things of this life there is much sorrow. And with all his *travail* (hard work) there is grief, because a man will always be

worrying whether he is going to accomplish what he intends. This anxiety is often so great that it will prevent him from relaxing at night when he should be finding it a time of rest.

Verse 24. Food and water are blessings given by the hand of God and it is right for a man to enjoy them. And if he will "be therewith content" (1 Tim. 6:8), he will not always be worrying about what worldly success he is going to have.

Verse 25. If Solomon with all of his advantages was dissatisfied with the accomplishments of this world, the average man should not think he could succeed.

Verse 26. *God giveth* is said in the sense that the things named are made possible to man through the providence of God. All have equal right to the favors of the Lord and if a man uses them as he should he will be acting according to the wisdom given of God. But if he chooses to act the part of a sinner and tries to make a success of hoarding the temporary things of this life, God will not prevent him from trying it. If he does, however, it will prove to be empty or *vanity*.

ECCLESIASTES 3

Verse 1. The key to this and several verses following is in the meaning of *season* and *time*. The idea is that one time or event should not be confused with another. The list of things to be enumerated starts with an arrangement of nature, and that is followed by a number of events and actions that are more or less the doings of man. Since in the first item nature is seen to be systematic and orderly, does not do one thing when it should be doing another, so man should take a lesson and observe the advantage in doing appropriate things at the appropriate time.

Verse 2. In this verse nature has fixed the order of events and man cannot change it. For instance, no man can die before he is born or begotten, and it is impossible to pluck up a plant before it has been started and grown.

Verse 3. The actions of man are introduced into the list referred to above. It should be noted that the writer does not profess to state just how the proper *time* is to be determined, that would have to be done in each case on its own merits. The idea is to do things at the appropriate time,

and not try to do one thing when it is not the right occasion for it.

Verse 4. Keeping in mind the general explanation offered above, it should be clear why it would be inappropriate either to *weep* or *laugh* when the two actions were reversed. To do the latter when the former is proper would indicate coldness and frivolity. To reverse it would be the act of a pessimist or calamity howler. *Mourn* and *dance* are used in the same sense as *weep* and *laugh* and take the same comments.

Verse 5. It is true that one must gather stones before he can cast them. However, if he delays gathering the stones until the time he should be using them he will make a failure. When the proper *time* comes for two people to embrace it will be right for them to do so. But they should not go to excess with it and should refrain at the proper *time*, which would be before they had gone to extremes.

Verse 6. One meaning for the original of *lose* is to *destroy* or *dispose of*. Thus the clause means there would be *times* when it would be necessary to seek for some articles of usefulness. But a man might learn that some things he had acquired were impractical, and it would then be the *time* to *lose* or cast off those things. The second clause of the verse is a repetition in thought of the first.

Verse 7. Every woman will appreciate the first clause. A garment might be in such a condition that it would need only to be sewed up. On the other hand, it could get into a state that could not be repaired without first rending it so as to remove the parts that were beyond repair. The second clause is subject to so many possible instances that I scarcely know to what I should refer. There are times when "silence is golden," but at others it would be negligence to keep still.

Verse 8. If a situation develops where a person is sincerely trying to live right, that will be a *time* when others should show their love. But if instead some man rejects all efforts to lead him aright and he persists in a wicked course of action, then it will be proper for the righteous to show their hatred for such a life. The *time of war* is when a nation is attacked and it would need to engage in a war of defense. By the same token, when the defensive warfare has been fought and won, then it is the *time* to seek for peace.

Verse 9. This is the same as ch. 1: 3 which was commented upon.

Verse 10. *To be exercised* refers to the purpose of God in requiring man to develop the elements of the earth. (See the comments at ch. 1: 13.)

Verse 11. *He* refers to God and *their heart* means the heart of man. God has caused man to be interested in the world of creation to the extent that he will labor and toil to find out all about it. However, the creation is so much greater than the knowledge of man that he never can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end. That is, he can never fully find out, yet he has the desire and as a consequence he labors at it until he finally is worn out in the attempt.

Verse 12. This verse takes the same explanation as ch. 2: 24.

Verse 13. The main point in this verse is the thought of the source of our blessings. When we are enjoying our food and other blessings of life we should remember they are *gifts from God*. (James 1: 17.)

Verse 14. The things God does, unlike those done by man, are perfect and cannot be improved upon by human beings. Man therefore should fear the Lord and strive to make the best use of the blessings given to him.

Verse 15. This verse is another form of the statement in ch. 1: 9, 10. Extensive comments were made at that place and the reader is requested to consult them in connection with the present verse.

Verse 16. *Saw under the sun* means Solomon took a look at the conditions in the world. He observed that the courts and other places that should be run according to righteousness, were corrupted with the elements of iniquity.

Verse 17. The wise man would have been in despair over the corrupt condition were it not for his faith in God. He believed that divine judgment would be rendered.

Verse 18. When the time finally comes that God takes a hand in the judgment of men, then the wicked ones will be made to realize they had stooped as low as beasts.

Verse 19. This is one of the favorite passages of the materialists. That term is explained in the comments on ch. 1: 1, and I urge the reader to consult that place now. It is true that the fleshly part of man will have the same

ending as the beasts. But before this chapter is finished we will see that Solomon was not a materialist.

Verse 20. The *one place* to which all living beings will go is the grave or the dust. The bodies of both man and beast are made of the ground and will return to it when death comes. But Solomon was writing only of the body in this verse and was not considering the soul. "Dust thou art to dust returnest, was not spoken of the soul," as a poet has truly said

Verse 21. This verse shows plainly that Solomon was writing about the body only of man in the preceding verses. Nothing was said about the spirit or inner life as that was not yet under consideration. That subject is now introduced and will receive careful attention. The two words that are outstanding are *knowledge* and *spirit*, and I shall examine the second one first. It is from RUWACH (otherwise spelled RUACH) and Strong's definition is, "Wind; by resemblance breath, i. e., a sensible (or even violent) exhalation; figuratively life, anger, unsubstantiality; by extension a region of the sky; by resemblance spirit, but only of a rational being (including its expression and functions)." In the King James Translation it has been rendered breath 28 times, spirit 232, wind 90. Its specific meaning is that part of a creature that enables its body to live and think. Of course a beast cannot think as man does yet it lives and knows some things. In that sense it also has a spirit without which it would be dead. The first word is from YADA and Strong's definition is the following: "A primitive root; to know (properly to ascertain by seeing); used in a great variety of senses, figuratively, literally, euphemically [a milder expression substituted for a harsh one but with the same meaning] and inferentially (including observation, care, recognition; and causatively instruction, designation, punishment, etc.)" I have copied the definition entire because of the importance of the word. In view of the requirements of the word with its variety of meanings, also the definition of the word for *spirit*, it is clear why Solomon sets forth that no man can know the spirits of man and beast. However, that need not keep us from accepting the inspired statement of Solomon that at death the spirit of the beast goes down to earth with its body, but the spirit of man goes upward as his body goes

back to the earth. That conclusively settles the question of Solomon's belief in the superiority of man over all other beings.

Verse 22. Having given us his actual belief concerning man's preeminence over other living creatures, Solomon again comes back to the use that should be made of things while in this world. *Rejoice* does not mean that man should live for this world only, but that he should experience the rejoicing that comes from realizing all good bodily blessings are from the Lord (James 1: 17). And even the righteous use of these things must be enjoyed in this life if at all, because man shall not see what shall be after him.

ECCLESIASTES 4

Verse 1. *Returned* means he came back to what has been the main subject of the book. That is the toil and struggle for satisfaction on the part of most human beings in the temporary things of this world. The thought has been frequently expressed that all such activities are empty and will prove disappointing in the end. This verse points out that even in this world a person may be disappointed because of the struggle to excel in the obtaining and use of earthly favors. If the stronger take advantage of their fellows there is not much that can be done about it.

Verse 2. Since all permanent rest and enjoyment will come only after this life, the dead were *praised* or congratulated. They have passed from the turmoil of earthly things and, if they have lived as they should, they will be in a state "where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest."

Verse 3. In the preceding verse the dead man is said to be more fortunate than the living, because of the unrest connected with the struggle for the things of the world. In this verse the man who is yet unborn is said to be better than both the others.

Verse 4. The man who engages in *travail* (tiresome labor) and righteous work will be envied by his neighbor. That is because he realizes the desirability of the things acquired by the honest labor, yet he is too indolent to secure them for himself. Such a man will pretend to think little of the accomplishments of the other one and will say they are "sour grapes." And this whole situation is one that will

finally prove to be temporary and hence *vanity* or emptiness.

Verse 5. *The fool* as he is considered in this connection is the man who craves temporal indulgences, yet he is too inactive to produce them. Hence he will live up what he has on hands with no replenishments, which is equivalent to consuming his own flesh like a man existing on his blood supply without additional food.

Verse 6. This verse is similar in thought to Paul's statement in 1 Tim. 6: 6. A discontented person will be in such misery that he will not appreciate the blessings that may be all around him.

Verse 7. One word in the lexicon definition for the original for *returned* is "again." Hence this verse simply means that the writer took another viewing of the things *under the sun*, which means those belonging to the earth and thus were temporal.

Verse 8. This verse pictures a person going through life single and alone. A part of his situation may be his own choice and part caused by other conditions. He is not responsible for not having a brother, and also it may or may not be his fault that he has no child, but it certainly is his choice if he is single. Such a man has ignored the instructions in Gen. 2: 24, Matt. 19: 5, Mark 10: 7, and Eph. 5: 31. Such a man might well ask, *for whom do I labor?* He has no wife to share his income and no child to be benefited by his hard labor. No wonder Solomon regarded such a life as *vanity* (emptiness) and *sore travail* or tiresome hard toil.

Verse 9. This verse acknowledges the statement of God recorded in Gen. 2: 18. Experience and observation also will teach us the truth of the passage.

Verse 10. The principle of cooperation is taught in this verse, applying to others besides husbands and wives. Both parties will not likely fall or become ill or otherwise needy at the same time, which will give opportunity for one to help another.

Verse 11. This verse continues the thoughts of the preceding verses, even giving a specific illustration of the subject. The facts are so universally known that further comment is unnecessary.

Verse 12. This is another specification of the principle being considered. If two people are joined by some common relationship, then a third party

cannot attack one without meeting the other. All of this agrees with other places in the Bible where provision was made for the stronger or more fortunate to come to the rescue of the other. On this subject I request the reader to consult Gen. 32: 6-8, Neh. 4: 19, 20.

Verse 13. The gist of this verse is that wisdom is better than riches or worldly power and glory.

Verse 14. The case of Joseph (Gen. 41) is one in point related to the thoughts in the preceding verse. He was poor and unjustly imprisoned, yet his wisdom procured for him his freedom and promotion to honor.

Verse 15. In his observation of people and conditions Solomon considered more than one generation. The purpose was to see if it just happened to be an unusual experience of a certain man, or was the common lot of mankind.

Verse 16. No, when he fixed his eyes on any specified person and saw his state, then considered others following him and also those preceding him, he found they all had the same story. It was summed up in the phrase *vanity and vexation of spirit*.

ECCLESIASTES 5

Verse 1. *Keep thy foot* is the same as saying "watch your step," or, be careful what you do and say. This is especially important when entering the house of God. A man who is hearing may be said not to be contributing anything. However, he could be showing more real devotion to God than is being offered by a fool in some useless or even harmful performance in the name of religion. What is more regrettable is that the fool does not realize the evil of his doing, and hence it will increase the iniquity.

Verse 2. *Rash* means to be unduly hasty with the mouth. In other words, do not speak until you understand what should be said. (See James 1: 19.) *Few* is not restricted to the numerical meaning literally. The idea is that man's declarations or assertions should be comparatively brief and modest. The basis for such advice is the vast difference between God and man. One is in Heaven and the other on earth. One is the Creator and the other is the creature.

Verse 3. There is not much relationship between *dream* and *multitude of words*; the idea is that effects have

their causes. A burden of business will so weigh on a man's mind that he will see it in his dream. Likewise, an undue number of words will result from the activities of a fool's mind.

Verse 4. Vows were not commanded by the Mosaic law, but they were approved when voluntarily made. The general definition in the lexicon for the original is, "a promise." It generally was a promise to make some kind of a gift in the way of sacrifice or the gift of money. However, it might consist in a promise to perform some special service. *Fools* is from a word that means "stupid or silly," and we inquire why the word is used in the present connection. If a person makes some specific promise to God it is for the purpose of obtaining some favor from Him. Only a stupid person would think he could induce God to give him a favor by making a promise that he never intended to keep.

Verse 5. Since vows were not commanded, it would be better not to make one than to break one. That would constitute truce breaking which is condemned by human and divine law. If a man voluntarily makes a vow he is as much obligated to fulfill it as if it had been commanded by the Lord.

Verse 6. The writer is still thinking about vows and the importance of keeping them when voluntarily made. To break one would be to *cause the flesh* (body) *to sin*. *Angel* is from MALAK and part of Strong's definition is, "prophet, priest or teacher." When a person made a vow it would generally be carried out under the services of some man of God. (Such as that of Hannah in 1 Sam. 1:11-28.) If Hannah had come before Eli and tried to evade the vow on the ground that she erred in making the vow, she would have violated this verse.

Verse 7. If dreams and words are the wrong kind, such as are described in the preceding verse, then the more they are multiplied the worse it will be. Therefore a man should fear or respect God and he will regulate his speech accordingly.

Verse 8. Oppression and violence such as are here described need not cause one to wonder. This refers especially to the men in official position who selfishly impose injustice upon the poor for personal gain. But they will finally get their just deserts at the hand of Him who is *higher than the highest*. He *regardeth* all that is going on and can bring all to strict

account because he is *higher than they* (the unjust officials).

Verse 9. No man has such a right to the things of the earth by reason of his official position that he may take advantage of another. The last clause of the verse is given to show that no one is independent of the necessities of the earth's products.

Verse 10. There is no sin in the mere possession of wealth, but there is in the wrong use of it. It was not money that Paul condemned but the love of it (1 Tim. 6:10). So it is that he that *loveth* silver will be disappointed in the end because it is *vanity* or something that is empty of any lasting value.

Verse 11. This verse evidently considers a case where a man employs a number of helpers to increase his production. It is expected that he will support the ones who work for him. That is the reason for the reference to *they that eat them*. The closing words are descriptive of a miser who takes pleasure in looking at his coins.

Verse 12. If a man is contented with "the simple life" and craves only the necessities, he will work for them and be grateful for having what his body needs. Having nothing to worry over he will lie down at night and enjoy a normal rest. The rich man is so fearful of losing his wealth that it prevents him from sleep.

Verse 13. The key to the point in this verse is in the last three words. The mere fact of possessing wealth is not wrong. The danger is in placing one's affections on it, and in that case men are keeping the wealth to *their hurt*.

Verse 14. *Perish by evil travail* means that earthly gain is uncertain and it is likely to "slip through the fingers" and be gone. When that occurs the man will have nothing to leave his children for all his hard work.

Verse 15. This verse teaches the same truth that Paul wrote in 1 Tim. 6:7. Solomon was not criticizing the fate decreed by the Almighty for humanity. His idea was to show why it is foolish for a man to wear himself out gathering the wealth of the world, when he will not be able to take any of it with him.

Verse 16. *Sore* means to be irritated, and Solomon regarded it an irritating matter to work all through life and then not be able to take anything along. *Wind* refers to this life and the

writer means that all of a man's toil for earthly things will have nothing left after this life is over.

Verse 17. *Eateth in darkness* means a man does not know when his days on earth will end. In view of that it is very foolish for him to devote his time and strength to the perishing things of this world.

Verse 18. Again we are shown that Solomon did not condemn a man for enjoying the good things of this life. What he lamented was to see those who were so greedy for riches to hoard that they could not appreciate the blessings which God had given them.

Verse 19. There are some men who use good judgment in the things of this life. Such persons will accumulate the riches of this world for the right purpose. And that kind of character will take the proper delight in consuming the food and other necessities of life, at the same time be producing a surplus that can be used for the benefit of others. The gift of God means the man who will pursue the course just described is exercising one of the greatest gifts that God ever extended to man, that of good judgment and an unselfish use of it.

Verse 20. The man described in the preceding verse will not *remember* or think sadly about the shortness of man's days. He has followed the kind of life that pleases God, and the consciousness of that fact will give him joy.

ECCLESIASTES 6

Verse 1. *Evil* is not always used as something morally wrong, but it also includes the idea of being unfortunate or undesirable. Solomon had in mind a condition that was not rare or just occasional, but it was *common* or of general occurrence.

Verse 2. *God hath given* ascribes these blessings to God, and they would be for the benefit of man if he were permitted to consume them upon himself. *God giveth him not power* does not blame Him for the misfortunes of the human race. It only means that the Lord does not perform any special miracle to overcome the misfortune that hinders man from the enjoyment of the blessings. *This is vanity* is another angle of the emptiness of the things of this world. One word in the lexicon definition of *disease* is "anxiety," and it well agrees with the idea Solomon had in mind.

Verse 3. The original for *burial* has

been rendered by grave 4 times in the King James Version, sepulchre 5, burying place 1. In Bible times people were much concerned about having proper provisions for the respectful interment of the body after death. (Gen. 24.) Our verse has in mind a man who had a large family and was prosperous in the world, yet made the wrong use of his opportunities. As a result of his unwise course of life he had not even made provision for a desirable place of burial when death came to him. Solomon regarded such a fate as worse than to have been prematurely born and died immediately after birth.

Verse 4. *Vanity and darkness* are connected in the description of this man because they have one quality in common which is emptiness or uselessness.

Verse 5. The premature infant never saw the sun, but he also never saw the empty turmoil that was experienced by the man described above. For that reason he will have more rest than the other person, because the spirit of the infant will go to the place "where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest."

Verse 6. *All go to one place* refers to the death of the body. That will come to all classes of men, the rich as well as the poor. The point is that even if a man could live two thousand years, he will finally come to his death the same as others, and leave all his earthly goods behind. For that reason it is foolish for a man to spend his days toiling aimlessly for the goods that he cannot take with him.

Verse 7. The need and desire for things to satisfy the fleshly body will be present as long as man lives. When it has been satisfied at any specific time the satisfaction is soon gone and the call of the body soon is felt again. The thought is that man should be grateful if he is supplied continuously with these necessities, and not labor with tiresome exertions to accumulate that which he could not consume even after he has produced it. Or, if he really could consume all that he is producing, it would not stop the natural craving, for that is *not filled*.

Verse 8. The gist of this verse is that all classes, the poor and the rich, the foolish and the wise, all are headed for the same destination, the death of the body.

Verse 9. "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush" is a familiar

saying that carries the same thought as this verse. The *sight of the eyes* means the things already in sight. *Wandering* desire means the things longed for but uncertain of obtaining. This refers to the wandering mind after uncertain favors, for such activities will wear a person out because of the vexation of spirit.

Verse 10. It would be vain for man to search for something new (see the comments at ch. 1: 9), because everything that is named is possible only by reason of the law of God expressed in Gen. 1: 28. If man should think to bring forth a new article, that would show him trying to be a creator. But such an attempt would be foolish for no man can compete with the Almighty.

Verse 11. The finite knowledge of man makes it in vain for him to explore the entire realm of nature. Hence the more attempts he makes to do so only increases his *vanity* or failure.

Verse 12. No man can know by his own searching what is in the future. He should therefore make the best use possible of the good things of life, and be preparing to meet Him who does know all and who is able to pass final judgment on the actions of all human beings.

ECCLESIASTES 7

Verse 1. The connection between the two clauses of this verse is not apparent, but it is there. A good name is a part of one's character and cannot be stolen or destroyed by accident. Ointment is a material substance and any man with money may obtain it. If a man maintains a good name until death it can never be lost. At the time of one's birth the uncertainties of this life are all yet in the future and the risks are still to be met.

Verse 2. The Lord does not require us to go to extreme on any subject. Feasting is not necessarily wrong, but it is a mistake to pass the time in the pleasures of this life and never think of death. *House of mourning* is a reference to the earthly end of human existence at which time one's friends will mourn over his passing. If the living will take the suggestion of Solomon he will think seriously on these matters.

Verse 3. This verse is about the same in meaning as the preceding one. A sad countenance does not directly cause a heart to be better, but it indicates a better attitude towards the serious affairs of life than does a laughing state of mind.

Verse 4. This verse is practically the same as verse 2.

Verse 5. A foolish song may be more agreeable to the ears, but a wise rebuke will be more beneficial in its effects upon the conduct of the hearer.

Verse 6. There is not much lasting fuel in a bunch of briars, but it will make a great deal of noise for a short time as it burns. Likewise a fool's laughter sounds great but it is soon exhausted and exposed so that its *vanity* may be realized.

Verse 7. It has been said that mankind cannot stand prosperity. *Oppression* is from a word that means extortion or unjust gain. A wise man will become *mad* or foolish if he acquires a large gain, especially if he obtains it unjustly or has not earned it by proper labor. On the same principle a *gift* (bribe) will corrupt a heart that was hitherto inclined to be honest and just to its fellow man.

Verse 8. *Better* is used in the sense of being more desirable. After a thing has been accomplished one can say, "now that the task is done it is a relief." A proud man will be hasty and try to force things to come his way, while a patient man will try to work out some satisfactory solution to a problem.

Verse 9. *Be not hasty* is used in the sense of James 1: 19 that says to be "slow to wrath." The criticism is not on the mere fact of becoming angry, but in the disposition to become angry easily. By the same token, if a man is not easily angered he will likely be one who has control of his temper. Such a man will know better than to cherish his wrath or hold it for a long time. A man who would let his anger rest in his bosom is here called a fool.

Verse 10. A complainer will say that his lot is worse than that of others; he also will think that things are getting worse as far as they affect him. The thought of Solomon is that "thy fate is the common fate of all."

Verse 11. The marginal rendering is that wisdom is a good inheritance and the connection will bear out the thought. Material wealth can disappear and leave its owner with nothing to show for it. Wisdom will prove to be of actual profit in many ways to them that see the sun, or to them who are on this earth.

Verse 12. The original for *defence* is defined "shade" in the lexicon which means a shelter. *Wisdom and money*

are both helpful if used properly, but of the two, wisdom is to be preferred; it can procure for one what money cannot.

Verse 13. For an explanation of this verse see the comments at ch. 1: 15. The main thought is that man has no control over the general conditions in the works of creation. The thing that he can and should do is to accept the situation as God designed it, and adjust himself to the conditions as far as possible.

Verse 14. If we are prosperous we should make the best use of it and find righteous joy therein. But there will come times when prosperity will give place to adversity. When that happens, one should know there is a cause for it and hence would do well to take the subject under consideration. The conclusion will be that God knows best and has arranged the "law of averages" so that one extreme will counteract the other. All of this was done in harmony with the great truth that man will not get to keep his possession after the race of life is run.

Verse 15. The reasoning in this verse is similar to that of Job in his controversy with the three "friends." Since the misfortunes of this world do not always come to the wicked, or to them only, the fact of experiencing them does not prove anything as to a man's character. *Days of my vanity* is Solomon's expression for referring to the things pertaining to this life.

Verse 16. Considering the following verse in connection with this, I believe all that is meant is to avoid being an extremist. Even in matters that are right in themselves, one should not go to unwise conclusions or become an extremist in his activities. *Destroy thyself* means to stun or bewilder oneself, which would be done by an unreasonable exertion in any field of endeavor.

Verse 17. We know we should not be wicked at all, therefore the conclusion must be that Solomon was thinking of the wickedness of being an extremist. *Die before thy time* means the extremist will bring upon himself a premature failure in life.

Verse 18. The antecedent of *this* is the advice just offered. *Take hold* means to accept and profit by the advice and thereby show that one fears God.

Verse 19. It is well for us frequently to remember that wisdom was Solo-

mon's "specialty," and that many of his comparisons and contrasts were between it and other desirable things. In this verse the contrast is made to *mighty men* which Strong defines, "a prince or warrior." Even ten soldiers who did not use wisdom would not be as strong a defence as one wise man who might not possess much material might.

Verse 20. The key to this verse is in the last 3 words. The thought is similar to that in 1 John 1: 8 and kindred passages. The best of men are still human and make mistakes. This is the reason why we should not go to extremes in our professions.

Verse 21. "Do not believe everything you hear" is not exactly the thought of this verse, but it is suggestive of the same. If a man "takes everything to heart" too seriously that he hears, he will be continually worked up and imagine seeing indications that even his own servant is against him.

Verse 22. Every man knows that he would not want even his own statements to be taken too seriously or interpreted too literally. Were that done he might stand charged with having said the wrong things about others.

Verse 23. In this verse we have two views of wisdom; that of the worldly wise and that which comes from the higher source. *I will be wise* refers to a man who thinks his worldly wisdom can figure out all things. But when he attempts it he finds that *it was far from him*. (See Rom. 1: 22.)

Verse 24. The things that are *far off* and *exceeding deep* are those beyond the reach of worldly wisdom.

Verse 25. Solomon had inspired wisdom and it was with that he proposed to make the investigations mentioned here.

Verse 26. Having made the investigations referred to in the preceding verse, Solomon experienced some important discoveries. The life of the great man was considerably affected by his contact with women. He learned that a deceitful woman was one of the bitterest foes of man.

Verse 27. Solomon speaks of himself in the third person when he mentions *the preacher* (see comments at ch. 1: 1). The verse is on the same thought as that in v. 25. He used his divine wisdom to find out what was true of people and things. Some things could be accounted for and some could not.

Verse 28. Solomon had a thousand women in his collection who were considered his wives or concubines, hence he used that numeral in his comparison. The women were his undoing (Neh. 13: 26), so he now concludes that he could not account for their actions or influence over him.

Verse 29. The imperfections in mankind are not due to any fault of the Creator, for he made man upright. *Inventions* means schemes or plots and the word refers to the evil contrivances of the human being.

ECCLESIASTES 8

Verse 1. The question form of this verse is a way of expressing a condition or proviso. The verse means that if a man will use wisdom his face will *shine*; that is, it will be radiant with wisdom. However, it will not assume the air of boldness that one might have who is full of self-esteem.

Verse 2. Solomon as king had required his subjects to swear loyalty to God. He now exhorts them to discharge that obligation.

Verse 3. The king would counsel his people to serve God, therefore they should not depart from under his jurisdiction, nor stand for things that are evil. *He* (the king) *doeth whatsoever pleaseth him* (the Lord).

Verse 4. This verse considers the kind of king that rules and speaks in respect for God. Such a king should be honored by his people and not be called in question by asking *what doest thou?* (See Rom. 13: 3, 4.)

Verse 5. The commandments expected to be kept are those given by such a king as described in the preceding paragraph. Keeping such commandments will assure the people against *evil things*, because they are intended for the good of man. (Again see Rom. 13: 4.) The last clause of the verse means a wise man is one who *discerneth* (knows or recognizes) the right time and verdict of the king.

Verse 6. It is natural for a man to be anxious for relief from distress. But he should try to be patient and wait for the time when the king can relieve him.

Verse 7. The knowledge of uninspired man is limited, therefore he should wait for the action of the king who is being guided by the Lord.

Verse 8. *Spirit* is from *ruwach* and Strong defines it, "wind; by resemblance breath, i. e., a sensible (or

even violent) exhalation; figuratively life, anger, unsubstantiality; by extension a region of the sky; by resemblance spirit, but only a rational being (including its expression and functions)." This word, then, like *pneuma* in the New Testament, may mean the natural wind, or the spirit of man, depending on the connection in which it is used. *Retain* is from *kala*, which Strong defines, "a primitive root; to restrict, by act (hold back or in) or word (prohibit)." The meaning of the first half of the verse is that no man has any more control over his spirit than he does over the wind in the realm of nature. Man's helplessness in this matter is compared to the obligation of a soldier in war who is not permitted to have a discharge or release. The grand thought of the verse is that when the time comes to die, no man can prevent his spirit from taking its flight from the body. This solemn truth should be considered especially by those who are *given to wickedness*.

Verse 9. To have the preeminence over others is generally regarded as a favor. But the writer says there are times when such an advantage will be to a man's hurt.

Verse 10. Some men who had the advantage referred to in the preceding verse had misused it in connection with the public place of worship. That proved to be to their *own hurt* in that they were forgotten soon after their death and burial. All of this is another instance of the *vanity* or emptiness of this life.

Verse 11. This verse is a sad comment on the attitude of man toward sin. Of course, undue haste in punishing crime is not to be sanctioned, neither is it well to delay the punishment too long. History records thousands of instances where justice has been defeated by prolonging the trial of the accused. When the guilt of a man has been proved beyond doubt, he should be punished without delay.

Verse 12. The apparent success of a sinner should not encourage others to do wrong. The wicked man will finally receive the reward due to him for his evil deeds, and the one who feared God will likewise receive the favor of the Lord.

Verse 13. The seeming length of the wicked man's life will be seen to be as brief as a shadow when the wrath of God is finally brought to bear upon him.

Verse 14. For explanation of this verse see ch. 7: 15 and the comments thereon.

Verse 15. God is no respecter of persons in his providence any more than in his offering of spiritual favors. Therefore, if a man desires to obtain the most possible enjoyment out of the temporal blessings of this world, he should take advantage of them while he may, making the proper use of them in the sight of God.

Verse 16. Solomon again refers to his desire to find out all about the things going on under the sun.

Verse 17. The above desire, however, was not accomplished. All of the wisdom and power of man is unable fully to fathom the depths of God's greatness. Since man is the creature and God is the creator, the right thing to do is to rely on the wisdom of God as he sees fit to reveal the great truths unto his created beings.

ECCLESIASTES 9

Verse 1. Man's utter dependence upon God is the subject of this verse. Even the objects and depths of love and hatred are beyond the grasp of man. He must depend upon the wisdom of God for all that he can ever obtain in any field of endeavor.

Verse 2. Again I will remind the reader that Solomon writes many things from the standpoint of a man of the world, not that he personally held to the view expressed. As far as the advantages of this earth are concerned, they are as apt to come to one kind of person as another. The same may be said of the misfortunes of earthly beings.

Verse 3. The record of an evil man simply shows a life wasted in unrighteous conduct with death as the final outcome.

Verse 4. *Better* is used in the sense of being more desirable. Since man cannot take anything with him, the lowest of creatures that are living are having a better time than the noblest of them after they die. If there were to be no life after this one (which the materialists teach but which Solomon really opposes), then it would be well to adopt the doctrine expressed by Paul in 1 Cor. 15: 32.

Verse 5. For several verses Solomon has been writing about the emptiness of the things of this life. He has stressed the truth that no man can take anything with him when he dies.

It is in that sense he here states the dead have no reward. It is even affirmed that the dead *know not anything*. This might seem to teach the doctrine of "soulsleeping" if we overlooked the connection which will be seen in the next verse.

Verse 6. *That is done under the sun* is the key to this and the preceding verse. After a man dies his connection with this world is broken and he "knows not anything" that is going on back on the earth. The rich man in Luke 16 only remembered his wicked brothers as they were while he lived with them.

Verse 7. If a man will make the proper use of the good things of this life his enjoyment of them will please God. But that must be done *now* according to this verse; nothing can be done about it hereafter.

Verse 8. White clothing for the body and olive oil dressing for the head indicated a condition of prosperity and satisfaction. Solomon suggested that a person might properly enjoy these while in this life, since they were things given by the Lord.

Verse 9. *To live joyfully* does not mean to live extravagantly or frivolously. It means to rejoice in the favors that he (God) *hath given* to be used *under the sun* or while in this life. *Life of thy vanity* is another way of referring to life on earth, because it is *vanity* or emptiness as far as the next life is concerned.

Verse 10. This is another verse that shows Solomon was not a believer in the doctrine of materialism. He words it in such a way as to indicate to the reader he was not considering the state of the inner man after leaving this world. He was writing about that part that will be *in the grave* which is the body. Therefore, all activities that are to be performed by the body should be done while in this life.

Verse 11. *I returned* means he considered again the things going on under the sun. The gist of the verse is that what appears to entitle a man to success does not always work that way. One man may seem to be a good runner and yet he will be defeated by another. Or one soldier might be classed among the valiant ones then be overcome by an apparent weakling. *Time and chance* means that in this world all people are subject to unforeseen conditions both favorable and unfavorable. The verse is not meant to justify inaction or lack of interest.

The point is that since we cannot always know when or how the opportune time will come, we should always be on the alert so that when it does come we will be prepared to make use of it. (See ch. 11: 6.)

Verse 12. This is practically the same in thought as the preceding verse as to the uncertainty of the future. That is the only point of comparison to the net and snare, not that God deliberately hides the future from man in order to ensnare him to his hurt. But since human beings have intelligence that is above that of fish and fowl, there will be no excuse if they run blindly into the traps.

Verse 13. In his observation of things going on under the sun, Solomon saw some cases where men used the good judgment that God had given them.

Verse 14. The particular instance that was noticed concerned a little city that had a small population. Against this little place there came a king with a strong army. He laid siege to it and all appearances were that the city would have to fall before the superior force.

Verse 15. A man could be poor and not be wise and vice versa, but either quality without the other might fail to meet the emergency. That is, if he were rich but did not use wisdom he would not be able to meet the situation. But wisdom would suggest means of resisting the enemy that wealth alone could not buy. What was so regrettable in this case, was the ingratitude of the citizens of the city. After the poor man had saved them from their enemy they forgot all about his service to the city.

Verse 16. The work of this poor man demonstrated that wisdom is worth more than riches. But that worth was not appreciated for the people *despised* or belittled the wisdom of the poor man and thus rendered themselves unworthy of the favor.

Verse 17. A wise man will quietly offer his counsel without great ado. Such a person is more likely to be heard than is one who seeks to impose his foolish sayings by great noise or commotion.

Verse 18. The first clause is the same in thought as v. 15. *Sinner* is from a word whose main idea is of one who errs in judgment. This fits well with the first part of the verse as a negative. Wisdom or good judgment

will plan a way to meet the enemy, while one false move may destroy the whole arrangement.

ECCLESIASTES 10

Verse 1. A large bulk of otherwise sweet ointment can be spoiled by the odor of a few dead insects. The fact is used to illustrate the effect that even a little foolishness can have on the influence of a man who has been generally regarded wise.

Verse 2. *Right* and *left* are used figuratively. The meaning is that a wise man will use his mind (heart) in a right manner.

Verse 3. *Wisdom* means a man's heart or mind. The thought is that when a fool is going round among the people his mind is filled with confusion. He thinks he is wise and all others are fools. "Everyone is out of step but me" is a familiar saying and illustrates the man described in this passage.

Verse 4. We have doubtless all heard the advice, "never try to get smart with an officer," and that is the thought in this verse. *Leave not thy place* means not to "talk back" or "resist an officer." By taking this attitude of respect toward a man in authority a charge may be lightened or even dismissed.

Verse 5. *Evil* is used in the sense of something that is undesirable and unfortunate, not necessarily wrong morally. Solomon is going to mention such a circumstance that is allowed to occur *from the ruler*, which means it takes place right under his eyes.

Verse 6. The *evil* referred to is the inconsistency of granting dignity to something that is worthless, then underestimating something that is really valuable.

Verse 7. The preceding verse makes a general statement of conditions, this verse specifies an instance of them. *Servants* and *princes* are named as representing two opposite ranks of society. However, their state is just reversed in the movements attributed to them. There is no particular criticism of anybody, but the story is told to show the uncertainty of earthly advantages.

Verse 8. This verse teaches the lesson that "evil often works its own rebuke." The connection indicates a pit that was dug as a trap for another person. *Hedge* is from *CADER*, which Strong defines as "an inclosure." A

man intended to destroy a fence or wall another man had built to protect his property. In doing this evil deed the guilty person ran up against a serpent that had been lurking in the wall.

Verse 9. *Removeth stones* refers to the malicious interference with some work of a peaceful citizen. In attempting this evil deed the doer of it will be injured by one of those very stones. *Cleaving wood* is not a wrong act in itself. The connection with several other verses shows the writer was considering one who was intending some wrong use of the wood he was cleaving.

Verse 10. This verse is a statement of common sense as against "main strength and awkwardness." Either means might accomplish the desired result but one could do so with greater ease. If a tool is dull it could be made to cut the material but it would require more bodily force. If a little judgment were used the workman would first sharpen the tool, then it could cut the material easier and better.

Verse 11. The quickness of a serpent enables it to bite before it is charmed. Therefore the *babbler*, which means a master in the use of words, would not be of any advantage in the presence of the vicious creature.

Verse 12. It is pleasant and beneficial to hear the words of a wise man. Those of a fool not only are not acceptable, but such a character will eventually expose his own unworthiness and bring himself to a downfall.

Verse 13. The speech of a fool is worthless to begin with, and it will get worse the longer he talks.

Verse 14. The idea here is the fool has an abundance of words only, but they do not make any sense. No one can tell what he means by what he has said nor what he is likely to say further.

Verse 15. Some people are so foolish and rude in both their words and actions that it makes a person tired to observe them. In as simple a matter as making an errand into a city a fool does not know how to proceed.

Verse 16. There were instances when the king of Israel was a mere child (2 Ki. 11: 21; 14: 21; 21: 1; 22: 1). I do not mean these young kings were evil nor that the land suffered in all of their reigns. I cite them only to show that Solomon was not just guessing or imagining things when he mentioned the subject of

young kings. But it would be reasonable to think the country would be at the mercy of the "politicians" when the king was irresponsible, and they would take advantage of the situation to "have a time." That is why it is said that they *eat in the morning*. (See Isa. 5: 11.)

Verse 17. This verse describes a situation that is opposite of that in the preceding one. The original for *nobles* is defined "white or pure." Such kings would reign for the good of the nation, and the leading men would eat for the right purpose.

Verse 18. All buildings are subject to decay as every man knows who has owned a home. If a man is slothful he will not keep his place up but will even let the "roof cave in and the walls tumble down."

Verse 19. All that anyone can get out of a feast is a good time with nothing but the bodily enjoyment, and nothing left to show for the expense. But an exchange of actual legal tender will meet future requirements.

Verse 20. We are sure the latter part of this verse is figurative. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Luke 6: 45). If a man indulges in evil thoughts he is likely to forget some time and "think out loud," especially if he thinks he is alone. But it often happens that someone is in hearing though not in sight, and that will result in his thoughts being broadcast. So a man should not indulge in thoughts that he would not want others to know about.

ECCLESIASTES 11

Verse 1. *Bread* is from *LECHEM* and Strong's definition is, "food (for man or beast), especially bread, or grain (for making it)." It will help to understand this verse if we consider it in the light of some others, especially v. 4. The point is that one should not be discouraged from doing something desired and needed because of unfavorable appearances. If the land is covered with water at the time when the bread "or grain for making it" should be sowed, do not wait for the water to disappear. Cast the grain out into the water; it will sink into the ground and finally grow.

Verse 2. *Seven* and *eight* are used to signify the idea of being liberal in the bestowal of favors. The future is unknown to man and the opportunities for doing good may be cut off unexpectedly.

Verse 3. This verse is to be considered especially in connection with the last clause of the preceding verse. The laws of nature are fixed so that man should make use of present opportunities for doing good, before some action of nature (which is unseen and unavoidable) cuts off the opportunity. Applying the falling of the tree to the future state of man is not only fanciful, but takes the verse out of connection.

Verse 4. See comments on verse 1 for explanation of this. It is foolish never to do anything until all things are favorable. One might always find some excuse for postponing an action if he is looking and desiring one.

Verse 5. We accept as facts many things we do not understand. The development of an unborn child is as far beyond our knowledge as are the works of God in other departments of the universe. The lesson still is that man should make use of present and known advantages, not waiting to figure out the ways of God as to the future.

Verse 6. This verse is a continuation of the thoughts in the preceding paragraphs. If we see an opportunity for doing a thing we know is right in principle, we should not wait for "a better time" to do it, for we are not sure of any better time.

Verse 7. On the favorable side of the subject, there is the enjoyment of sunlight and it is right to take that view of the condition.

Verse 8. This verse presents the other side of the picture and reminds us that many dark days will come. This is true in the material world, and it is referred to as an illustration of the sunshine and shadow that will come into the life of any man who *lives many years*. Solomon does not mention this in the spirit of a pessimist, but to put man on his guard and prepare his mind to make the best use of the enjoyments that God offers him through the realm of nature.

Verse 9. All parts of the Bible harmonize with each other. Throughout this book Solomon has held out the idea that the good things of this world are temporary. Yet he has encouraged man to enjoy them while he can for soon they will be cut off. A proviso that has always been understood whether expressed or not, is that man should make the proper use of the pleasures of this life. Hence in the present verse the young man is ad-

vised to get his enjoyment out of the good things around him while he is young and can appreciate them. However, all the while he is having this enjoyment he should bear in mind that he must answer to God for the kind of use he makes of them.

Verse 10. Improper sentiments of the heart and evil deeds of the flesh should be put away, and instead the young man should make a wise use of his time and surroundings. His youth and ability for making the most of life will soon pass away and in that sense it is *vanity* or *tempory*.

ECCLSIASTES 12

Verse 1. *Remember* is from ZAKAR and Strong defines it, "A primitive root; properly to mark (so as to recognize), i. e., to remember." In the King James version of the Bible it is rendered "be mindful" 6 times. The word means to give to the Creator that consideration due him. It is in the *days of youth* the man was exhorted to remember his Creator. From this basis we must conclude the following verses are a description of the declining years of life. The passages are highly figurative, so we are required to find some condition in the time of the infirmities of age in our application of the figures. In a general sense, the joys that were possible in youth will be out of reach when a man gets to the period of his decline. When that time comes he will feel so weakened and life will hold so little of interest for him that he will not be disposed to give very serious consideration to spiritual subjects if he had not done so while in his youth. On the other hand, if he had thought of God while "in the days of his youth," and had tempered his joys of life by a proper regard for the Creator, then he will have something to cheer him when the days of decline come. His years of devotion to God will still be in his memory when these last ones come upon him so that it may be said that "his last days sloped gently toward the grave."

Verse 2. The sun, moon and stars in the universe are the means of light, and the eyes are the means of light in the human body. When the eyes become dim with age it is compared to the darkening of the bodies of light in the heavens. In favorable weather the refreshing rain is followed by clear skies and cheerful sunshine. At other times it rains but does not clear

off afterwards. So in youth the sorrows disappear after a brief season of weeping, but in old age the grief keeps coming up to becloud the life with sadness and anxiety.

Verse 3. The *keepers* are the hands and the *house* is the body (2 Cor. 5: 1). The hands will tremble and become unreliable as age comes on. *Strong men* or the limbs will become tottering and weak so that their owner cannot walk erectly. The *grinders* or teeth will cease to do full service of mastication because they have become few in number. What few are left to *look out of the windows* or show through the partially opened mouth will be discolored by the decay accompanying old age.

Verse 4. The chewing done by an old person is so imperfect due to the fewness of the teeth that it can scarcely be observed. It is compared to the closing of a door opening onto a street so that the sound inside could not be heard by those on the street. *Rise up at the voice of the bird* could be worded *with the voice*. The word for *bird* is defined to mean a little bird with a weak chirp, and it is used to compare the weak and broken voice of the old man. This thought agrees with what follows, *the daughters of music shall be brought low*, referring to the broken voice in trying to sing.

Verse 5. *Afraid of that which is high* means he will be easily frightened and fears in general will seem to threaten the pathway. When an almond tree is in full bloom its top resembles the pale color of a head that is gray with age. *Grasshopper shall be a burden* refers to the little things that can worry an old person. *Desire shall fail* means that about all interest in life will be gone until the aged one finally "passes away." *Long* is from OLAM and Strong defines it, "Concealed, i. e., the vanishing point; generally time out of mind (past or future), i. e. (practically) eternity; frequently adverbially (especially with prepositional prefix) always." The word really refers to the length of time the man will stay in this home, rather than to the home itself. In other words, when a man dies he will never come back to the earth again. There is evidence of hired mourners who were sometimes used in old times. However, since this passage is describing the circumstances of man in general, the reference to mourners is general also and means the state of

mind in all who are concerned in the death of the aged person who had lived among them for so long.

Verse 6. *Or ever* means before ever the things about to be mentioned have happened. The entire verse is a poetic description of the time of death, when the soul and body separate because of the dissolving of the ties that have bound them together. The *silver cord* refers to the "brittle thread of life" that is snapped in death. A pitcher is used to procure water, a very important necessity of life. The breaking of this vessel would be like putting an end to life. The same could be said of the wheel that was a part of the machinery used to draw the water at the cistern or water tank.

Verse 7. See the comments at Gen. 2: 7 and 3: 19 in Vol. 1 of this COMMENTARY for the meaning of *dust*. This verse is a direct proof that Solomon did not believe in materialism, which is the doctrine that man is wholly mortal. He believed that some part of man is spiritual and lives on after the death of the body.

Verse 8. *Vanity of vanities* is a repetition for the sake of emphasis, describing the utter emptiness of things pertaining to affairs of this life. The *preacher* is a term applied to Solomon and it is explained at the first verse of this book.

Verse 9. *The peacher was wise* is not to be regarded as an immodest boast. Solomon knew he had received his wisdom from God (1 Ki. 3: 12), and it was from that source he had the qualification. With such divine guidance he sought to place the proverbs before his people that they might be instructed in the ways of wisdom.

Verse 10. Solomon wished his teaching not only to be correct, but also to be such as would be delightful to his readers. It is not necessary that all teaching be unpleasant in order to be true.

Verse 11. A *goad* is something to urge one to action, and the words of the wise man were intended to influence the hearers unto proper conduct. *Nails* is used figuratively in the sense of "driving a nail home," or making a word so plain and forceful that it reaches its object in the mind of the hearer. *Given from one shepherd* means that the sayings of one wise man (Solomon) if driven properly will affect the minds and lives of all the assembly.

Verse 12. For the significance of *my son* see the comments at Prov. 1: 8. *By these* denotes the words of wisdom referred to in vs. 10, 11 and offered for the guidance of the youth. Solomon bids the *son* to be admonished by these words and not have his mind all worn out with many books of man's production.

Verse 13. *Hear the conclusion* means to give attention and the writer will sum up all of the truths and principles he has been giving in the book. The sum of it is that if one fears or respects God so that he will keep his commandments, he will be discharging the duty of man to the Lord.

Verse 14. *Judgment* is from an original that has a wide range of meanings. Its central thought is a sentence or verdict, and its application is not restricted to any particular time or place. The force of this verse is that God will decide as to the right or wrong of all things pertaining to the conduct of man. The verse is offered as a concluding exhortation and in conjunction with the preceding admonition to do the commandments of God.

SONG OF SOLOMON 1

General remarks: This book describes conversations and visits between Solomon and his favorite wife, the daughter of Pharaoh. (1 Ki. 3: 1.) These associations could have been supposed or actual or both as far as their nature is concerned. However, the probability is that Solomon really put the words into the mouth of his beloved wife to represent what he believed should at least have been her own sentiments. He might have been somewhat disappointed in her final reaction to his ardent advances, and if that is the case, it will throw some light on his statement about women in Eccl. 7: 28. At any rate, whether Solomon actually had such experiences, or if the "wish was father to the thought," he enlarges on the subject and puts it down in his writing to give the reader a view of the love that should exist between a man and his wife. If the reader will keep this in view he will not be confused as to the propriety of the intimate expressions made between the two parties. As a guide in properly classifying each part of the various conversations between this husband and wife, I suggest the reader mark his Bible as follows: Ch. 1: 1-7 is the wife, and ch. 1: 8-11

is the husband. From now on the initial letter of husband and wife only will be used: ch. 1: 12-3: 11, w; ch. 4: 1-15, h; ch. 4: 16, w; ch. 5: 1, h; ch. 5: 2-8, w; ch. 5: 9, daughters of Jerusalem; ch. 5: 10-16, w; ch. 6: 1, daughters of Jerusalem; ch. 6: 2, 3, w; ch. 6: 4-7: 9, h; ch. 7: 10-8: 14, w.

Verse 1. *Song of songs*. In many works of reference this book is called Canticles, abbreviated Cant. It is from the English word canticles which means "A song or hymn." The wife regards a song about Solomon as a song *OF* songs, or a song of special importance.

Verse 2. *Kiss* is from NASHAQ and Strong's lexicon says it is a primitive root and that it is identical with another Hebrew word through the idea of "fastening up," and which has been defined, "to catch fire." The word of our verse is defined, "To kiss, literally or figuratively (touch); also (as a mode of attachment), to equip with weapons." In view of the wide meaning of the word, we can appreciate the ardor in the request of the beloved wife. She was not asking merely for an indication of affection of some kind, which could be truly considered as a form of kiss, but she longed for the literal kiss in all of its possible intensity, and that would need to be performed with *his mouth* as it is worded here. Such an act would be an expression of deepest love and would be more exhilarating than wine, because its thrilling effect would not merely move the physical and nervous sensations, but would set into vibration every chord of the affections.

Verse 3. See the comments at Prov. 17: 17 on the subject of perfumes, and its relation to the passionate affections between the sexes.

Verse 4. *Draw me* is an affectionate appeal that any wife would have the moral right to make of her husband. *We will run after thee* has been rendered "let us haste" in another translation. The wife is eager for the company of her mate. *The king hath brought me*, etc. Let it be remembered that many a man in olden times had a plurality of wives. It would be understood that he would not live with any one of them continuously, and this would be especially true of kings. Hence when a husband wished to visit one of his wives he would need to make a call on her at her apartment, or have her go with him to his. (See Gen. 30: 14-16.) This will account for