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ECCLESIASTES 1: 1 The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem:

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The book, entitled Koheleth, or Ecclesiastes, has ever been received, both by the Jewish and Christian Church, as written under the inspiration of the Almighty; and was held to be properly a part of the sacred canon. But while this has been almost universally granted, there has been but little unanimity among learned men and critics as to its author. To Solomon it has been most generally attributed, both in ancient and modern times.

Grotius, however, conjectured that it was written a long time after Solomon; and he says, at the close of his notes on it, that it was revised in the days of Zerubbabel by some learned man, who in the twelfth verse of the last chapter addresses his son Abihud: "And farther, by these, my son, be admonished." But such a conjecture appears to have little foundation. This great man was more successful in his criticism on the language of the book; showing that there are many words in it which do not savor of the purity of the Hebrew tongue; and are found in the times of the captivity and afterwards, and such as appear principally in the books of Ezra and Daniel.

Calovius has on the other hand, not with so much success as he imagined, argued against Grotius for the purity of the language.

Mr. G. Zirkel of Wurtzburgh published an examination of this book in 1792, in which he endeavors to prove: -

1. That the style of Ecclesiastes is that of the later Hebrew writers, as appears by the Chaldaisms, Syriacisms, and Hellenisms that occur in it.
2. That it may have been written between the years 380 and 130 before Jesus Christ, if not later.

The Jena reviewers seem to have thought it to be a translation from the Greek, and to have been written by a Jew of Alexandria, while the famous library was founding by Ptolemy Philadelphus king of Egypt, about the year 240 before Christ. And that it is to this circumstance that Ecc 12:12 alludes, "Of making many books there is no end;" which could not have entered into the head of a Palestine Jew; and such a person might speak with propriety of an Israel in Jerusalem, Ecc 1:12, being acquainted with an Israel in Alexandria.

The Jews in general, and St. Jerome, hold the book to be the composition of Solomon, and the fruit of his repentance when restored from his idolatry, into which he had fallen through means of the strange or heathenish women whom he had taken for wives and concubines.

Others, of no mean note, who consider Solomon as the author, believe that he wrote it before his fall; there being no evidence that he wrote it afterwards; nor, indeed, that he ever recovered from his fall. Besides, it was in his old age that his wives turned away his heart from God; and the book bears too many evidences of mental energy to allow the supposition that in his declining age, after so deep a fall from God, he was capable of writing such a treatise. This opinion goes far towards destroying the Divine inspiration of the book; for if he did recover and repent, there is no evidence that God gave him back that Divine inspiration which he before possessed; for we hear of the Lord appearing to him twice before his fall, but of a third appearance there is no intimation. And lastly, Of the restoration of Solomon to the favor of God there is no proof in the sacred history; for in the very place where we are told that "in his old age his wives turned away his heart from the Lord," we are

told of his death, without the slightest intimation of his repentance. See my character of Solomon at the end of 1 Kings 11 (note).

Nothing, however, of this uncertainty can affect either the character, importance, or utility of the book in question. It is a production of singular worth; and the finest monument we have of the wisdom of the ancients, except the book of Job.

But the chief difficulty attending this book is the principle on which it should be interpreted. Some have supposed it to be a dialogue between a true believer and an infidel, which makes it to the unwary reader appear abounding with contradiction, and, in some instances, false doctrine; and that the parts must be attributed to their respective speakers, before interpretation can be successfully attempted. I am not convinced that the book has any such structure; though in some places the opinions and sayings of infidels may be quoted; e.g., Ecc 7:16, and in some of the following chapters.

In the year 1763, M. Desvoeux, a learned foreigner then resident in England, and who was in the British service, wrote and published a Philosophical and Poetical Essay on this book, in which he endeavors to prove, that the design of the author was to demonstrate the immortality of the soul; and that it is on this principle alone that the book can be understood and explained.

As a late commentator on the Bible has adopted this plan, and interwoven the major part of this dissertation with his notes on the book, I shall introduce the whole of M. Desvoeux's analysis of its contents, the propositions, arguments, proofs, illustrations, corollaries, etc., on the ground of which he attempts its illustration: -

The whole of the discourse (he says) may be reduced to the three following propositions, each of which is attended with its apparatus of proofs and especial observations.

The three propositions, with their proofs and illustrations, are contained in the following analysis:

Proposition 1 No labor of man in this world can render him contented, or give him true satisfaction of soul. Ecc 1:2, Ecc 1:3 No labor of man, etc. Ecc 1:4-11 First proof - The course of nature. Ecc 1:12, etc. Second proof - Men's occultations. Ecc 1:15-18 First head - Wisdom or philosophy. Ecc 2:1, Ecc 2:2 Second head - Pleasure. Ecc 2:3-10 Both jointly. Ecc 2:11 General conclusion of the second proof.

A review of the second proof with special conclusions, relating to every particular therein mentioned, viz., Ecc 2:12-17 1. Wisdom. Ecc 2:18-23 2. Riches. Ecc 2:24-26 3. Pleasure. Ecc 3:1, etc. Third proof - Inconstancy of men's wills. Ecc 3:9 Conclusion of the third proof. A review of the second and third proofs, considered jointly, with special observations and corollaries. Ecc 3:10, Ecc 3:11 First observation - God is inculpable. Ecc 3:12, Ecc 3:15 Second observation - God is the author of whatever befalls us in this world. Ecc 3:16, Ecc 3:17 First corollary - God shall redress all grievances. Ecc 3:18-21 Second corollary - God must be exalted, and man humbled. Ecc 3:22 Third corollary - God allows men to enjoy the present life. Ecc 4:1 Fourth proof - Men's neglect of proper opportunities, evidenced in several instances, viz., Ecc 4:1-3 1. Oppression. Ecc 4:4 2. Envy. Ecc 4:5, Ecc 4:6 3. Idleness. Ecc 4:7-12 4. Avarice. Ecc 4:13-Ecc 5:1-9 5. Misapplication of esteem and regard.

N. B. Ecc 5:1-9 is a digression containing several admonitions, in order to prevent any misconstruction of the fore-going remarks. Ecc 5:10-12 6. Expensive living. Proposition 2 - Ecc 5:13 Earthly goods and possessions are so far from making us happy, that they may be even viewed as real obstacles to our ease, quiet, and tranquillity of mind. Ecc 5:14-17 First proof. Instability of riches. Ecc 5:18 Second proof. Insufficiency of riches to make men happy. Ecc 6:3-6 Corollary. The fate of an abortive is, on the whole, preferable to that of him who lives without enjoying life. Ecc 6:7-9 Third proof. Men's insatiableness. Ecc 6:10, Ecc 6:11 General conclusion from the first and second

propositions. Proposition 3 - Ecc 6:12 Men know not what is or is not truly advantageous to them; because they are either ignorant or unmindful of that which must come to pass after their death. Ecc 7:1, etc. First proof. Wrong estimation of things.

A digression, intended, like that Ecc 7:1-9, to prevent any misconstruction of the preceding observations; and containing several advices, together with a strong commendation of him who gives them, in order to enforce the observation of the rules he lays down. Ecc 7:9-12 First advice. Do not blame Providence. Ecc 7:13 Second advice. Do not judge of Providence. Ecc 7:14, Ecc 7:15 Third advice. Submit to Providence. Ecc 7:16-20 Fourth advice. Avoid excesses. Ecc 7:21, Ecc 7:22 Fifth advice. Do not heed idle reports. Ecc 7:23-25 Commendation of the foregoing advices from the author's application of every thing; and especially, Ecc 7:26-29 1. Wickedness and ignorance. Ecc 8:1-8 2. Wisdom.

Second proof. Anticipated judgments. Ecc 8:9-14 1. That sin shall go unpunished, because it is so in this world. Ecc 9:1-6 2. That life is preferable to death. Ecc 9:7-9 First corollary. Earthly enjoyments are not criminal. Ecc 9:10 Second corollary. We must make a proper use of our faculties. Ecc 9:11-15 Third proof. Judgments that are seemingly right, but entirely false. Ecc 9:16, etc. Fourth proof. Little regard paid to wisdom. Ecc 9:16 1. Past services are forgotten.

2. The least fault is noticed. Ecc 10:5-19 3. Favor gets what is due to merit. Ecc 10:20 A caution to prevent the abuse of the preceding remarks. Practical Inferences Ecc 11:1-4 1. From the first Proposition, - We must give to earthly goods that stability of which they are capable. Ecc 11:5, Ecc 11:6 2. From the first and second Propositions, - We must, in all our conduct, conform to the design of Providence, and leave the success to God. Ecc 12:7, Ecc 12:8 3. From the three Propositions, but especially from the third, we must seek for happiness beyond the grave. Ecc 12:9-12 Commendation of the work, from several considerations. Ecc 12:13, Ecc 12:14 Conclusion of the whole. This is the whole of M. Desvoeux's Analysis; and I place it here, that the reader who approves of the plan may keep it in view while he is passing through the book. For my own part, I doubt whether the author made any such technical arrangement.

The three propositions which M. Desvoeux lays down, and which are so essential to the interpretation he gives of the book, would have been expressly propounded by the inspired writer had he intended such; but they appear nowhere in it, and M. D. is obliged to assume or gather them from the general scope of the work. However, on his plan, he has certainly made a number of judicious observations on different passages, though his translations are generally too bold, and seldom well supported by the original text.

In 1768 was published "Choeleth, or the Royal Preacher, a Poetical Paraphrase of the Book of Ecclesiastes. Most humbly inscribed to the King." 4th. There is no name to this work. The late Rev. John Wesley gives the following account of the work and its author in his Journals: - "Monday, Feb. 8, 1768. I met with a surprising poem, entitled, Choeleth, or the Preacher: it is a paraphrase in tolerable verse on the book of Ecclesiastes. I really think the author of it (a Turkey merchant) understands both the difficult expressions, and the connection of the whole, better than any other either ancient or modern writer whom I have seen. He was at Lisbon during the great earthquake, just then sitting in his nightgown and slippers. Before he could dress himself, part of the house he was in fell, and blocked him up. By this means his life was saved; for all who had run out were dashed to pieces by the falling houses."

Mr. W. seems to have known the author well, but did not like to tell his name. About the year 1789 that eminent man recommended the work to me, and told me several particulars relative to it,

which have escaped my memory. I procured the book the first opportunity, and read it with great satisfaction; and from it derived no small portion of information. Having now examined it anew, I can most cordially subscribe to Mr. Wesley's opinion. I really believe that the author understood both the difficult expressions, and the connection of the whole, better than any other writer, whether ancient or modern, at least known to me. Had it comported with my plan, I should have thought a reprint of his work, with the text, which he does not insert, and a few philological notes, would have been quite sufficient to have given my readers a safe and general view of the whole work and its design; though I can by no means adopt the author's hypothesis, that the book was written by Solomon after he was restored from his grievous apostasy. This is an assumption that never was proved and never can be.

From the preface to this work I have selected some general observations, which I consider to be important, and subjoin to this introduction; and what I borrow from the work itself I mark with a C, not knowing the author's name. Of the authenticity of the book of Ecclesiastes I have no doubt; but I must say, the language and style puzzle me not a little. Chaldaisms and Syriasm are certainly frequent in it, and not a few Chaldee words and terminations; and the style is such as may be seen in those writers who lived at or after the captivity. If these can be reconciled with the age of Solomon, I have no objection; but the attempts that have been made to deny this, and overthrow the evidence, are in my view often trifling, and generally ineffectual. That Solomon, son of David, might have been the author of the whole matter of this, and a subsequent writer put it in his own language, is a possible case; and were this to be allowed, it would solve all difficulties. Let us place the supposition thus: Solomon said all these things, and they are highly worthy of his wisdom; and a Divine writer, after his time, who does not mention his name, gives us a faithful version of the whole in his own language.

On other subjects relative to this book, the author of *Choheleth* shall speak for me. "I. Not to perplex our readers with the various expositions of the word *Choheleth*, the title of the book in the original, (for in truth we can find none better or more significant than that commonly received, viz., *Ecclesiastes*, or the *Preacher*), let us now come to the book itself. Nothing can be more interesting than the subject it treats of, to wit, the chief or sovereign good which man, as a rational and accountable being, should here propose to himself. Every human creature, it is certain, naturally aims at happiness; but though all apply themselves with equal ardor to this desirable end, yet such is the violence of passion, and want of reflection in the generality of mankind, that the means they use for obtaining it, instead of conducting them to the safe and direct road, only serve to mislead and bewilder them in dark and intricate labyrinths, where it is impossible to find what they seek for. Now as it was absolutely necessary to convince such men of the vanity of their pursuits, in order to induce them to turn back in the right way, Solomon shows, in the first place, what is not happiness, and then what really is. Like a skillful physician, he searches deeply into the latent cause of the malady, and then prescribes a radical cure. "II. In the former disquisition he enumerates all those particulars which mankind are most apt to fix their hearts upon, and shows, from his own dear-bought experience, and the transient and unsatisfactory nature of the things themselves, that no such thing as solid felicity is to be found in any of them. What he asserts on this head carries with it the greater weight, as no man upon earth was ever better qualified to speak decisively on such a subject, considering the opportunities he had of enjoying to the utmost all that this world affords. After having thus cleared away the obstacles to happiness, he enters on the main point, which is to direct us how and where it may be found. This he affirms, at the conclusion of the book, where he recapitulates the sum and substance of the sermon, as some not improperly have styled it, consists in a religious and virtuous life, with which, as he frequently intimates, a man in the lowest circumstances may be happy, and without which one in the highest must be miserable. As the whole

book tends to this single point, so, in discussing thereof, many excellent observations are interspersed relating to the various duties of life, from the highest to the lowest station; the advantages resulting even from poverty, the genuine use of riches, and extreme folly of abusing them; the unequal dispensations of Divine Providence; the immortality of the human soul; and great day of final retribution. All these noble and important subjects are treated of in such a style and manner as nothing among the ancients can parallel. "We have here given the genuine character of this inestimable piece; yet such has been the ignorance, inattention, or depravity of some persons, that it would be hard to find an instance of any thing written on so serious and interesting a subject, which has been so grossly misrepresented. How often has a handle been taken from certain passages, ill understood, and worse applied, to patronize libertinism, by such as pretend to judge of the whole from a single sentence, independent of the rest, without paying the least regard to the general scope or design! According to which rule the most pious discourse that ever was written may be perverted to atheism. Some fanatics have fallen into the contrary extreme; for, on reading that all here below was vanity, they have been so wrong-headed, as to condemn every thing as evil in itself. This world, according to them, cannot be too bitterly inveighed against; and man has nothing else to do with it, but to spend his days in sighing and mourning. But it is evident that nothing could be farther from the preacher's intention: for notwithstanding he speaks so feelingly of the instability and unsatisfactory nature of all sublunary things, and the vanity of human cares, schemes, and contrivances; yet, lest any one should mistake his meaning, he advises every man, at the same time, to reap the fruit of his honest labors, and take the comfort of what he possesses with a sober freedom and cheerful spirit. Not to harass and disturb his mind with anxious cares and restless solitudes about future events; but to pass the short space which Heaven has allotted him here, as pleasantly as his station will admit, with a quiet conscience. He does not condemn the things themselves, such as science, prudence, mirth, riches, honors, etc.; but only their abuse, that is, the useless studies, unreasonable pursuits, and immoderate desires, of those who pervert God's blessings to their own destruction. "On this head Solomon gives his sentiments, not only as a divine and philosopher, but like one thoroughly acquainted with the foibles of the human heart. It was not his design to drive people out of the world, or to make them live wretchedly in it; but only that they should think and act like rational creatures; or, in other words, be induced to consult their own happiness. "There is nothing in the whole body of pagan philosophy so elevated and magnificent, as what some have written on the important subject of this poem: but we find their opinions so various and contradictory, and the most plausible so blended with errors, even those of the divine Plato not excepted, that their sublimest sentiments on the sovereign good or ultimate happiness of man, when compared with those of the royal preacher, not only appear cold and languid, but always leave the mind unsatisfied and restless. We are lost in a pompous flow of words; and dazzled, but not illuminated. One sect, by confining happiness to sensual pleasures, so greatly slackened the cord as to render it wholly useless: another, by their too austere and rigid maxims, stretched it so tight that it snapped asunder; though the experience of all ages has evinced that these latter imposed both on themselves and the world, when they taught that virtue, however afflicted here, was its own reward, and sufficient of itself to render a man completely happy. Even in the brazen bull of Perillus, truth will cry out from the rack against such fallacious teachers, and prove them liars. The extravagant figments, therefore, of the stoical apathy, no less than those of the voluptuous epicurean, both equally vanish at the splendor of the Divine truth delivered by Solomon. He alone decides the great question in such a manner that the soul is instantly convinced; it need seek no farther. "III. To prevent all misapprehensions, which a slight and cursory reading of this book is apt to raise in many persons, it will be requisite to observe two cautions: First, that Solomon, who tells us that he applied his heart not only to the search of wisdom and knowledge, but also of folly and madness, frequently speaks, not according to his own sentiments, though he proposes the thing in a

naked and simple manner, designedly making use of such terms as might set the picture in a fuller and clearer light, so that we often meet with certain expressions which, unless we search into their true design, seem to have a quite different force and meaning from what the author really intended. We must therefore take particular care to distinguish the doubts and objections of others from Solomon's answers; the want of attending to which has made this book much more obscure than otherwise it would appear. Secondly, we should not judge of the entire discourse from some parts of it; since many things are pertinently said, according to the present subject, which, in themselves, and strictly taken, are far from true. In order to come at the genuine sense, we should form our opinion from the different circumstances of the matter treated of, comparing the antecedent with the consequent passages, and always considering the preacher's real scope and design. By carefully attending to these two cautions, this book will be seen in a very different light from what it now appears in to the generality of readers. "IV. This book, besides the figurative and proverbial expressions to be found in no other part of the Scripture, is undoubtedly metrical; and, consequently, the grammatization, in many places, not a little perplexed, from the frequent ellipses, abbreviations, transposition of words, and other poetical licenses, allowed in all languages; to say nothing of the carelessness or ignorance of transcribers, as appears from the variety of readings. Yet, notwithstanding we are so little acquainted with the nature of the Hebrew metre, and the propriety of certain phrases which, at this vast distance of time, in a language that has been dead upwards of two thousand years, must unavoidably occasion the same difficulties and obscurities as occur in works of far less antiquity, and in languages more generally studied and better understood; notwithstanding this, I say, a diligent and attentive observer will always find enough to recompense his trouble; and, if he has any taste, cannot avoid being struck with the exquisite beauty and regularity of the plan. "V. The most judicious commentators have remarked on this book, that we have here a conspicuous example of that form of disputing, which was so justly admired in the soundest of the pagan philosophers; particularly in Socrates, who, whilst others were taken up with abstruse speculations about the nature of things, and investigating the number, motions, distance, and magnitude of the stars, brought down philosophy from the upper regions, and fixed its abode on earth; that is, by teaching such precepts as served for the regulation of life and manners, by far the most useful of all sciences, as being most conducive to the welfare of society, and the general benefit of mankind. Of this we have a noble specimen in the memoirs of that ancient moralist, collected by Xenophon. It is, I think, beyond all contradiction, that no one ever made deeper researches into nature, or had made so great a progress in every branch of science, both speculative and experimental. But what, after all, was the result of his inquiries? A thorough conviction of the inutility of such studies, and how little they conduce towards the obtaining that peace and tranquillity of mind wherein true happiness consists. He applied himself, therefore, to that study which might produce a real and lasting advantage, namely, to render men wise to some purpose; that is, truly virtuous. The manner of his treating this important subject bears some resemblance to that of the celebrated Greek moralist. He does not give us a long roll of dry formal precepts, with which the mind is soon tired; but, to confirm the truth of every thing he says, appeals, not only to his own experience, but to the general sense of unbiassed reason. At the same time he sets before us, in the liveliest colors, the sad effects of vice and folly; and makes use of every incentive to engage the heart to be enamored with virtue, and pursue its own interest. Whatever he intends to inculcate is first barely proposed, and then more accurately explained and illustrated, though by gentle and almost imperceptible transitions; with this peculiarity, that there is always much more implied than expressed; insomuch that the reader, from a slight hint given him, is left to draw such inferences as his own reflection must naturally suggest. Every thing, in short, is drawn, in this admirable composition, with equal simplicity and elegance; and hath as distinguished a superiority to whatever the best pagan philosophers have given us on the same subject, as the borrowed light of the moon is

surpassed by that of the sun in his full meridian lustre; or, to use a still stronger comparison, as Solomon's knowledge of the one true God excelled the idle notion of their fictitious deities."

Some have supposed that the book of Ecclesiastes is a poem. That some poetic lines may be found in it, there is no doubt; but it has nothing in common with poetic books, nor does it exist in the hemistich form in any printed edition or MS. yet discovered. It is plain prose, and is not susceptible of that form in which the Hebrew poetic books appear.

The author already quoted thinks that the book of Ecclesiastes is metrical. I cannot see this: but it has what is essential to poetry, a truly dignified style; there are no mean, creeping words in it, whether pure Hebrew, or borrowed from any of its dialects. They are all well chosen, nervous, and highly expressive. They are, in short, such as become the subject, and are worthy of that inspiration by which the author was guided.

The prophet shows that all human courses are vain, Ecc 1:1-4. The creatures are continually changing, Ecc 1:5-8. There is nothing new under the sun, Ecc 1:9-11. Who the prophet was, his estate and his studies, Ecc 1:12-18.

#### Verse 1

The words of the Preacher - Literally, "The words of Choheleth, son of David, king of Jerusalem." But the Targum explains it thus: "The words of the prophecy, which Choheleth prophesied; the same is Solomon, son of David the king, who was in Jerusalem. For when Solomon, king of Israel, saw by the spirit of prophecy that the kingdom of Rehoboam his son was about to be divided with Jeroboam, the son of Nebat; and the house of the sanctuary was about to be destroyed, and the people of Israel sent into captivity; he said in his word - Vanity of vanities is all that I have labored, and David my father; they are altogether vanity." The word קהלת Koheleth is a feminine noun, from the root קהל kahal, to collect, gather together, assemble; and means, she who assembles or collects a congregation; translated by the Septuagint, ekklesiasthv, a public speaker, a speaker in an assembly; and hence translated by us a preacher. In my old MS. Bible it is explained thus: a talker to the people; or togyder cleping.

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ECCLESIASTES 1: 2 "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher; "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

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#### Verse 2

Vanity of vanities - As the words are an exclamation, it would be better to translate, O vanity of vanities! Emptiness of emptinesses.

True, substantial good is not to be found in any thing liable to change and corruption.

The author referred to in the introduction begins his paraphrase thus: - "O vain deluding world! whose largest gifts

Thine emptiness betray, like painted clouds,

Or watery bubbles: as the vapor flies,

Dispersed by lightest blast, so fleet thy joys,

And leave no trace behind. This serious truth

The royal preacher loud proclaims, convinced  
 By sad experience; with a sigh repeats  
 The mournful theme, that nothing here below  
 Can solid comfort yield: 'tis all a scene.  
 Of vanity, beyond the power of words  
 To express, or thought conceive. Let every man  
 Survey himself, then ask, what fruit remains  
 Of all his fond pursuits? What has he gain'd,  
 By toiling thus for more than nature's wants  
 Require? Why thus with endless projects rack'd  
 His heated brain, and to the laboring mind,  
 Repose denied? Why such expense of time,  
 That steals away so fast, and ne'er looks back? Could man his wish obtain, how short the space  
 For his enjoyment! No less transient here  
 The time of his duration, than the things  
 Thus anxiously pursued. For, as the mind,  
 In search of bliss, fix'd on no solid point,  
 For ever fluctuates; so our little frames,  
 In which we glory, haste to their decline,  
 Nor permanence can find. The human race  
 Drop like autumnal leaves, by spring revived:  
 One generation from the stage of life  
 Withdraws, another comes, and thus makes room  
 For that which follows. Mightiest realms decay,  
 Sink by degrees; and lo! new form'd estates  
 Rise from their ruins. Even the earth itself,  
 Sole object of our hopes and fears,  
 Shall have its period, though to man unknown."

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ECCLESIASTES 1: 3 What does man gain from all his labour in which he labours under the sun?

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Verse 3

What profit hath a man - What is the sum of the real good he has gained by all his toils in life? They, in themselves, have neither made him contented nor happy.

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ECCLESIASTES 1: 4 One generation goes, and another generation comes; but the earth remains forever.

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Verse 4

One generation passeth away - Men succeed each other in unceasing generations: but the earth is still the same; it undergoes no change that leads to melioration, or greater perfection. And it will continue the same לעולם לעולם leolam, during the whole course of time; till the end of all things arrives.

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ECCLESIASTES 1: 5 The sun also rises, and the sun goes down, and hurries to its place where it rises.

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Verse 5 , Ecc 1:6

These verses are confused by being falsely divided. The first clause of the sixth should be joined to the fifth verse. "The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he ariseth; going to the south, and circulating to the north."

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ECCLESIASTES 1: 6 The wind goes toward the south, and turns around to the north. It turns around continually as it goes, and the wind returns again to its courses.

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Verse 6

"The wind is continually whirling about, and the wind returneth upon its whirlings."

It is plain, from the clause which I have restored to the fifth verse, that the author refers to the approximations of the sun to the northern and southern tropics, viz., of Cancer and Capricorn.

All the versions agree in applying the first clause of the sixth verse to the sun, and not to the wind. Our version alone has mistaken the meaning. My old MS. Bible is quite correct:

The sunne riisith up, and goth doun, and to his place turnith agein; and there agein riising, goth about bi the south, and then agein to the north.

The author points out two things here:

1. Day and night, marked by the appearance of the sun above the horizon; proceeding apparently from east to west; where he sinks under the horizon, and appears to be lost during the night.
2. His annual course through the twelve signs of the zodiac, when, from the equinoctial, he proceeds southward to the tropic of Capricorn; and thence turneth about towards the north, till he reaches the tropic of Cancer; and so on.

ECCLESIASTES 1: 7 All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full. To the place where the rivers flow, there they flow again.

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Verse 7

All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full - The reason is, nothing goes into it either by the; rivers or by rain, that does not come from it: and to the place whence the rivers come, whether from the sea originally by evaporation, or immediately by rain, thither they return again; for the water exhaled from the sea by evaporation is collected in the clouds, and in rain, etc., falls upon the tops of the mountains; and, filtered through their fissures, produce streams, several of which uniting, make rivers, which flow into the sea. The water is again evaporated by the sun; the vapors collected are precipitated; and, being filtered through the earth, become streams, etc., as before.

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ECCLESIASTES 1: 8 All things are full of weariness beyond uttering. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.

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Verse 8

All things are full of labor - It is; impossible to calculate how much anxiety, pain, labor, and fatigue are necessary in order to carry on the common operations of life. But an endless desire of gain, and an endless curiosity to unfitness a variety of results, cause men to, labor on. The eye sees much, but wishes to, see more. The ear hears of many things; but is curious to have the actual knowledge of them. So desire and curiosity carry men, under the Divine providence, through all the labors and pains of life.

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ECCLESIASTES 1: 9 That which has been is that which shall be; and that which has been done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.

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Verse 9

The thing that hath been - Every thing in the whole economy of nature has its revolutions; summer and winter, heat and cold, rain and drought, seedtime and autumn, with the whole system of corruption and generation, alternately succeed each other, so that whatever has been shall be again. There is really, physically, and philosophically, nothing absolutely new under the sun, in the course of sublunary things. The same is the case in all the revolutions of the heavens.

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ECCLESIASTES 1: 10 Is there a thing of which it may be said, "Behold, this is new?" It has been long ago, in the ages which were before us.

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Verse 10

Is there any thing, etc. - The original is beautiful. "Is there any thing which will say, See this! it is new?" Men may say this of their discoveries, etc.; but universal nature says, It is not new. It has been, and it will be.

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ECCLESIASTES 1: 11 There is no memory of the former; neither shall there be any memory of the latter that are to come, among those that shall come after.

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#### Verse 11

There is no remembrance - I believe the general meaning to be this: Multitudes of ancient transactions have been lost, because they were not recorded; and of many that have been recorded, the records are lost. And this will be the case with many others which are yet to occur. How many persons, not much acquainted with books, have supposed that certain things were their own discoveries, which have been written or printed even long before they were born! Dutens, in his Origin of the Discoveries attributed to the Moderns, has made a very clear case.

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ECCLESIASTES 1: 12 I, the Preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem.

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#### Verse 12

I the Preacher was king - This is a strange verse, and does not admit of an easy solution. It is literally, "I, Choheleth, have been king over Israel, in Jerusalem." This book, as we have already seen, has been conjectured by some to have been written about the time that Ptolemy Philadelphus formed his great library at Alexandria, about two hundred and eighty-five years before our Lord; and from the multitude of Jews that dwelt there, and resorted to that city for the sake of commerce, it was said there was an Israel in Alexandria. See the introduction.

It has also been conjectured from this, that if the book were written by Solomon, it was intended to be a posthumous publication. "I that was king, still continue to preach and instruct you." Those who suppose the book to have been written after Solomon's fall, think that he speaks thus through humility. "I was once worthy of the name of king; but I fell into all evil; and, though recovered, I am no longer worthy of the name." I am afraid this is not solid.

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ECCLESIASTES 1: 13 I applied my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under the sky. It is a heavy burden that God has given to the sons of men to be afflicted with.

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#### Verse 13

And I gave my heart to seek and search - While Solomon was faithful to his God he diligently cultivated his mind. His giving himself to the study of natural history, philosophy, poetry, etc., are sufficient proofs of it. He had not intuitive knowledge from God; but he had a capacity to obtain every kind of knowledge useful to man.

This sore travail - This is the way in which knowledge is to be acquired; and in order to investigate the operations of nature, the most laborious discussions and perplexing experiments must be instituted, and conducted to their proper results. It is God's determination that knowledge shall be acquired in no other way.

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ECCLESIASTES 1: 14 I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and behold, all is vanity and a chasing after wind.

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Verse 14

Behold, all is vanity - After all these discussions and experiments, when even the results have been the most successful, I have found only rational satisfaction; but not that supreme good by which alone the soul can be made happy.

O curas hominum! O quantum est in rebus inane! "How anxious are our cares, and yet how vain

The bent of our desires!"

Pers. Sat. i., 5: 1.

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ECCLESIASTES 1: 15 That which is crooked can't be made straight; and that which is lacking can't be counted.

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Verse 15

That which is crooked cannot be made straight - There are many apparent irregularities and anomalies in nature for which we cannot account; and there are many defects that cannot be supplied. This is the impression from a general view of nature; but the more we study and investigate its operations, the more we shall be convinced that all is a consecutive and well-ordered whole; and that in the chain of nature not one link is broken, deficient, or lost.

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ECCLESIASTES 1: 16 I said to myself, "Behold, I have obtained for myself great wisdom above all who were before me in Jerusalem. Yes, my heart has had great experience of wisdom and knowledge."

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Verse 16

I communed with mine own heart - Literally, "I spoke, I, with my heart, saying." When successful in my researches, but not happy in my soul, though easy in my circumstances, I entered into my own heart, and there inquired the cause of my discontent. He found that, though -

1. He had gotten wisdom beyond all men;
2. Wealth and honors more than any other;
3. Practical wisdom more than all his predecessors;

4. Had tried pleasure and animal gratification, even to their extremes; yet after all this he had nothing but vexation of spirit.

None of these four things, nor the whole of them conjoined, could afford him such a happiness as satisfies the soul. Why was all this? Because the soul was made for God, and in the possession of him alone can it find happiness.

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ECCLESIASTES 1: 17 I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also was a chasing after wind.

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Verse 17

To know madness and folly - הוללות ושכלות holloth vesichluth. Παραβολας και επιστημην, "Parables and science." - Septuagint. So the Syriac; nearly so the Arabic. "What were error and foolishness." - Coverdale. Perhaps gayety and sobriety may be the better meaning for these two difficult words. I can scarcely think they are taken in that bad sense in which our translation exhibits them. "I tried pleasure in all its forms; and sobriety and self-abnegation to their utmost extent." Choheloth paraphrases, "Even fools and madmen taught me rules."

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ECCLESIASTES 1: 18 For in much wisdom is much grief; and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.

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Verse 18

For in much wisdom is much grief - The more we know of ourselves the less satisfied shall we be with our own hearts; and the more we know of mankind the less willing shall we be to trust them, and the less shall we admire them.

Be that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow - And why so? Because, independently of God, the principal objects of knowledge are natural and moral evils.

The Targum gives a curious paraphrase here: "The man who multiplies wisdom, when he sins and is not converted to repentance, multiplies the indignation of God against himself; and the man who adds science, and yet dies in his childhood, adds grief of heart to his relatives." A man in science; a foolish child in conduct. How pained must they be who had the expense of his education! But there are many men-children of this sort in every age and country.