

CHAPTER 10

INTRODUCTION TO ECCLESIASTES 10

This chapter treats of the difference between wisdom and folly; and of the preferableness of the one, to the other, especially in civil government: folly is compared to a dead or deadly fly; a little of which as much hurts a wise man's reputation, as that does the most precious ointment, (^{2100B}Ecclesiastes 10:1). A wise man and a fool differ in the situation of their heart; which is in the one on the right hand, in the other on the left, (^{2100B}Ecclesiastes 10:2); the folly of the latter lies not only in his heart, but betrays itself throughout the whole of his conversation, (^{2100B}Ecclesiastes 10:3). And it is one part of wisdom in a subject to bear patiently the anger of his prince, and not in a passion and at once leave his service, (^{2100B}Ecclesiastes 10:4). And, among the follies of princes, this is a great one; to bestow their honours and favours on improper persons, to the neglect of such as are deserving, (^{2100B}Ecclesiastes 10:5-7). And several proverbial expressions are used, as cautions to a wise man against plotting mischief to others; breaking in upon the constitution and laws of a commonwealth; weakening the strength of the state by an methods, and making discord in it, and carrying thin by mere strength and force; when, if wisdom used, it would direct to proper ways and means, by which things would be managed to the best advantage, (^{2100B}Ecclesiastes 10:8-10). Then the babbling of fools against a government is exposed, which is like the secret bite of a serpent, (^{2100B}Ecclesiastes 10:11); and the difference between the words of wise men, which express grace and kindness, and are amiable and acceptable to men; and those of fools, which destroy themselves, begin in folly, and end in mischief; are noisy, and without meaning; do not direct to things most plain and easy, but wearisome and fatiguing to themselves and others, (^{2100B}Ecclesiastes 10:12-15). Next the unhappiness of a land is observed, when the governors of it are childish, intemperate, slothful, and prodigal; the happiness of a country when it is the reverse, (^{2100B}Ecclesiastes 10:16-19); and the chapter is concluded with advice not to curse a king, or any great personage; no, not in the most private and secret manner; since, by one means or another, it will be discovered (^{2100B}Ecclesiastes 10:20).

Ver. 1. *Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour*, etc.] Such, as Jarchi observes, are in the winter season, which are weak and near to death, and get into precious ointment, prepared after the best manner, where they die, and corrupt and spoil it: or, “flies of deaths”^{f232}; deadly ones, which have something in their nature poisonous and pernicious; which, when they light upon the most sweet and savoury ointment, give it an ill smell;

[so doth] a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom [and] honour; a good name is like precious ointment, valuable and fragrant; sin, which is folly, is like a dead fly; not only light and mean, and base and worthless, but hurtful and pernicious, deadly, and the cause of death; and what may seem little, a peccadillo, or, however, one single act of sin, may injure the character of a wise and honourable man, and greatly expose him to shame and contempt, and cause him to stink in the nostrils of men, (^{<0133>}Genesis 36:20); and to be reproached by men, and religion and government to be reproached for his sake. Thus the affair of Bathsheba and Uriah, what a slur did it bring on the character of David, so famous for wisdom and honour, for religion and piety? and the idolatry of Solomon, the wisest of men; Jehoshaphat, that good king, entering into affinity with Ahab; and pious Josiah going to war with the king of Egypt, contrary to the word of the Lord; with many other instances. This teaches how careful men eminent for gifts and grace should be of their words and actions; since the least thing amiss in them is easily discerned, and soon taken notice of, as the least speck in a diamond, or spot in fine linen, clean and white; and there are wicked and envious persons enough watching for their halting, glad to have an occasion against them, and improve everything to the uttermost: this is a caution to wise magistrates, honourable ministers of the word, and eminent professors more especially. The Targum is,

“evil concupiscence, which dwells at the gates of the heart, is as a fly, and is the cause of death in the world; and corrupts a good name, which was before like to anointing oil, perfumed with spices:”

and to the same purpose the Midrash. One of the names of Satan is Beelzebub, the lord of a fly; who, by his temptations, solicits to sin and folly, which produce the effect here mentioned, and therefore to be shunned as a deadly fly in the ointment, (^{<0124>}Matthew 12:24). Gussetius^{f233} renders it,

“that which is precious and worthy of honour “proceeds” from wisdom; and folly “comes” from glory, “worldly glory”, in a little time.”

Ver. 2. *A wise man’s heart [is] at his right hand*, etc.] This is not designed to express the direct position and situation of the heart of man, wise or foolish, which is the same in both; and which, according to anatomists, is in the middle of the body, inclining to the left side; but the understanding and wisdom of men, as Aben Ezra observes; which, with a wise man, is ready a hand to direct and assist him in any affair; and which under the influence of it, he goes about with great readiness and dexterity, and performs it with great ease and facility, without sinister ends and selfish views; it inclines him to pursue the true way to honour, heaven, and happiness, which lies to the right; to seek things that are above, at the right hand of God; and, in all, his honour and glory;

but a fool’s heart [is] at his left; he is at a loss for wisdom and understanding to direct him, when he has an affair of any moment upon his hand; which he goes about in an awkward manner, as left handed persons do, and has sinister ends in what he does; and he is to every good work reprobate and unfit, and seeks earth and earthly things, which lie to the left, and in all himself. The Targum is,

“the heart of a wise man is to get the law, which was given by the right hand of the Lord; and the heart of a fool to get the goods of gold and silver:”

so Jarchi,

“his wisdom is ready to incline him (the wise man) to the right hand way for his good; but the heart of a fool to pervert him from it.”

The ancients^{f234} used to call things wise and prudent the right hand and things foolish the left hand.

Ver. 3. *Yea also, when he that is a fool walketh by the way*, etc.] The king’s highway, the common road; as he passeth along the streets, going to any place, or about any business:

his wisdom faileth [him]; or “his heart”^{f235}; he appears by his gait, his manner of walking, to want a heart, to be a fool; walking with a froward mouth, winking with his eyes, speaking with his feet, and teaching with his

fingers; all which shows the frowardness and folly of his heart, (^{216B}Proverbs 6:12-14); or he discovers it throughout his conversation, in all the actions of it, in whatsoever business he is concerned, and in all the affairs of life. The Targum is,

“when he walketh in a perplexed way;”

then his wisdom fails him; he does not know which way to take, whether to the right or left: this can never be understood of the highway of holiness, in which men, though fools, shall not err, (^{238B}Isaiah 35:8);

and he saith to everyone [that] he [is] a fool; his folly is manifest to all; he betrays it, by his words and actions, to every man he has to do with; his sins and transgressions, which are his folly, he hides not, they are evident to all; and, as the Targum expresses it,

“all say he is a fool:”

though indeed he himself says this of every other man, that he is a fool; for, according to the Vulgate Latin version, he, being a fool himself, thinks everybody else is so.

Ver. 4. *If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee*, etc.] The wrath of the civil magistrate, the chief ruler of the land, the sovereign prince or king, to whom men are and should be subject: if his wrath on any occasion breaks out in a furious manner, and, like a storm and tempest, is very blustering and threatening:

leave not thy place; at court; thine office under the prince, do not throw it up in a passion, and quit his service upon it; and much less forget thy duty and allegiance to him, and go into disloyalty and rebellion; (see ^{200B}Ecclesiastes 8:3);

for yielding pacifieth great offences; bearing his anger patiently, submitting to his displeasure quietly, making no returns, or at least giving soft answers, and behaving in a modest and humble manner; in time his wrath will subside, and he will be pacified, and forgive the offences committed; or be convinced that there were none, or however not so great as to require such resentment; (see ^{215B}Proverbs 15:1 25:15). The Targum is,

“if a spirit of evil concupiscence rules over thee; thy good place, in which thou wert used to stand, leave not:”

some understand this of a man's having a spirit of rule and government coming upon him, or of his being advanced to power and authority, that then he should not forget the low estate in which he had been. Jarchi interprets it of the spirit of the governor of the world, strictly inquiring into the actions of men; and healing their sins by chastisements, which cause them to leave them.

Ver. 5. *There is an evil [which] I have seen under the sun*, etc.] Which Solomon had observed in the course of his life, practised in some kingdoms and by some princes on earth, under the sun; for there is nothing of the like kind, as after mentioned, done in heaven, above the sun;

as an error [which] proceedeth from the ruler; from the supreme ruler of a nation, the king of it; and it is not only as an error, or like one, a seeming one; but it is a real error, bestowing places of honour and profit on undeserving persons: which error proceeds from ignorance of the persons; or from affection to them, and from friendship cultivated with them in the younger time of life, being educated with them; or through the misrepresentation and imposition of those about him, who have ends to serve by their promotion; or through his own lusts and passions, which these men indulge him in. It may be understood of God, the supreme ruler, who suffers such things to be; and which may seem to some an error in providence, though it is not: but the other sense is best.

Ver. 6. *Folly is set in great dignity*, etc.] Or "in great heights"^{f236}; in high places of honour and trust; even foolish and wicked men; men of poor extraction, of low life, and of mean abilities and capacities; and, which is worse, men vile and vicious, as Doeg the Edomite, Haman the Amalekite, and others;

and the rich sit in low places; men not only of fortune and estates, and above doing mean and little actions, and so more fit for such high places; but men rich in wisdom and knowledge, of large capacities and of great endowments of mind, and so abundantly qualified for posts in the administration of government; and, above all, men rich in grace, fearing God, and hating covetousness, as rulers ought to be, (^(~~Q~~)Exodus 18:21); and yet these sometimes are neglected, live in obscurity, who might otherwise be very useful in public life. The Targum interprets this and the following verse of the Israelites in exile and poverty among the Gentiles for their sins; so Jarchi.

Ver. 7. *I have seen servants upon horses*, etc.] Which being scarce in Judea, were only rode upon by princes and great personages, or such as were in affluent circumstances; and therefore it was an unusual and disagreeable sight to see servants upon them, which was a token of their being advanced upon the ruin and destruction of their masters; a reigning servant is not only uncomely, but one of the things by which the earth is disquieted, and it cannot bear, (^{<318D>}Proverbs 30:21,22); the Parthians and Persians distinguished their nobles and the vulgar, freemen and servants, by this; the servants went on foot, and the freemen rode on horses^{f237};

and princes walking as servants upon the earth; degraded from their honour; banished from their thrones and palaces, or obliged to leave them, and reduced to the lowest state and condition: so David, when his son rebelled against him, and he was forced to flee from him, and walk on foot, (^{<318D>}2 Samuel 15:30); Alshech thinks it may be a prophecy of the captivity of Israel, when they walked as servants on the earth, and the Gentiles rode on horses.

Ver. 8. *He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it*, etc.] This and the three following clauses are proverbial expressions, teaching men to be wise and cautious, lest by their conduct they bring mischief upon themselves; as it often is, the one that digs a pit for another, falls into it himself, as the wise man's father before him had observed, (^{<318D>}Psalm 7:15,16 9:15,16); as kings that lay snares for their people, and subjects that plot against their sovereign; or courtiers that form schemes for the ruin of those that are in their way; or any man that devises mischief against another, frequently so it is, that the same befalls them; as Haman, who prepared a gallows for Mordecai, was hanged on it himself;

and whoso breaketh an hedge a serpent shall bite him; which often lies hid in fences, in old walls, and rotten hedges^{f238}, (^{<318D>}Amos 5:19 ^{<318D>}Acts 28:3); so he that breaks down the hedges and fences of kingdoms and commonwealths, and breaks through the fundamental laws of a civil constitution, and especially that transgresses the laws of God, moral or civil, may expect to smart for it. Jarchi interprets this hedge of the sayings of their wise men, which those that transgress shall suffer death by the hand of heaven: but it would be much better to apply it to the doctrines contained in the word of God, which are a hedge and fence to the church of God, and whoever transgress them will suffer for it; (see 2 John 8,9); The Targum, by the "serpent", understands an ungodly king, who bites like

a serpent, into whose hands such transgressors shall be delivered: and some have thought of the old serpent the devil, as Alshech, who deceived Adam and Eve.

Ver. 9. *Whoso removeth stones shall be hurt therewith*, etc.] That carries them from the quarry, where they are dug; or takes them from a heap, where they lie; or that attempts to pull them out of a building, where they are put; or removes them from places, where they are set as boundaries and landmarks; all which is troublesome, and by which men get hurt; the stones fall upon them, or are too heavy for them, or they do what they should not do, and so bring themselves into trouble; as do all such persons who are for removing the boundaries of commonwealths and communities, and for changing laws, and altering constitutions;

[and] he that cleaveth wood shall be endangered thereby; of cutting himself: so he that soweth discord among brethren, that makes divisions in families, neighbourhoods, kingdoms, and churches; (see ^{<1136>}Proverbs 6:16,19) (^{<518>}Romans 16:18). Jarchi renders it, “shall be warmed” or “heated”, according to the sense of the word, as he thinks, in (^{<1102>}1 Kings 1:2); though he understands it of being profited by studying in the law and the commandments; of which he interprets the clause; and Ben Melech observes, that the word so signifies in the Arabic language; and Mr. Broughton renders it, “shall be heated thereby”. The Targum paraphrases it,

“shall be burnt with fire, by the hand of the Angel of the Lord:”

or, however, he may be overheated and do himself hurt, as men, that kindle the flame of contention and strife, often do.

Ver. 10. *If the iron be blunt*, etc.] With which a man cleaves wood: the axe, made of iron:

and he do not whet the edge; with some proper instrument to make it sharper, that it may cut the more easily;

then must he put to more strength; he must give a greater blow, strike the harder, and use more force; and yet it may not be sufficient, or; it may be to no purpose, and he himself may be in the greatest danger of being hurt; as such are who push things with all their might and main, without judgment and discretion;

but wisdom [is] profitable to direct; this is the “excellency” of wisdom, that it puts a man in the right way of doing things, and of doing them right; it directs him to take the best methods, and pursue the best ways and means of doing things, both for his own good and the good of others; and so it is better than strength, (²⁰⁹⁶Ecclesiastes 9:16,18).

Ver. 11. *Surely the serpent will bite without enchantment*, etc.] See (²¹⁸⁷Jeremiah 8:17). Or rather, “without a whisper”,^{f239}; without hissing, or any noise, giving no warning at all: so the Vulgate Latin version renders it, “in silence”; some serpents bite, others sting, some both; see (²¹³²Proverbs 23:32); some hiss, others not, as here;

and a babbler is no better; a whisperer, a backbiter, a busy tattling body, that goes from house to house, and, in a private manner, speaks evil of civil governments, of ministers of the word, and of other persons; and; in a secret way, defames men, and detracts from their characters: such an one is like a venomous viper, a poisonous serpent or adder; and there is no more guarding against him than against such a creature that bites secretly.

Ver. 12. *The words of a wise man’s mouth [are] gracious*, etc.] Or “grace”^{f240}. He speaks kind and good things in favour of the characters of men, and not as the babbling detractor: he speaks well of civil magistrates and rulers in the state; of the ministers of the word in the church; and of all his fellow creatures, as far as can with truth be said: and a truly good and gracious man, who is Solomon’s wise man, in opposition to a fool and wicked man; his discourse will run upon the grace of God, upon the doctrines of grace, and upon the experience of the truth of grace on his heart: upon the grace of God the Father, in loving and choosing men; in contriving their salvation; in making a covenant of grace with them in Christ; in sending him to die for them, and in accepting his satisfaction and righteousness for them: and on the grace of the Son, in becoming their surety; assuming their nature, dying in their room and stead, interceding for them, taking care of them, and supplying them with grace out of his fulness: and on the grace of the Spirit, in regeneration and sanctification; working in them faith, hope, and love; applying precious promises to them, and sealing them up to the day of redemption: of these things they speak often one to another, and cannot but talk of the things they have felt and seen: and such words and discourses are gracious, graceful, and grateful to truly pious souls, and minister grace unto them; and are also well pleasing

and acceptable to God and Christ, as well as gain them favour among men; (see ^{1221b}Proverbs 22:11 ^{404b}Ephesians 4:29);

but the lips of a fool swallow up himself; his words are not only able and displeasing to others, but bring ruin upon himself; by talking too freely of rulers and others, he brings himself into trouble, and plunges himself into difficulties, out of which he cannot easily get; yea, is swallowed up in them, and destroyed. Or, his “lips swallow up him”^{f241}; the wise man, whose words are gracious; and, by his calumny and detraction, his deceit and lies, brings him into disgrace and danger: or, “swallows it up”, or “that”^{f242}; the grace of the wise man, or his gracious words; and hinders the edification of others by them, and the good effects of them. Though the first sense seems best.

Ver. 13. *The beginning of the words of his mouth [is] foolishness*, etc.] As soon as ever he opens his mouth, he betrays his folly; the first word he speaks is a foolish one; or it is from the abundant folly in his heart that he speaks, which is the source and spring of all his foolish talk;

and the end of his talk [is] mischievous madness; to himself and others; as he goes on, he appears more and more foolish, and yet more confident of his own wisdom; and is resolutely set on having his own way and will; grows warm, and is violently hot, to have his own words regarded; and, if contradicted, is like a madman, scattering arrows, firebrands, and death; his talk from first to last is a circle of folly; and, though it begins with something weak, and may seem innocent, yet it ends and issues in wickedness and madness, in rage and wrath, in oaths and curses.

Ver. 14. *A fool also is full of words*, etc.] Or, “multiplies words”^{f243}. Is very talkative, says the same thing over and over again; uses an abundance of waste words, that have no meaning in them; utters every thing that comes uppermost, without any order or judgment; affects to talk on every subject, whether he knows anything of it or not; and will engross all the conversation to himself, though of all in company the most unfit for it;

a man cannot tell what shall be; and what shall be after him who can tell him? what the fool is talking of; what is the drift of his discourse; or where it will end, and what he will bring it to, it is so noisy, confused, and incoherent: or no man can tell future things, or what will come to pass; nor can any man inform another of future events; and yet a fool boasts and brags of what he shall do, and what he shall have, as if he was master of

the future, and knew for certain what would come to pass, which the wisest of men do not.

Ver. 15. *The labour of the foolish wearieth everyone of them*, etc.] The labour of fools, both in speaking and doing, weary those who have any concern with them, and themselves likewise, since all their labour is vain and fruitless;

because he knoweth not how to go to the city; to any city, the road to which is usually broad, and plain and easy to be found, and yet cannot be found by the foolish man; showing, that he that talks of abstruse things, things too high and wonderful for him, which he affects to know, must needs be a stranger to them, since things the most easy to be understood he is ignorant of, and wearies himself to find; or he does not know how to behave himself in a city, among citizens, in a civil and polite manner. The Targum is,

“he learns not to go to the city, where wise men dwell, to learn instruction from it.”

Some interpret it of the city of Jerusalem, where were the temple, sanhedrim, synagogues, schools, etc. but it may be better applied to the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, which fools or wicked men know not the way unto, nor do they seek after it; (see ^{<19471>}Psalm 107:7 ^{<10713>}Matthew 7:13,14); so Alshech interprets it of heaven.

Ver. 16. *Woe to thee, O land, when thy king [is] a child*, etc.] Not so much in age; though it is sometimes an unhappiness to a nation to be governed by a minor, especially if the young king has not good tutors, guardians, ministers, and counsellors, about him; but, if otherwise, a nation may be very happy under a minority, or the government of a young prince; such were Solomon, Joash, Uzziah, Josiah, and our Edward VI: but it rather respects one that is a child in understanding and judgment, in manners and conduct; that minds his pleasures, as children their play; is fickle and changeable, passionate and self-willed, unskilful in government, and yet will not be advised. The Targum applies this to the land of Israel, and instances in wicked Jeroboam, who made the morning sacrifice to cease; (see ^{<3182>}Isaiah 3:12). From considering the bad effects of folly in men in general, in private persons and in subjects, the wise man proceeds to observe the ill consequences of it to a nation, in kings and princes, in civil magistrates: Jerom or Bede interprets this allegorically: Woe to the

land whose king is the devil, who is always desirous of new things, (~~1001~~2 Corinthians 4:4);

and thy princes eat in the morning; as soon as they are up, children like; and not only eat, which may be convenient and lawful to do; but eat to excess, in a riotous and intemperate manner, and so unfit themselves for any service all the day: the “morning” is particularly observed, because the fittest time for consultation about the affairs of government; and was the usual time of sitting in judgment and trying causes, (~~3012~~Jeremiah 21:12); and also for acts of religion and devotion. And so the Targum,

“and thy princes eat bread before they offer the daily morning sacrifice.”

Sad is the case of a nation, when not only their king is a minor, or a foolish one; but when his tutors and guardians, or his ministers of state and counsellors, give up themselves to sensual pleasures, and neglect public affairs; and, instead of being in the council chamber, or in a court of judicature, or at their early devotions, are indulging themselves in riotous eating and drinking.

Ver. 17. *Blessed [art] thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles,* etc.] Or “heroes”^{f244}, called “Hhorim” in the Hebrew, which signifies “white”; either from the white garment they wore, or rather from the purity and ingenuity of their minds and manners; being illustrious persons, not only by birth and education, but in their lives and actions. Now a land is happy when it is governed by a king that is not only descended from a race of heroes and illustrious men, and has a princely and liberal education; but that imitates his ancestors, and treads in their steps, and is famous himself for wisdom, virtue, and real piety, in which true nobility consists; and so the Vulgate Latin version renders it, “whose king is noble”; who is of an ingenuous mind, has princely virtues and qualifications; who is wise and prudent, skilful in the affairs of government, and assiduous and industrious therein; for as, on the one hand, kings may, as they commonly do, descend from illustrious progenitors, and yet be base and wicked, ignoble and infamous, in their administration; and, on the other hand, persons may be raised from a low estate to royal dignity, as David and others, and yet behave with great prudence and ingenuity. The Targum applies this to the land of Israel also, and instances in Hezekiah, a man mighty in the law;

and thy princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness; that is, eat their meals at proper times, and that after they have been at business; to refresh nature, and recruit their strength, that they may be fit for further service; and do not indulge themselves, and spend their time, in rioting and drunkenness; which would render them very unfit for public business, to sit in council, or in any court of judicature: according to the Targum, the time was four o'clock, that is, ten o'clock in the morning. Or, "not unto drinking" or "drunkenness"^{f245}; they do not eat so as to cause an appetite, or eager desire for drinking to excess: or, not "with drinking"^{f246}; their eating is not attended with excessive drinking; they eat and drink moderately. The Egyptians had a law, which fixed such a measure of wine to be allowed their kings daily, and no more^{f247}; and it was Solon's law, given to the Athenians, that if a prince was found drunk, death was his punishment^{f248}; and, with the Indians, if a woman killed a drunken king, her reward was to marry his successor^{f249}: all which show how odious drunkenness was with the Heathens, and especially in their kings and princes; (see ~~AND~~ Proverbs 31:4,5). So Plato observes^{f250}, that

"drunkenness ought to be abstained from; and rather it should be allowed to any than to a keeper, (that is, of a city and its laws, a Civil magistrate), for it would be ridiculous for a keeper to need a keeper."

Jerom, as before observed, interprets this figuratively, "blessed is the land", of the church; whose "King" is Christ, the son of nobles, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and whose "princes" are the apostles, who seek not pleasure in this world, but shall eat in the world to come.

Ver. 18. *By much slothfulness the building decayeth,* etc.] Or, "by slothfulnesses"^{f251}, The word is in the dual number, and so may signify the slothfulness of the hands, as Aben Ezra, of both hands, and of both feet; or the various kinds of slothfulness, as the Arabic version, slothfulness both of body and mind; or of all sorts of persons, superiors and inferiors, princes and subjects; and with respect to all things present and future: and, as through slothfulness a material building decays; or a "beam", as the word signifies, the raftering of a house, the roof, which consists of rafters and beams joined together when the tiling is decayed by winds and rains, or any breaches made in the rafters, and no care taken to repair, the whole falls in, and the house is in ruins: so figurative buildings, families, churches, and kingdoms, come to nothing, through the sluggishness of masters of

families, ministers of the word, and civil magistrates; to the latter of which more especially this is to be applied, who give up themselves to luxury and sloth;

and, through idleness of the hands, the house droppeth through; or, “through the letting” or “hanging down of the hands”^{f252}; the remissness of them, as is to be observed in idle persons, who will not lift them up to work; particularly to repair a breach in a house, by means of which the rain drops through it, and makes it uncomfortable and unsafe being in it; and, in process of time, that itself drops to the ground: and this expresses the same thing, how, through the neglect of the civil magistrate, a commonwealth comes to nothing; or, however, the members of it become wretched and miserable.

Ver. 19. *A feast is made for laughter*, etc.] Or, “who make bread for laughter”^{f253}. Not bakers, who make bread for common use, and for all sorts of persons, sorrowful ones as others; but luxurious men, particularly such princes as are before described; they “make bread”, that is, a feast, as the phrase is used, (^{<2000>}Daniel 5:1); not for mere refreshment, but to promote mirth and gaiety to an excessive degree; being attended with rioting and drunkenness, chambering and wantonness, with revellings and dancing;

and wine maketh merry; or, “and [they prepare] wine”^{f254}; which is provided in plenty at feasts; and which is sometimes put for a feast itself, and called a banquet of wine, (^{<2000>}Esther 7:2); which wine makes merry, and men drink of it till they become drunk with it, at such profuse feasts: or, “which maketh life cheerful”^{f255}; as it does, when moderately used: “cheers the living”; so Aben Ezra;

but money answereth all [things]; is in the room of all things, and by it men obtain everything they want and wish for; it answers the requests of all, and supplies them with what they stand in need of, or can desire: particularly such expensive feasts, and sumptuous entertainments, are made by means of money; and, in this luxurious way, the coffers of princes are drained, and they are obliged to raise new levies, and impose new taxes upon their subjects, to the oppression of them. Or else the sense may be, that princes should consider, and not be so profuse in their manner of living, but be more frugal and careful of the public money, and lay it up against a time of need; since it is that that answers all things, is the sinew of war when that arises, and will procure men and arms, to secure and protect

them from their enemies, and obtain peace and safety for them and their subjects, which otherwise they cannot expect.

Ver. 20. *Curse not the king; no, not in thy thought*, etc.] Though he is a child, and unskilful in government, gives himself to his passions and pleasures, and neglects the affairs of the kingdom; yet be so far from rebelling against him, and doing him any injury, or speaking ill of him, as not even to wish him any ill; or, within thine own breast, imprecate any evil upon him, but rather pray for him, wish him well, and do everything to promote the welfare of his person and government, and this both for the Lord's sake, and for conscience's sake; and therefore curse him not "in thy conscience"^{f256}, as some render it. Jarchi interprets this of God the King of the world; (see ~~RB~~ Job 2:9); and Jerom of Christ; who should not be blasphemed, lest the angels, that go about the earth, should carry it to heaven;

and curse not the rich in thy bedchamber; subordinate rulers and magistrates, the king's ministers and counsellors, who are commonly rich; even those luxurious princes, before described, who give up themselves to eating and drinking, and spend the public money in profuse feasts and entertainments: yet a man should be careful how he speaks against them; and not only be cautious of what he says about them, in a vilifying way, in companies and clubs where disaffected persons speak their minds freely; but even in his own house, where his servants may hear him; nay, even in his bedchamber where only his wife and children are;

for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter; an hyperbolical expression; showing that, by some strange and unthought of ways and means, treason, though so very secret, should be brought to the knowledge of the king and his ministers; as if a bird, sitting at the window, or flying by at the same time, should hear and carry it to them: sometimes this is by means of spies and informers, that kings have in all places, to bring them news of the behaviour and sentiments of men, of whom such understand the passage; or by means of such, that bear an ill will to them, or are faithful subjects to the king. With the Persians were certain officers, called the king's ears, and the emperor's eyes; by means of whom the king was believed to be a god, since, by the ears and eyes of others, through those spies, he knew all that was done everywhere^{f257}. Some interpret it of angels, good or bad: Jarchi, of the soul of man, which at last flies to heaven, which he thinks is the bird of the air;

and of an angel that is associated to him, his guardian angel; meant, as he supposes, by that which hath wings, or “the master of wings”,^{f258}.