
1KINGS 11: 1 Now king Solomon loved many foreign women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites;

Solomon's attachment to strange women, and consequent idolatry, 1Kgs 11:1, 1Kgs 11:2. Number of his wives and concubines, 1Kgs 11:3. In his old age they turn away his heart from God, 1Kgs 11:4. He builds temples to idols, burns incense and sacrifices to them, 1Kgs 11:5-8. The Lord is angry with him, and threatens to deprive him of the kingdom, but will leave one tribe for David's sake, 1Kgs 11:9-13. The Lord stirs up Hadad, the Edomite, to be his enemy; the history of this man, 1Kgs 11:14-22. He stirs another adversary against him, Rezon the son of Eliadah. He and Hadad plague Israel, 1Kgs 11:23-25. Jeroboam also becomes his enemy, and the reason why, 1Kgs 11:26-28. Ahijah the prophet meets Jeroboam, and promises, in the name of the Lord, that God will rend Israel from the family of Solomon, and give him ten tribes, 1Kgs 11:29-39. Solomon, hearing of this, seeks to put Jeroboam to death, who escapes to Egypt, where he continues till the death of Solomon, 1Kgs 11:40. Solomon dies, after having reigned over Israel forty years; and his son Rehoboam reigns in his stead, 1Kgs 11:41-43.

Verse 1

Many strange women - That is, idolaters; together with the daughter of Pharaoh: she was also one of those strange women and an idolater. But many think she became a proselyte to the Jewish religion; of this there is no evidence.

1KINGS 11: 2 of the nations concerning which the LORD said to the children of Israel, "You shall not go among them, neither shall they come among you; for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods." Solomon joined to these in love.

1KINGS 11: 3 He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart.

Verse 3

He had seven hundred wives, princesses - How he could get so many of the blood royal from the different surrounding nations, is astonishing; but probably the daughters of noblemen, generals, etc., may be included.

And three hundred concubines - These were wives of the second rank, who were taken according to the usages of those times; but their offspring could not inherit. Sarah was to Abraham what these seven hundred princesses were to Solomon; and the three hundred concubines stood in the same relation to the Israelitish king as Hagar and Keturah did to the patriarch.

Here then are one thousand wives to form this great bad man's harem! Was it possible that such a person could have any piety to God, who was absorbed by such a number of women? We scarcely allow a man to have the fear of God who has a second wife or mistress; in what state then must the man be who has one thousand of them? We may endeavor to excuse all this by saying, "It was a custom in the East to have a multitude of women, and that there were many of those whom Solomon probably never saw," etc., etc. But was there any of them whom he might not have seen?

Was it for reasons of state, or merely court splendor, that he had so many? How then is it said that he loved many strange women? - that he clave to them in love? And did he not give them the utmost proofs of his attachment when he not only tolerated their iniquitous worship in the land, but built temples to their idols, and more, burnt incense to them himself? As we should not condemn what God justifies, so we should not justify what God condemns. He went after Ashtaroth, the impure Venus of the Sidonians; after Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites; after Chemosh, the abomination of the Moabites; and after the murderous Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. He seems to have gone as far in iniquity as it was possible.

1KINGS 11: 4 When Solomon was old, his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.

1KINGS 11: 5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.

1KINGS 11: 6 Solomon did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, and didn't go fully after the LORD, as did David his father.

1KINGS 11: 7 Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the mountain that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the children of Ammon.

Verse 7

The hill that is before Jerusalem - This was the Mount of Olives.

1KINGS 11: 8 So he did for all his foreign wives, who burnt incense and sacrificed to their gods.

1KINGS 11: 9 The LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice,

Verse 9

The Lord was angry with Solomon - Had not this man's delinquency been strongly marked by the Divine disapprobation, it would have had a fatal effect on the morals of mankind. Vice is vice, no matter who commits it. And God is as much displeased with sin in Solomon as he can be with it in the most profligate, uneducated wretch. And although God sees the same sin in precisely the same degree of moral turpitude as to the act itself, yet there may be circumstances which greatly aggravate the offense, and subject the offender to greater punishment. Solomon was wise; he knew better; his understanding showed him the vanity as well as the wickedness of idolatry. God had appeared unto him twice, and thus given him the most direct proof of his being and of his providence. The promises of God had been fulfilled to him in the most remarkable manner, and in such a way as to prove that they came by a Divine counsel, and not by any kind of casualty. All these were aggravations of Solomon's crimes, as to their demerit; for the same crime has, in every case, the same degree of moral turpitude in the sight of God; but circumstances may so aggravate, as to require the offender to be more grievously punished; so the punishment may be legally increased where the crime is the same. Solomon deserved more punishment for his worship of Ashtaroth than

any of the Sidonians did, though they performed precisely the same acts. The Sidonians had never known the true God; Solomon had been fully acquainted with him.

1KINGS 11: 10 and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he didn't keep that which the LORD commanded.

1KINGS 11: 11 Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, "Because this is done by you, and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant.

Verse 11

Forasmuch as this is done of thee - Was not this another warning from the Lord? And might not Solomon have yet recovered himself? Was there not mercy in this message which he might have sought and found?

1KINGS 11: 12 Notwithstanding I will not do it in your days, for David your father's sake; but I will tear it out of the hand of your son.

1KINGS 11: 13 However I will not tear away all the kingdom; but I will give one tribe to your son, for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen."

Verse 13

Will give one tribe - for David my servant's sake - The line of the Messiah must be preserved. The prevailing lion must come out of the tribe of Judah: not only the tribe must be preserved, but the regal line and the regal right. All this must be done for the true David's sake: and this was undoubtedly what God had in view by thus miraculously preserving the tribe of Judah and the royal line, in the midst of so general a defection.

And for Jerusalem's sake - As David was a type of the Messiah, so was Jerusalem a type of the true Church: therefore the Old Jerusalem must be preserved in the hands of the tribe of Judah, till the true David should establish the New Jerusalem in the same land, and in the same city. And what a series of providences did it require to do all these things!

1KINGS 11: 14 The LORD raised up an adversary to Solomon, Hadad the Edomite: he was of the king's seed in Edom.

Verse 14

The Lord stirred up an adversary - A satan, יָשׁוּעַ. When he sent to Hiram to assist him in building the temple of the Lord, he could say, There was no satan, see 1Kgs 5:4; and all his kingdom was in peace and security, - every man dwelt under his vine, and under his fig tree, 1Kgs 4:25 : but now that he had turned away from God, three satans rise up against him at once, Hadad, Rezon, and Jeroboam.

1KINGS 11: 15 For when David was in Edom, and Joab the captain of the army was gone up to bury the slain, and had struck every male in Edom

Verse 15

Was gone up to bury the slain - The slain Edomites; for Joab had in the course of six months exterminated all the males, except Hadad and his servants, who escaped to Egypt. Instead of bury the slain, the Targum has to take the spoils of the slain.

1KINGS 11: 16 (for Joab and all Israel remained there six months, until he had cut off every male in Edom);

1KINGS 11: 17 Hadad fled, he and certain Edomites of his father's servants with him, to go into Egypt, Hadad being yet a little child.

Verse 17

Hadad being yet a little child - נער קטן naar katan, a little boy; one who was apprehensive of his danger, and could, with his father's servants, make his escape: not an infant.

1KINGS 11: 18 They arose out of Midian, and came to Paran; and they took men with them out of Paran, and they came to Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, who gave him a house, and appointed him food, and gave him land.

Verse 18

These arose out of Midian - They at first retired to Midian, which lay to the southwest of the Dead Sea. Not supposing themselves in safety there, they went afterwards to Paran in the south of Idumea, and getting a number of persons to join them in Paran, they went straight to Egypt, where we find Hadad became a favourite with Pharaoh, who gave him his sister-in-law to wife; and incorporated him and his family with his own.

1KINGS 11: 19 Hadad found great favour in the sight of Pharaoh, so that he gave him as wife the sister of his own wife, the sister of Tahpenes the queen.

1KINGS 11: 20 The sister of Tahpenes bore him Genubath his son, whom Tahpenes weaned in Pharaoh's house; and Genubath was in Pharaoh's house among the sons of Pharaoh.

1KINGS 11: 21 When Hadad heard in Egypt that David slept with his fathers, and that Joab the captain of the army was dead, Hadad said to Pharaoh, "Let me depart, that I may go to my own country."

1KINGS 11: 22 Then Pharaoh said to him, "But what have you lacked with me, that behold, you seek to go to your own country?" He answered, "Nothing, however only let me depart."

Verse 22

Let me go in any wise - It does not appear that he avowed his real intention to Pharaoh; for at this time there must have been peace between Israel and Egypt, Solomon having married the daughter of Pharaoh.

1KINGS 11: 23 God raised up an adversary to him, Rezon the son of Eliadah, who had fled from his lord Hadadezer king of Zobah.

Verse 23

Rezon the son of Eliadah - Thus God fulfilled his threatening by the prophet Nathan: If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men; 2Sam 7:14.

1KINGS 11: 24 He gathered men to him, and became captain over a troop, when David killed them of Zobah: and they went to Damascus, and lived therein, and reigned in Damascus.

Verse 24

And reigned in Damascus - Rezon was one of the captains of Hadadezer, whom David defeated. It seems that at this time Rezon escaped with his men; and; having lived, as is supposed, some time by plunder, he seized on Damascus, and reigned there till David took Damascus, when he subdued Syria, and drove out Rezon. But after Solomon's defection from God, Rezon, finding that God had departed from Israel, recovered Damascus; and joining with Hadad, harassed Solomon during the remaining part of his reign. But some think that Hadad and Rezon were the same person.

1KINGS 11: 25 He was an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon, besides the mischief of Hadad: and he abhorred Israel, and reigned over Syria.

1KINGS 11: 26 Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite of Zeredah, a servant of Solomon, whose mother's name was Zeruah, a widow, he also lifted up his hand against the king.

Verse 26

Jeroboam the son of Nebat - From the context we learn that Jeroboam while a young man was employed by Solomon to superintend the improvements and buildings at Millo, and had so distinguished himself there by his industry and good conduct as to attract general notice, and to induce Solomon to set him over all the laborers employed in that work, belonging to the tribes of

Ephraim and Manasseh, called here the house of Joseph. At first it appears that Solomon employed none of the Israelites in any drudgery; but it is likely that, as he grew profane, he grew tyrannical and oppressive: and at the works of Millo he changed his conduct; and there, in all probability, were the seeds of disaffection sown. And Jeroboam, being a clever and enterprising man, knew well how to avail himself of the general discontent.

1KINGS 11: 27 This was the reason why he lifted up his hand against the king: Solomon built Millo, and repaired the breach of the city of David his father.

1KINGS 11: 28 The man Jeroboam was a mighty man of valor; and Solomon saw the young man that he was industrious, and he put him in charge of all the labour of the house of Joseph.

1KINGS 11: 29 At that time, when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him on the way; now Ahijah had clad himself with a new garment; and they two were alone in the field.

Verse 29

When Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem - On what errand he was going out of Jerusalem, we know not.

Ahijah the Shilonite - He was one of those who wrote the history of the reign of Solomon, as we find from 2Chr 9:29, and it is supposed that it was by him God spake twice to Solomon; and particularly delivered the message which we find in this chapter, 1Kgs 11:11-13.

1KINGS 11: 30 Ahijah laid hold of the new garment that was on him, and tore it in twelve pieces.

1KINGS 11: 31 He said to Jeroboam, "Take ten pieces; for thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Behold, I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to you

Verse 31

Take thee ten pieces - The garment was the symbol of the kingdom of Israel; the twelve pieces the symbol of the twelve tribes; the ten pieces given to Jeroboam, of the ten tribes which should be given to him, and afterwards form the kingdom of Israel, ruling in Samaria, to distinguish it from the kingdom of Judah, ruling in Jerusalem.

1KINGS 11: 32 (but he shall have one tribe, for my servant David's sake and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel);

1KINGS 11: 33 because that they have forsaken me, and have worshipped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of Moab, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon. They have not walked in my ways, to do that which is right in my eyes, and to keep my statutes and my ordinances, as David his father did.

1KINGS 11: 34 ““However I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand; but I will make him prince all the days of his life, for David my servant’s sake whom I chose, who kept my commandments and my statutes;

1KINGS 11: 35 but I will take the kingdom out of his son’s hand, and will give it to you, even ten tribes.

1KINGS 11: 36 To his son will I give one tribe, that David my servant may have a lamp always before me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen me to put my name there.

Verse 36

That David my servant may have a light alway - That his posterity may never fail, and the regal line never become extinct. This, as we have already seen, was in reference to the Messiah. He was not only David's light, but he was a light to enlighten the Gentiles.

1KINGS 11: 37 I will take you, and you shall reign according to all that your soul desires, and shall be king over Israel.

Verse 37

According to all that thy soul desireth - It appears from this that Jeroboam had affected the kingdom, and was seeking for an opportunity to seize on the government. God now tells him, by his prophet, what he shall have, and what he shall not have, in order to prevent him from attempting to seize on the whole kingdom, to the prejudice of the spiritual seed of David.

1KINGS 11: 38 It shall be, if you will listen to all that I command you, and will walk in my ways, and do that which is right in my eyes, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did; that I will be with you, and will build you a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel to you.

Verse 38

And build thee a sure house - He would have continued his posterity on the throne of Israel, had he not by his wickedness forfeited the promises of God, and thrown himself out of the protection of the Most High.

1KINGS 11: 39 I will for this afflict the seed of David, but not forever.”

Verse 39

But not for ever - They shall be in affliction and distress till the Messiah come, who shall sit on the throne of David to order it and establish it in judgment and justice for ever. Jarchi says, on this verse, "When the Messiah comes, the kingdom shall be restored to the house of David.

1KINGS 11: 40 Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam; but Jeroboam arose, and fled into Egypt, to Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon.

Verse 40

Sought - to kill Jeroboam - He thought by this means to prevent the punishment due to his crimes.

Unto Shishak king of Egypt - This is the first time we meet with the proper name of an Egyptian king, Pharaoh being the common name for all the sovereigns of that country. Some suppose that this Shishak was the Sesostris so renowned for his wars and his conquests. But it is likely that this king lived long before Solomon's time.

1KINGS 11: 41 Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, and all that he did, and his wisdom, aren't they written in the book of the acts of Solomon?

Verse 41

The book of the acts of Solomon? - These acts were written by Nathan the prophet, Ahijah the Shilonite, and Iddo the seer; as we learn from 2Chr 9:29. Probably from these were the Books of Kings and Chronicles composed; but the original documents are long since lost.

1KINGS 11: 42 The time that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was forty years.

Verse 42

Solomon reigned - forty years - Josephus says fourscore years, which is sufficiently absurd. Calmet supposes him to have been eighteen years old when he came to the throne, and that he died A.M. 3029, aged fifty-eight years; and, when we consider the excess in which he lived, and the criminal passions which he must have indulged among his thousand wives, and their idolatrous and impure worship, this life was as long as could be reasonably expected.

1KINGS 11: 43 Solomon slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David his father: and Rehoboam his son reigned in his place.

Verse 43

Solomon slept with his fathers - He died in almost the flower of his age, and, it appears unregretted. His government was no blessing to Israel; and laid, by its exactions and oppressions, the foundation of that schism which was so fatal to the unhappy people of Israel and Judah, and was the most powerful procuring cause of the miseries which have fallen upon the Jewish people from that time until now.

I. It may now be necessary to give a more distinct outline of the character of this king.

1. In his infancy and youth he had the high honor of being peculiarly loved by the Lord; and he had a name given him by the express authority of God himself, which to himself and others must ever call to remembrance this peculiar favor of the Most High.

There is little doubt that he was a most amiable youth, and his whole conduct appeared to justify the high expectations that were formed of him.

2. He ascended the Israelitish throne at a time the most favorable for the cultivation of those arts so necessary to the comfort and improvement of life. Among all the surrounding nations Israel had not one open enemy; there was neither adversary, nor evil occurrent, 1Kgs 5:4. He had rest on every side, and from the universal and profound peace which he enjoyed, the very important name Jedidiah, "beloved of the Lord" which was given him by Divine authority was changed to that of Solomon, the Peaceable, 2Sam 12:24, 2Sam 12:25, which at once indicated the state of the country, and the character of his own mild, pacific mind.

3. To the dying charge of his pious father relative to the building a temple for the Lord, he paid the most punctual attention. He was fond of architecture, as we may learn from the account that is given of his numerous buildings and improvements; and yet it does not appear that he at all excelled in architectural knowledge. Hiram, the amiable king of Tyre, and his excellent workmen, were the grand directors and executors of the whole. By his public buildings he doubtless rendered Jerusalem highly respectable; but his passion for such works was not on the whole an advantage to his subjects, as it obliged him to have recourse to a burdensome system of taxation, which at first oppressed and exasperated his people, and ultimately led to the fatal separation of Israel and Judah.

4. That he improved the trade and commerce of his country is sufficiently evident: by his public buildings vast multitudes were employed; and knowledge in the most beneficial arts must have been greatly increased, and the spirit of industry highly cultivated.

Commerce does not appear to have been much regarded, if even known, in Israel, previously to the days of Solomon. The most celebrated maritime power then in the world was that of the Tyrians. With great address and prudence he availed himself of their experience and commercial knowledge, sent his ships in company with theirs to make long and dangerous but lucrative voyages, and, by getting their sailors aboard of his own vessels, gained possession of their nautical skill, and also a knowledge of those safe ports in which they harboured, and of the rich countries with which they traded. His friendly alliance with the king of Tyre was a source of advantage to Israel, and might have been much more so had it been prudently managed. But after the time of Solomon we find it scarcely mentioned, and therefore it does not appear that the Jews continued to follow a track which had been so successfully opened to them; their endless contentions, and the ruinous wars of the two kingdoms, paralyzed all their commercial exertions: till at length all the maritime skill which they had acquired from the expert and industrious Tyrians, dwindled down to the puny art of managing a few boats on the internal lakes of their own country. Had it not been for the destructive feuds that reigned between the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah, that country might have become one of the best and richest maritime powers of either Asia or Europe. Their situation was grand and

commanding, but their execrable jealousies deprived them of its advantages, exposed them to the aggressions of their enemies, and finally brought them to ruin.

5. I have intimated that Solomon was truly pious in his youth; of this there can be no doubt; it was on this account that the Lord loved him, and his zeal in the cause of true religion, and high respect for the honor of God, are strong indications of such a frame of mind. Had we no other proof of this than his prayer for wisdom, and his prayer at the dedication of the temple, it would put the matter for ever beyond dispute, independently of the direct testimonies we have from God himself on the subject. He loved the worship and ordinances of God, and was a pattern to his subjects of the strictest attention to religious duties. He even exceeded the requisitions of the law in the multitude of his sacrifices, and was a careful observer of those annual festivals so necessary to preserve the memory of the principal facts of the Israelitish history, and those miraculous interventions of God in the behalf of that people.

6. There can be no doubt that Solomon possessed the knowledge of governing well; of the importance of this knowledge he was duly aware, and this was the wisdom that he so particularly sought from God. "I am," said he, "but a little child; I know not how to go out or come in; and thy servant is in the midst of a great people that cannot be counted for multitude. Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, and that I may discern between good and bad; for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? And the speech pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this thing;" 1Kgs 3:8-10. This wisdom he did receive from God; and he is here a pattern to all kings, who, as they are the vicegerents of the Lord, should earnestly seek that wisdom which is from above, that they may be able to know how to govern the people intrusted to their care; because, in every civil government, there are a multitude of things on which a king may be called to decide, concerning which neither the laws, nor the commonly received political maxims by which, in particular cases, the conduct of a governor is to be regulated, can give any specific direction.

7. But the wisdom of Solomon was not confined to the art of government, he appears to have possessed a universal knowledge. The sages of the East were particularly distinguished by their accurate knowledge of human nature, from which they derived innumerable maxims for the regulation of man in every part of his moral conduct, and in all the relations in which he could possibly be placed. Hence their vast profusion of maxims, proverbs, instructive fables, apologues, enigmas, etc.; great collections of which still remain locked up in the languages of Asia, particularly the Sanscrit, Arabic, and Persian; besides those which, by the industry of learned men, have been translated and published in the languages of Europe. Much of this kind appears in the books of Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus in the Apocrypha, and in the very excellent collections of D'Herbelot, Visdelou, and Galand, in the Bibliotheque Orientale. That Solomon possessed this wisdom in a very high degree, the book of Proverbs bears ample testimony, leaving Ecclesiastes for the present out of the consideration.

8. As a poet, Solomon stands deservedly high, though of his one thousand and five poems not one, except the book of Song of Solomon, remains. This ode alone, taken in a literary point of view, is sufficient to raise any man to a high degree of poetic fame. It is a most interesting drama, where what Racine terms the genie createur, the creative genius, every where appears; in which the imagery, which is always borrowed from nature, is impressive and sublime; the characters accurately distinguished and defined, the strongest passion, in its purest and most vigorous workings, elegantly portrayed; and in which allusions the most delicate, to transactions of the tenderest complexion, while sufficiently described to make them intelligible, are nevertheless hidden from the eye of the gross vulgar by a tissue as light as a gossamer covering. Such is the nature of this inimitable ode, which, had it not been perverted by weak but well designing men to purposes to which it can never

legitimately apply, would have ranked with the highest productions of the Epithalamian kind that ever came from the pen of man. But alas! for this exquisite poem, its true sense has been perverted; it has been forced to speak a language that was never intended, a language far from being honorable to the cause which it was brought to support, and subversive of the unity and simplicity of the ode itself. By a forced mode of interpretation it has been hackneyed to death, and allegorized to destruction. It is now little read, owing to the injudicious manner in which it has been interpreted.

It was scarcely to be expected that the son of such a father should not, independently of inspiration, have caught a portion of the pure poetic fire. Though the spirit of poetry, strictly speaking, is not transmissible by ordinary generation, yet most celebrated poets have had poetical parents; but in many cases the talent has degenerated into that of music, and the spirit of poetry in the sire has become a mere musical instrument in the hands of the son. This however was not the case with the son of David, for though vastly inferior to his father in this gift, he had nevertheless the spirit and powers of a first-rate poet.

9. His knowledge in natural history must have been very extensive; it is said, "He spake of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall. He spake also of beasts, of fowls, of reptiles, and of fishes;" 1Kgs 4:33. All this knowledge has perished; his countrymen, the prophets excepted, were without taste, and took no pains to preserve what they did not relish. A man of such mental power and comprehension under the direction of Divine light must have spoken of things as they are. His doctrine therefore of generation and corruption, of nutrition, vegetation, production, aliments, tribes, classes, families, and habits, relative to the different subjects in botany, zoology, ornithology, entomology, and ichthyology, which are all evidently referred to here, must have been at once correct, instructive, and delightful. I have already lamented the labor it has cost our Rays, Tourneforts, Linnes, Buffons, Willoughbys, Swammerdams, and Bloschs, to regain those sciences which possibly were possessed in their highest degree by the Israelitish king, and which, alas! are all lost, except a few traces in the book of Ecclesiastes, if that work can be traced to so remote an age as that of Solomon.

10. As a moral philosopher the author of the book of Ecclesiastes occupies no mean rank. At present we may consider this work as a production of Solomon, though this is disputed, and the question shall be considered in its proper place. This book contains such a fund of wisdom, applied to the regulation of life, and all referred to the proper end, that it most deservedly occupies a high place in Biblical ethics, and deserves the closest attention of every reader.

11. The proofs of Solomon's vast wisdom, as brought into practical effect, lie in a very small compass, because his history in the Bible is short, his own writings in general lost, and the annals of his reign, as compiled by Nathan the prophet, Ahijah the Shilonite, and Iddo the seer, long since perished. The decision between the two harlots is almost the only instance.

Of his interesting interview with the queen of Sheba, and the discussions into which they entered, we have only the fact stated, without the least detail of particulars. Those who have read the *Concessus of Harari*, or the *Heetopadesa*, of Veeshnoo Sarma, will regret that the conversations of the wisest of men, with probably the most intelligent of women, should have been lost to the world, which may be reasonably concluded to have been as far superior to the excellent works above referred to, as they are beyond the maxims of Rochefoucault, and the sayings of Madame Maintenon.

12. The wisdom of the East has ever been celebrated; and if we may believe their own best writers, much of what they possess has been derived from Solomon. Encomiums of his wisdom are

everywhere to be met with in the Asiatic writers; and his name is famous in every part of the East. Most of the oriental historians, poets, and philosophers, mention Soliman ben Daoud, "Solomon the son of David." They relate that he ascended the throne of Israel at the death of his father, when he was only twelve years of age, and that God subjected to his government, not only men, but good and evil spirits, the fowls of the air, and the winds of heaven. They agree with the sacred writers in stating that he employed seven years in building the temple at Jerusalem.

Solomon's seal, and Solomon's ring, are highly celebrated by them, and to these they attribute a great variety of magical effects. They state that without his ring he had not the science of government; and having once lost it, he did not remount his throne for forty days, as being destitute of that wisdom without which he could not decide according to truth and equity. But these things are probably spoken allegorically by their oldest writers. Of the throne of this prince they speak in terms of the most profound admiration. I have met with the most minute description of its magnificence, its ivory, gold, and jewels, and an estimate of its cost in lacs of rupees! According to those writers it had 12,000 seats of gold on the right hand for patriarchs and prophets, and as many on the left for the doctors of the law, who assisted him in the distribution of justice.

In various parts of the Koran Solomon is spoken of in terms of the highest respect, and is represented as a true believer; though, through the envy of demons, magic and sorcery were attributed to him. Mohammed speaks of this in the second surat of his Koran. The story, in sum, is this: The devils, by God's permission, having tempted Solomon without success, made use of the following stratagem to blast his reputation: they wrote several books of magic, and hid them under his throne; and, after his death, told the chief men that if they wished to know by what means Solomon had obtained absolute dominion over men, genii, and the winds, they should dig under his throne. This they did, and found the aforesaid books full of impious superstitions. The better sort would not learn these incantations; but the common people did, and published them as the genuine works of Solomon. From this imputation the Koran justifies him, by saying, Solomon was not an unbeliever, surat 2. From the wonder-working signet and ring of the Asiatics came the Clavicle of Solomon, so celebrated among the Jewish rabbins, and the Christian occult philosophers; for such things found in Cornelius Agrippa, and such like writers, are not late inventions, but have descended from a very remote antiquity, as the Koran and the various commentators on it sufficiently prove. See Calmet and Sale.

The oriental traditions concerning this prince have been embodied in the Soliman Nameh of Ferdusi, in Persian, and in the Soliman Nameh of Uscoobi, in Turkish. D'Herbelot mentions one of these histories in Persian verse, containing 1571 couplets.

Indeed, the traditions concerning the wonderful knowledge of Solomon, which abound so much in the East, are at least an indirect proof that many things relative to this prince have been preserved among them which are not mentioned in our sacred books, but which they have blended so miserably with fables that it is impossible now to distinguish the precious from the vile.

Works attributed to Solomon have existed in different ages, from his time till the present. Eusebius states that Hezekiah, finding the Jews putting too much confidence in the books of Solomon, relative to cures and different occult arts, ordered them to be suppressed. Josephus positively says that Solomon did compose books of charms to cure diseases, and conjurations to expel demons, Antiq., lib. viii., cap. 2. He states farther, that a Jew named Eliezar cured several demoniacs in the presence of Vespasian, by reciting the charms which had been invented by Solomon. R. D. Kimchi speaks of a book of Solomon entitled The Cure of Diseases, which Genebrard supposes to be the same work of

which Josephus speaks. And Origen speaks of conjurations which were used by the Jews in his time, and which they professed to derive from the books of Solomon.

There are still extant books of this kind attributed to Solomon, such as *The Enchantments*, *The Clavicle*, *The Ring*, *The Hygromantia*, *The New Moons*, and *The Shadows of Ideas*; but these, as they now stand, are the inventions of quacks and impostors, and entitled to no regard. If there were any books containing the wisdom of Solomon, they are either irrecoverably lost, or exist in mutilated fragments among the Asiatic sages; and are disfigured by being connected with improbable tales, and pretended mantras or charms.

II. Hitherto we have looked only at the bright side of Solomon's character: we must now take a much less satisfactory view of this singular man; one in whom every thing great, glorious, wise, and holy, and every thing little, mean, foolish and impious, predominated by turns. He forsook the God of his mercies in a great variety of ways.

1. Whatever may be thought of the step in a political point of view, he most assuredly went out of the way of God's providence, and acted contrary to his law, in making affinity with Pharaoh's daughter. The sacred writers frequently refer to this; and it is never mentioned with approbation: it is rather associated with circumstances that place it in a reprehensible point of view. She was doubtless an idolater; and the question of her becoming a proselyte is far from being satisfactorily settled. I believe she was the first means of drawing off his heart from the true God.

2. His expensive buildings obliging him to have recourse to a system of oppressive taxation, was another flaw in his character. Though with great zeal and honorable industry, and at great expense, he built a temple for the Lord, which he completed in seven years, yet the expense here was little in comparison of what was incurred by his own house, called the house of the forest of Lebanon, in which he spent incredible sums, and consumed nearly thirteen years; almost twice the time employed in building the temple at Jerusalem. This would have had no evil operation provided he had not been obliged to impose heavy taxes on his subjects, which produced an almost universal disaffection. Add to this, he had a most expensive household; one thousand women, part wives, part mistresses, would require immense riches to support their pomp and gratify their ambition. The people therefore justly complained of an establishment which, notwithstanding the riches brought into the country, must be both odious and oppressive.

3. He began his reign by an inauspicious act, the death of his brother Adonijah. This was a sin against God and nature: and no art of man can ever wash out its guilt. If state policy required it, which is very questionable, what had that to do with the feelings of humanity, and the love of God? On no pretense whatever is Solomon justified in this act.

4. His inordinate love of women. He had no doubt formed matrimonial alliances with all kingdoms and neighboring states, by taking their sisters and daughters to be his wives, to the fearful amount of no less than seven hundred! Politicians may endeavor to justify these acts by asserting, that in the Asiatic countries they were matters of a sound policy, rather than an argument of the prevalence of an irregular and unbridled passion. Let this stand for its value; but what can such apologists say for the additional three hundred concubines, for the taking of whom no such necessity can be pleaded? But even allowing that state policy might require such extensive alliances, what are we to say to the flagrant breaches of a most positive law of God? Most solemnly and most authoritatively had he said that his people should not give their daughters to the heathen, nor take the daughters of the heathen to be their wives; lest they should turn their hearts away from serving the Lord. In the face

of this most positive declaration, Solomon took wives of the most idolatrous of the surrounding nations; who succeeded, according to what was foretold in turning his heart away from God.

5. He became an idolater. He worshipped "Ashtaroth, the Venus of the Sidonians; Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites; Chemosh, the abomination of the Moabites; and Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon." He did more: he built a temple to each of these; "and to all the gods of all his strange wives which burned incense, and sacrificed unto their gods," 1Kgs 11:5-8.

6. By this time we may suppose that the light of God had entirely departed from his mind. He who knew so well the true God, now served him not; or, if he did, it was in conjunction with those idols, thus bringing the Supreme Being on a level with demons, or the figments of impure hearts and disordered fancies. We need not wonder at the tale of the mighty Samson betraying his life's secret in the lap of Delilah; or of the unconquerable Hercules handling the distaff among the maids of Omphale, queen of Lydia; when we see the son of David, the once well-beloved of the Lord, the wisest of human beings, for the love of his millenary of wives and concubines, erecting temples to devils, and burning incense to them that were no gods; not considering that an idol is nothing in the world. To what an indescribable state of blindness and fatuity must this man have been brought, before he could have been capable of such acts as these! O Lucifer, son of the morning, how art thou fallen!

7. I have already hinted that Solomon's oppressive taxation laid the foundation of that discontent which shortly after his death produced the separation of Israel and Judah; also the long and ruinous wars which drenched these states in blood: and this was doubtless the cause that ten-twelfths of the Jewish people became idolaters; which crime was punished, by the just judgments of God, by the Babylonish captivity, which lasted seventy years; and by the carrying away of the ten Israelitish tribes by the Assyrians, who are lost from the map of the universe, and no longer numbered among the children of men!

8. What greatly aggravates the whole of this most dismal tale is, that this strange defection from God, truth, reason, and common sense, was persisted in to his old age; or that in his old age, meaning undoubtedly his latter days, his wives turned away his heart from God. But his idolatry must have been of many years' standing; he meddled with it in his connection with the princes of Egypt; each of his idolatrous wives in succession increased the propensity: to chastise him for this very idolatry the Lord stirred up an adversary unto him, Hadad, the Edomite, and Rezon, the son of Eliadah, who was an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon, 1Kgs 11:14-25, which surely intimates that this idolatry was not the sin merely of his old age; as to chastise him for it Rezon was an adversary to Israel all his days. And as Solomon reigned forty years, we may fairly presume that a principal part of that time was spent in idolatrous practices.

9. This dismal account has a more dismal close still; for, in the same place in which we are informed of his apostasy, we are informed of his death, without the slightest intimation that he ever repented and turned to God. It is true that what is wanting in fact is supplied by conjecture; for it is firmly believed that "he did repent, and wrote the book of Ecclesiastes after his conversion, which is a decided proof of his repentance." I am sorry I cannot strengthen this opinion; of which I find not the shadow of a proof.

1. The book of Ecclesiastes, though it speaks much of the vanity of the creatures, yet speaks little or nothing of the vanity or sin of idolatry.

2. It is not the language of a man who was recovering from a state of the most awful backsliding. Is there any direct confession of sin in it? Is there any thing in it like the penitential confessions of his

father, or like the lamentations of Jeremiah? Is there any where to be heard in it the sighing of a broken heart, or strong crying and tears to deprecate the justice and implore the mercy of a deeply offended God? Does it any where exhibit the language of a penitent, or expressions suitable to the state and circumstances of this supposed penitent king of Israel? Excellent as it is in its kind, is it any thing more than a valuable collection of experimental ethics, relative to the emptiness of the creature, and the folly of earthly pursuits and worldly anxieties?

3. Nor is it even past doubt that Solomon wrote this book: it certainly does in several places bear evidences of times posterior to those of Solomon. Eminent scholars have discerned a deterioration in the style from the pure classical Hebrew, with an admixture of exotic terms that did not exist in the Hebrew language previously to the Babylonish captivity. But supposing that they are mistaken here, I still contend that it is not the language of a penitent soul.

4. It has been supposed, that, as Solomon was a type of Christ, it is not likely that he has finally perished. To this I answer, (1). I know not that Solomon was a type of Christ. The reference to Sol 3:7; Sol 8:11, Sol 8:12, is to me no proof whatever of the point. (2). Were it even otherwise, this would be no proof of his repentance, when the Scriptures are silent on the subject. The brazen serpent was a type of Christ, Joh 3:14, and was held in great veneration for a considerable time among the Jews; but when it became an incitement to idolatry, it was called nehushtan, a brazen trifle, taken down, and destroyed; 2Kgs 18:4. Typical persons and typical things may perish as well as others; the antitype alone will infallibly remain.

5. Finally, there seems every evidence that he died in his sins. His crimes were greatly aggravated: he forsook the Lord, who had appeared to him twice; his wives turned away his heart in his old age: there is not a single testimony in the Old or New Testament that intimates he died in a safe state. That awful denunciation of Divine justice stands point blank in the way of all contrary suppositions: "If thou forsake the Lord, he will cast thee off for ever," 1Chr 28:9. He did forsake the Lord; and he forsook him in his very last days; and there is no evidence that he ever again clave to him. Ergo.

Reader, let him that standeth take heed lest he fall; not only foully but finally. Certainly, unconditional final perseverance will find little support in the case of Solomon. He was once most incontrovertibly in grace. He lost that grace and sinned most grievously against God. He was found in this state in his old age. He died, as far as the Scripture informs us, without repentance. Even the doubtfulness in which the bare letter of the Scripture leaves the eternal state of this man, is a blast of lightning to the syren song of "Once in grace, and still in grace;" "Once a child, and a child for ever."

I shall close these observations with the account given by Abul Farage, an Arabic writer of the thirteenth century, in his work entitled *The History of the Dynasties*, p. 55. "But in this Solomon transgressed, because towards the end of his life he took other women of foreign nations besides the daughter of Pharaoh; nations with whom God had forbidden the children of Israel to form matrimonial alliances; but leaning towards their gods, he worshipped their idols. In the thirty-fourth year of his reign he built a house for idols in the mount which is opposite to Jerusalem; and the length of it was one hundred cubits, its breadth fifty, and its height thirty. He made also for himself golden shields, and a brazen sea, supported on the horns of brazen oxen. God reprov'd him for his infidelity, and gave him for punishment in this world that he took away from his son the greater part of the kingdom. Moreover, the duration of his reign was forty years; and he died without repentance, and was buried in the sepulcher of his father David."

For other particulars relative to the different transactions of this reign, the reader is referred to the notes in the order of their occurrence; and to those treatises which have been written on the probability that Solomon did or did not repent of his idolatry: and also to the notes on Ecclesiastes, where the subject will be again reviewed.